

# WAGGA WAGGA EVANGELICAL CHURCH

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## WWEC PROCEDURE - Safe Ministry Management

### Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to assist Wagga Wagga Evangelical Church (WWEC) to meet its obligations for reporting behaviours of concern against any persons in church communities by ensuring an appropriate incident response is followed. It outlines responsibilities, principles and processes to follow.

It forms an important part of our organisation's commitment to creating a culture of safety and protection of people, and outlines the process to implement our Safe Ministry Policy.

This process should be followed by the Safe Ministry Contacts (SMC) when they receive a report, relating to alleged inappropriate behaviour of a WWEC member, the safety or mistreatment of a person or relating to the safety of a WWEC program. Responding to concerns on a case by case basis allows Safe Ministry Contacts the ability to ensure their course of action is suitable for alleged inappropriate behaviour, without having to work through fixed steps which may be unnecessary, and allows them to develop particular steps more suitable for the persons and concern raised.

Note: This is not a legal procedure and any person(s) alleging criminal activity will be urged and supported in taking criminal matters to the appropriate authorities. Person(s) making allegation(s) who agree to follow this procedure are in no way stopped from seeking compensation from the legal system.

### Principles

Within this procedure inappropriate behaviour is defined as ***behaviour which acts in breach of the relevant WWEC Code of Conduct*** (*WWEC Code of Conduct for staff, leaders & volunteers OR WWEC Code of Conduct for paid pastoral staff*).

When alleged inappropriate behaviour is reported, our response will be guided by the following key principles:

- All allegations will be responded to promptly and thoroughly
- Our response will protect the confidentiality, dignity, health and well-being of all individuals involved (including any individuals suspected of behaving inappropriately)
- Special consideration must be given to protecting the interests of children (if they are in any way involved), and we recognise that this may require expert involvement to assist the incident response

- We will promote a culture where all leaders, volunteers and participants are encouraged to raise concerns and report incidents as they happen. We will make this process accessible to everyone and ensure we meet our reporting obligations (i.e. senior staff, regulators, law, insurance) are met on every occasion
- At each point in the process, the Safe Ministry Contacts will need to;
  1. Agree on a reasonable course of action based on the information at hand and apply the principles on a case by case basis
  2. Ensure the alleged inappropriate behaviour and outcomes are thoroughly documented and saved as a record. They are required to record their decisions and any actions they have determined to take (which includes clearly outlining roles and responsibilities and follow up)
  3. Ensure where there is a conflict of interest, the Safe Ministry Contacts with the conflict will not be involved in the management of the incident/concern.

A summary of reported Safe Ministry cases and responses will be reviewed by the WWEC Administration Committee, as a standing agenda item at each Administration Committee meeting, to implement risk management strategies which focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating of risks to vulnerable people.

## Process Overview

### Step 1. Record & Classify allegations of inappropriate behaviour

- A. WWEC member makes an allegation of inappropriate behaviour to a WWEC Safe Ministry Contact (SMC).

**Note:** Physical accidents/property incidents resulting in injury/illness are managed following the *WWEC PROCEDURE - Work, Health & Safety (WHS)*. A copy of the *WWEC PROCEDURE -- WHS*, including first aid processes and *WWEC WHS Incident* forms, are located in the 'WWEC Sunday Service Folder', kept at the WWEC church venue. These types of incidents can be recorded by any WWEC member, as deemed most appropriate. A physical accident involving inappropriate behaviour may also require action under this procedure.

- B. Safe Ministry Contact (SMC) ensures significant elements of the alleged inappropriate behaviour are recorded utilising **Appendix A: WWEC Safe Ministry Report** form. This can be completed by the person identifying the concern, a representative\* of their choosing or the SMC. Where the SMC completes the WWEC Safe Ministry Report, the completed report is to be reviewed by the person (or representative) reporting the concern/complaint/incident to ensure all details are recorded and accurate.

\*If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/or resolution of their concern/complaint/incident, WWEC can offer to communicate with them through their representative. Anyone may represent a person wishing to report an allegation of inappropriate behaviour (for example; family member, advocate, legal or community representative).

