

Why do we need a process?

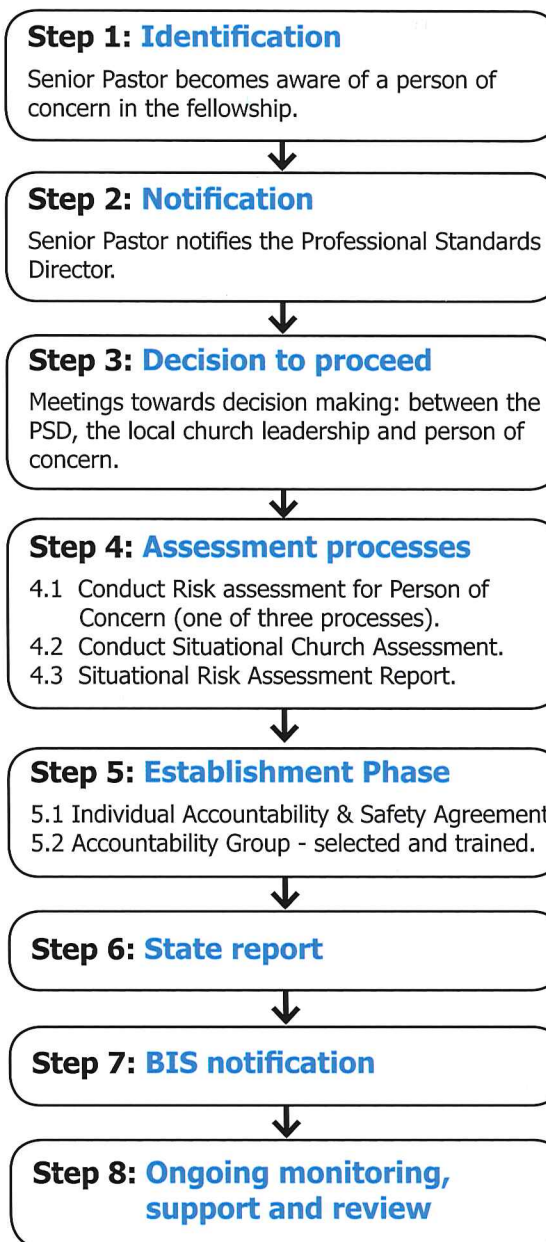
From time to time you may face the situation where a person of concern has been worshipping and been involved, or wishes to worship and be involved, in your church. While demonstrating genuine compassion and justice, you must take steps to protect the whole church community.

This process aims to ensure that all reasonable measures have been put in place to ensure safe *ministry* occurs with persons of concern. Australian Baptists are committed to safe *ministry*, i.e. God honouring, abuse free, harm free, person valuing and respectful ministry as per agreed national standards.

Ministry to a person of concern acknowledges:

- that there is a high level of community feeling and fear about sexual abuse.
- the duty of care we have to provide safe environments for all people in our churches.
- that there is no one type of person of concern, therefore individual Safety Agreements are necessary.
- that there are survivors of abuse in congregations, and we seek to care for them effectively.
- the issues of forgiveness and a person of concern's right to privacy.
- the liability issues around a person of concern reoffending.
- the need for denominational support, training, monitoring and oversight in this process.

Flowchart



Who are persons of concern (POC)?

A person of concern:

1. has pleaded guilty to, been convicted of, or has admitted to a sexual criminal offence.
2. has been found to have sexually offended, arising through due diligence checks related to recruitment (screening).
3. is currently charged with a sexual offence.
4. has been the subject of an allegation of a sexual offence and this was not appropriately investigated.
5. has been found to have received an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct.
6. is deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk assessment relating to sexual misconduct (including grooming).
7. exhibits constant wandering across other peoples' sexual boundaries.

What does an Individual Accountability & Safety Agreement Mean?

An individual safety agreement is an agreement between a person of concern, the local church and denomination, establishing the terms and conditions for the person of concern to participate in the life of the church.

A Safety Agreement makes clear what steps the church and person of concern are taking to reduce real and potential risks associated with ministry to the person of concern.

When to use this process?

If a person in your church, or a person interested in coming to your church:

- Tells you that they have committed a sexual offence.
- in the course of doing your due diligence checks for recruitment, a person discloses they have committed a past sexual offence.
- if you are aware that a person has had an allegation of a past or current sexual offence.
- deemed to be a risk to the safety of children and/or vulnerable adults because of an adverse risk.

Is this a Christian Response?

A Christian congregation can be one of the few places where sexual abusers, as the recipients of God's forgiveness, can mix with a Christian community. However, that forgiveness does not mean immunity from temptation to re-offend.

The forgiveness and grace of God, mediated with supervision and clear guidelines through a local church, can be a vital part of that journey.

This demonstrates the Australian Baptist Churches' mission and commitment to provide a safe place for children and other vulnerable people to grow and shine.

Who should we contact?

Your Professional Standards or Safe Church Liaison person:

Baptist Churches of South Australia & NT
08 8357 1755

Baptist Union of Victoria & Baptist Churches of Tasmania
03 9880 6100

Queensland Baptists
07 3354 5600

Baptist Churches Western Australia
08 6313 6300

Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT
02 9868 9200



The definition of a Person of Concern is adapted from *the Anglican Church of Australia – Professional Standards Commission "Guidelines for parish safety where there is a risk of sexual abuse by a person of concern"*, 2010.

An Australian Baptist Response to Persons of Concern



Individual Accountability & Safety Agreements

