

## **Allegations brought against an Accredited (or Recognised) Minister Policy**

**Approval Date:** 31 March 2012

**Effective Date:** 31 March 2012

**Required Revision Date:** 31 March 2015

**Approval Authority:** Assembly

### **Purpose**

The Purpose of the Policy is to ensure the appropriate response to allegations of abuse, boundary violations and / or misconduct by Accredited (or Recognised) Ministers, approved by the Baptist Union of New South Wales, as well as ensure:

- Guidance and support exists for affiliated/ local churches;
- Appropriate support is put in place for all parties affected;
- A fair and transparent process is initiated for all involved; and
- A clear and consistent process is in place for the NSW and ACT Baptist Churches.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all situations where there is an allegation of abuse, misuse of power or misconduct by an Accredited (or Recognised) Minister, approved by the Baptist Union of New South Wales, that is brought to the attention of the Baptist Union of New South Wales, and is not covered through another process. This will include, but is not exclusive to, issues of leadership and abuse of power, financial fraud, bullying, and sexual misconduct or misconduct.

*Note:* This policy is operational within the unique governance structure of Baptist Churches. Individual churches ally themselves with other churches through membership of a voluntary association of churches. Despite retention of autonomy to make independent decisions, affiliated Churches will be encouraged to act in accordance with the policy and processes relating to allegations of abuse, misuse of power, or misconduct by an Accredited (or Recognised) Minister who has been approved by the Baptist Union of NSW. Church decisions to act independently, and not comply with the Union policy, may result in varying and increased rates of professional indemnity insurance. Whether the individual will remain in employment within a church or any other organisation is the decision of that organisation.

### **Principles**

- Prevention as much as possible through education, visibility of issues and screening.
- Processes that work with, and are complementary to, those undertaken by Authorities (eg. Police and Community Services) where required.
- Support and encouragement to congregations to have best practices in place.
- Proactive and prompt response to allegations, issues and concerns, once raised with the Baptist Union of New South Wales.
- Encourage high standard of accountability and transparency through clear and consistent processes.
- Independence of investigation when appropriate.
- Due diligence to issues of safety, legality, faith and theology.

## **Policy Statement**

- A comprehensive Procedures Manual, consistent with the purpose and principles of this policy, shall be in place and outline the steps to be taken in the event of allegations. This is to be reviewed and updated bi-annually, or as legislative change requires.
- Following complex or significant cases, or a new emerging trend, there will be a review of procedures in light of learning from these experiences or trends.
- Up to date information and brochures will be provided to churches to assist them in ensuring visibility and responding appropriately. Information will also be made available to affiliated churches via the website.
- Training and education will be made available to affiliated churches to encourage prevention, clear expectations and high visibility of expected conduct.

This policy is supported by the Codes of Conduct in relation to Leadership and Ministry, as well as Creating Safe Spaces, which all form part of the preventative strategy.