- C. SMC identifies the alleged inappropriate behaviour either;
- Involves a WWEC Pastor; in this case the SMC classifies the Safe Ministry Case as a major (**serious**) case and shares the report of alleged inappropriate behaviour with all WWEC SMCs (excluding those with a conflict of interest) who then work through the concern/incident together - go to Step 2 for process details

OR

- Does NOT involve a WWEC Pastor; in this case both the Associate Pastor\* (as a SMC) and an additional SMC, together classify the Safe Ministry case as;
  - NO case; one that does not fall under the Safe Ministry Management process. In these cases the SMC's may identify those involved may require further support and, where appropriate, will refer the matter to relevant WWEC leaders. The case is closed.
  - MINOR (less serious) case; whereby the Associate Pastor and one SMC addresses the allegation of inappropriate behaviour independently, following process as outlined in Step 2, OR
  - MAJOR (serious) case; whereby all four (4) SMCs are asked to work through the allegation of inappropriate behaviour together, following the process as outlined in Step 2.

\*Note: WWEC's Associate Pastor, assigned to the role of Director of Ministry/Kids & Youth, will be the Safe Ministry Contact (SMC) as outlined in this document. This Associate Pastor is officially WWECs 'Head of the relevant Entity' (HRE) (as delegated by the Senior Pastor) under the requirements of the Office of Children's Guardian. They are the team leader of the WWEC SMCs. A further outline of the Associate Pastors role is within the document *WWEC Procedure - Safe Ministry roles, responsibilities and screening*.

- D. SMC assigns a SM Case Number to case and registers the case on the private *WWEC Safe Ministry Register (available only to SMCs at WWEC)*. SMCs creates an electronic folder, titled with the SM Case Number, within the confidential 'Safe Ministry Cases' electronic folder, stored on a cloud service (only accessible to the SMCs). All documents relating to the SM Case are to be stored in this confidential folder. A SM Case Report template and SM Case Action template are available for the SMCs to assist in case documentation.
- E. Associate Pastor places non-confidential SM Case details on the *WWEC Safe Church Register*. Associate Pastor informs the Senior Pastor of all SM cases (where there is no COI) and seeks counsel where needed.
- F. Senior Pastor informs the WWEC Administration Committee of all SM cases (excluding confidential information) as a standing agenda item at each committee meeting. The Administration Committee are tasked with identifying any systems or procedural risk management strategies required to prevent similar cases in the future.

## **Step 2. Address steps related to the type of Safe Ministry Case**

The Safe Ministry Contact/s address each type of concern. For major (serious) cases all four (4) WWEC SMCs work together on the concern. Where there is a conflict of interest or where a SMC is unavailable, member/s of the WWEC Selection Panel will be asked to assist the SMC's to process and manage the Safe Ministry case.

In SM cases the SMC's may appoint one SMC as the *Lead SMC*.

As applicable, record the next steps that need to be taken, and take those steps.

**1. Is the concern about a Child or Vulnerable Person? (see Appendix B)**

Are there reasonable grounds?

Are there external agencies who need to be contacted? (Refer to the *WWEC Guideline: WWEC's Obligations under Child Protection Law*)

What are the next steps?

**2. Is the concern about a Church Leader (incl. volunteer leaders)? (see Appendix C)**

Are there reasonable grounds?

Are there external agencies who need to be contacted?

How should this be investigated?

Should the Leader be suspended?

What are the next steps?

**3. Is the concern about a Church Participant? (see Appendix D)**

Are there reasonable grounds?

Are there external agencies who need to be contacted?

How should this be investigated?

Should any actions be taken towards the Participant?

What are the next steps?

**4. Is the concern about a Church Program? (see Appendix E)**

Are there reasonable grounds?

How should this be investigated?

Should any actions be taken regarding the Program?

What are the next steps?

**5. Is the concern about an incident outside the Church? (see Appendix F)**

Are there reasonable grounds?

What actions should be taken regarding the concern?

Further guidelines, titled ***WWEC Guidelines - Safe Ministry Management***, are available for the SMC to utilise. These guidelines aim to provide further detail (supplementing steps outlined in Appendices B-F) to assist in the investigation and resolution of a case.

