



24 November 2014

Dear pastors

**Re: BUV equipping churches to lead the way in safeguarding children**

As followers of Jesus Christ, who welcomed and blessed children, we regard the safeguarding of children to be an important part of the Church's integrity and mission. In the spirit of this, we draw your attention to recent changes to State laws and regulations concerning children.

BUV churches and leaders have received a number of communications providing updates and information relevant to the significant legislative changes enacted in response to the findings and recommendations of the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations.

Details on these significant changes have been provided through emails to pastors and churches, presentation at the October Delegates Dinner, BUV Bulletin communications and information provided on the BUV Website. Soon our BUV Office will be providing churches with simple guides on grooming and reporting.

The need for Baptist churches and leaders to understand and implement the requirements of these laws is paramount to church life and mission. This is not just a matter of legal compliance, but of ensuring that our churches are safe places, with cultures of valuing and protecting children. Adoption and practise of the regulatory guidelines should be undertaken with the following clarification of our BUV position.

At the 28 October 2014 Union Council meeting it was resolved that:

- **The Baptist Union of Victoria adopts the policy that pastoral leaders and other leaders serving in Baptist churches and agencies should comply with the legal requirement to report criminal child sexual abuse to Victoria Police for investigation.**
- **The Baptist Union of Victoria makes a declaration that it does not recognise a 'pastor and penitent privilege' that may give pastoral leaders an option to refuse to report or otherwise divulge a confession of child sexual abuse.**

Over the past few years, it has been recommended that all leaders in all Victorian Baptist churches undertake Safe Church Awareness Workshops as a basic level of training and competence in ensuring we safeguard those amongst whom we

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minister. This training meets part of the proposed new minimum child-safe standards that are to be legally required of churches and other organisations in the near future. We urge all churches to ensure their leaders participate in a Safe Church Awareness Workshop. In addition, early in 2015, our BUV will also offer in several locations, for pastors and key leaders, a comprehensive one-day seminar presented by specialists in the field of child safety. This will build on the Safe Church Awareness Workshop, providing a higher level of training in good practice, so that Baptist churches are equipped to deal well with these matters, safeguarding and blessing the children amongst whom we minister in Jesus name.

Sincerely



**Trevor Spicer**  
BUV Union Council Chairman



**Rev. Daniel Bullock**  
BUV Director of Mission & Ministries

Please utilise the many sources of information, advice and support available to you, including:

BUV Professional Standards Worker, Brenda Williams [Brenda.williams@buv.com.au](mailto:Brenda.williams@buv.com.au) or 9880 6103

BUV Safe Church Co-ordinator, Kylie Kendal [kylie.kendall@buv.com.au](mailto:kylie.kendall@buv.com.au) or 9880 6113

BUV Website – Safe Church Resources pages <http://www.buv.com.au/about-us/church-health-capacity-building/safe-church>

Changes to the Working With Children Check Legislation  
[http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/about+the+check/purpose/changes+to+legislation+home/changes+to+legislation?utm\\_campaign=amendments%20to%20act%20campaign&utm\\_medium=banner&utm\\_source=wwcc](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/about+the+check/purpose/changes+to+legislation+home/changes+to+legislation?utm_campaign=amendments%20to%20act%20campaign&utm_medium=banner&utm_source=wwcc)

Department of Justice Criminal Law Reform  
<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/betrayal+of+trust+implementation>

Applying for a Working With Children Check  
<https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/onlineapplication.doj>

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