### **Step 3. Record a Summary and Review Regularly**

After the concern has been appropriately managed and responded to, the Safe Ministry Contacts should ensure the summary details are submitted to the Administration Committee, using the WWEC Safe Church Register, and that any ongoing actions or commitments are properly in progress.

**Where an allegation is found to be False or Not sustained and a church/staff member is CLEARED of all wrong doing;** the final management steps may involve determining if the member can return to their paid/volunteer work at WWEC. Where a person has been cleared of wrong doing, to give permission for that member to return to ministry, the SMC are required to;

- check the member has a valid Working with Children check/number and
- gain approval from WWECs insurer. The insurer assesses each situation on a case by case basis.

**Where an allegation against a church/staff member is Sustained (confirmed) by authorities;** the final management steps taken by the SMC's may involve, depending on the severity of the incident:

- Termination from paid employment for employee's of WWEC  
Note: where an employee is found guilty of committing sexual abuse (either by internal investigation or by court) they are to be automatically terminated from their employment.
- Counselling
- Restrictions in participating in particular church activities
- Removal from leadership role/s
- Exclusion from church
- Removal from partnership (subject to the church's constitution)
- An oral &/or written warning

Note: these are in addition to any legal ramifications.

# Appendix A. WVEC Safe Ministry Report

This form is to be completed by the person\* who wishes to raise an allegation of inappropriate behaviour. Copies of the completed form should be given only to a **WVEC Safe Ministry Contact (SMC)**.

\*where the person is unable to complete the report it can be completed by the SMC and sent to the person to verify. Alternatively the person may appoint a representative to report the allegation.

## What, When and Where

**Alleged Inappropriate Behaviour** Date\* \_\_\_\_\_ Time\* \_\_\_\_\_

Event Name\* \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Leader at event\* (name/title) \_\_\_\_\_

Day of the week\* \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Day\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*alleged inappropriate behaviour may not be limited to one event/date

Nature of alleged inappropriate behaviour

- |                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> physical    | <input type="checkbox"/> emotional  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sexual      | <input type="checkbox"/> neglect    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> spiritual   | <input type="checkbox"/> harassment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bullying    |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |                                     |

## Person of concern (the person an allegation is made against)

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (m) \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity were they at the event

<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Volunteer Organiser
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group Participant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

WVEC Member  Yes  No

## Affected Person

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (m) \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate Age \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity were they at the event

<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Volunteer Organiser
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group Participant

WVEC Member  Yes  No



## Appendix B.

### Is the Concern about a Child or Vulnerable Person?

Note: This step should only be used when there is a concern about a particular (named/identifiable) child.

If the concern is not about a particular child, but rather about a program involving children or a leader of children, skip this step.

If there are concerns raised about a Child or Vulnerable Person;

**Step 1: Determine if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a particular child or vulnerable person was/is at significant risk of being harmed.**

**NOTE: For children (those under 18 years of age at the time of an allegation) WWEC is a mandatory reporter and must take immediate action. Refer to the 'WWEC Guideline: WWEC's Obligations under Child Protection Law'.**

Record any notes or reasons for your determination. It's possible that the details of a concern could be nonsensical; or the claims could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.

**Step 2: Determine what, if any, external agencies or organisations might need to be contacted.**

These steps might include:

- Making an official Report to the Dept. of Family Services (This might be actioned through helping the reporter contact or by another person)
- Making an official report with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- Making an official report with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian
- Contacting the Police to inquire if they need to be informed
- Making a Police Report
- Contacting your Insurance provider
- Contacting an Elder Abuse Hotline or National Aged Care Advocacy Line on 1800 700 600
- Contacting the National Disability, Abuse & Neglect Hotline 1800 880 052
- Contacting the State Ombudsman to inquire if there needs to be a formal notification.
- Contacting any pastoral care persons to provide support to the child and carers.

Include the name of the person responsible for taking those steps.

**Step 3: Record and make plans regarding any further steps, processes or guidelines any of the above agencies recommend taking.**

Include the name of the person responsible for taking each of these steps.



## Appendix C.

### Is the Concern about a Church Leader (incl. volunteer leaders)?

A 'Leader' could be a staff member, administration committee member, program leader, volunteer, or even a helper within our organisation. If the concern/incident relates to the behaviour of a Leader then the organisation may bear the responsibility for the leader's actions.

Note:

- If multiple leaders have been implicated in the concern, the Safe Ministry Contacts should go through this process for each leader individually.
- If no specific leader is able to be identified, it may be appropriate to treat the issue as a 'Program Concern' which relates to the general behaviour of leaders within the program.

If there are concerns raised about a Church Leader;

#### **Step 1: Determine if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a leader has behaved inappropriately.**

Record any notes or reasons for your determination. It's possible that claims made about leaders could be accurate, but not describe inappropriate behaviour; or the claims could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.

#### **Step 2: Determine if outside agencies should be contacted about the suspected behaviour of the Leader**

It may be suitable to contact the Police if the suspected behaviour could be considered illegal. Other possible agencies could be WWEC's insurance provider, denominational support teams, or organisation partners (church leader's paid employers?).

Record who will contact which agency and any details or recommendations coming out of that contact. This may be done with or through the person who originally made the report.

#### **Step 3: Determine what steps should be taken to investigate the suspected behaviour**

The appropriate method of investigation will depend on the circumstances and the severity of the suspected behaviour and on the suspected leader's role in the organisation.

- If the suspected incident occurred outside the responsibility of the organisation, and in which the suspected leader was not acting (or could not be reasonably thought to be acting) as a representative of the organisation, it may not be appropriate for the organisation to conduct an investigation
- If the suspected behaviour is severe misconduct or the position of the leader is at a high level within the organisation, it may be appropriate to arrange an Independent Investigator to investigate the suspected behaviour with a level of transparency and separation from the organisation. The Independent Investigator should provide a report and recommendations to the Safe Ministry Contacts and Administration Committee for their review and action
- Otherwise, the SMC will investigate the suspected behaviour
- In some circumstances it may be appropriate to temporarily remove the suspected Leader from various responsibilities during the investigation (see step 4 below)
- It may be appropriate to inform the pastoral team so they can provide pastoral care.

Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.

Record any resulting decisions or recommendations provided by an investigator (if applicable).

**Step 4: Determine if the suspected Leader should be temporarily suspended from some or all of their responsibilities**

There may be reasons to consider removing the suspected leader from their duties or responsibilities, and to what extent.

- It may be appropriate to remove the leader from all responsibilities if the severity of the suspected behaviour is such that it warrants concerns about the ongoing safety of other persons in the organisation
- It may be appropriate to remove the leader from responsibilities where they would be brought into any or substantial contact with the suspected victim
- It may be appropriate to not remove the leader, but to reduce their responsibilities for a time to ensure they are aware of the appropriate behaviour of a leader in their role
- It may not be necessary to take any actions related to the suspected leader.

Note: where an employee is under investigation (internally or by the police) for committing sexual abuse they will be automatically suspended from work or other duties within WWEC.

**Step 5: Record the decision and what, if any, steps needs to be taken, and who is responsible for taking those steps.**

They may include;

- Communicating with the suspected leader
- Communicating with the suspected leader's supervisor
- Communicating with WWECs Administration Committee
- Communicating with the suspected victim

## Appendix D.

### Is the Concern about a Church Participant?

A 'participant' is someone who attends a program or event run by WWEC.

Note: Only follow this step if there is a concern raised about the behaviour or conduct of a particular person which occurred in the context of an organisation program. If the concern is regarding someone's behaviour outside the context of a WWEC program, please use Appendix F "Respond to concerns about incidents outside the organisation".

- If multiple participants have been implicated in the concern, the Safe Ministry Contacts should go through this process for each participant individually
- If no specific participant is able to be identified, it may be more appropriate to treat the issue as a 'Program Concern' which relates to the general behaviour of leaders within the program

### If there are concerns raised about a Participant;

#### **Step 1: Determine if there are there reasonable grounds to suspect the participant has behaved inappropriately.**

Record any notes or reasons for your determination. It's possible that claims made about a participant could be accurate, but not describe inappropriate behaviour; or the claims could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.

#### **Step 2: Determine if the suspected behaviour is of such a nature that any State, Federal or other organisation might need to be notified**

It may be suitable to contact the Police if the suspected behaviour could be considered illegal. Other possible agencies could be the WWEC's Insurance provider, denominational support teams, WWEC partners, participants paid employment.

Record who will contact which agency and any details or recommendations coming out of that contact. This may be done with or through the person who originally made the report.

#### **Step 3: Determine what steps should be taken to investigate the concerns**

It may be appropriate to investigate the suspicion further. Depending on the nature of the incident or the relationships between the parties it may be appropriate to appoint an independent investigator. The Independent Investigator should provide a report and recommendations to the board for their review and action.

Otherwise (if appropriate) SMC's will investigate and record their report.

**Step 4: Determine what, if any, steps should be taken regarding the suspected incident and participant**

Depending on the suspected or potential severity of the incident, there may be a range of options to consider taking in response to the concern.

- It may be appropriate to appoint someone to speak with the suspected participant about standards of behaviour expected for organisation Participants
- It may be appropriate to set out some particular standards of behaviour for this participant to ensure future behaviours are appropriate
- It may be appropriate to request the participant does not attend various programs for a time, or until various criteria are met
- It may be appropriate to inform the pastoral team so they can provide appropriate pastoral care

**Step 5: Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.**

Record any resulting decisions or recommendations provided by an investigator (if applicable).

## Appendix E.

### Is the Concern about a Church Program?

A 'Program' is an event, group, or session which is run by WWEC staff or WWECo volunteers. It includes its spaces, environments and culture. It may also include any online environments used for the Program by Leaders or Participants.

If a concern is raised about Leadership in general, or the general behaviour of Participants, it might be suitable to use these following steps to respond.

If there are concerns raised about a Program;

**Step 1: Determine if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a Program is unsafe.**

Record any notes or reasons for your determination. It's possible that claims made about a Program could be accurate, but not describe inappropriate culture or an unsafe environment; or the concerns could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.

**Step 2: Determine what steps will be taken to investigate the concerns**

Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.

Record any resulting decisions or recommendations.

**Step 3: Determine what, if any, steps should be taken regarding the Program concerns**

Depending on the severity of the concerns about the Program and the result and recommendations of any investigation, there may be a variety of steps to consider taking.

- It may be appropriate to gather some or all of the Program Leaders to re-establish appropriate culture standards and acceptable behaviours
- It may be appropriate to gather some or all of the Program Participants to increase awareness of organisational Policies and appropriate behaviours
- It may be appropriate to conduct a Program Risk assessment
- It may be appropriate to recommend updated systems or processes to be used within the Program by the Leaders
- It may be appropriate to inform the pastoral team so they can provide appropriate pastoral care

**Step 4: Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.**

## Appendix F.

### Is the Concern about an Incident outside the Church?

If the concern relates to an incident which occurred outside the context of a WWEC Program, and the person of concern was not acting as a representative of the church, the concern is most likely outside the direct responsibility of the church.

However, as responsible members of our communities, there may be appropriate steps to take in response to external concerns. Many of these steps have already been captured in Section A if the concern was about a child or vulnerable person, by contacting various agencies.

If there are concerns raised about an external incident;

**Step 1: Determine if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the concern is valid.**

Record any notes or reasons for your determination. It's possible that concerns raised about a external incident could be such that no reasonable person would consider them worthy of further review.

**Step 2: Determine what, if any, steps should be taken about this concern.**

Depending on the severity of the concern, it may be appropriate to one or several of the following;

- Contact CrimeStoppers, the Police or other emergency services
- Contact Family and Community Services
- If there is a concern about a person who is in a position of influence in another organisation, it may be appropriate to help the reporter raise their concern through the appropriate channels in that organisation
- It may be appropriate to inform the pastoral team so they can provide appropriate pastoral care

**Step 3: Record what steps should be taken, including who will action those steps and what will be expected as a result.**