



# Baptist Churches

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## Accreditation Policy

### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 The Constitution of the Baptist Union of Western Australia Incorporated (BUWA) defines an Accredited Person in Ministry as 'persons who are approved by Council and recognised by Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Accreditation Policy.'<sup>1</sup> It also empowers the BUWA<sup>2</sup> to clarify the role and responsibilities of an Accredited Person. The BUWA established a policy and associated guidelines for those seeking Accreditation as Pastors in 2007. The Council reviews the Accreditation Policy from time to time.
- 1.2 The Relationship Agreement between Churches includes the expectation that all local church pastoral appointees will apply for Registration with BUWA as a Person in Ministry within 6 months of appointment.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.3 Fully Accredited Persons whose Registration is current; and are in an appointed pastoral position in a member church or are in an appointed BUWA Inc. ministry OR are an active resident member of a member church and are awaiting a pastoral placement; are entitled to attend and vote at Assembly.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.4 The Accreditation Policy defines the responsibilities for the acceptance, maintenance, and removal of Registration as a Person in Ministry with BUWA.

### 2 Scope

- 2.1. The scope of this policy covers the Council, Director of Ministries, Member Churches of BUWA, associations seeking or gaining recognition of BUWA, persons seeking recognition as a Registered Person in Ministry and those already Registered as Local Appointments, Accreditation Candidates and Accredited Persons in Ministry.
- 2.2. A Person in Ministry refers to persons in pastoral appointments or positions of spiritual leadership in the context of BUWA ministries and local churches. Most churches use the title "pastor" or "minister" to refer to those in officially appointed pastoral leadership roles, including titles such as "Senior Pastor", "Associate Pastor", "Youth Pastor", and so on. This title may also be applied to other specific ministry roles such as church planters, chaplains and leaders serving in other approved ministries. A Person in Ministry would normally meet the definition of the Australian Taxation Office as a 'minister of religion'<sup>5</sup>: authorised, recognised, and acknowledged as a leader in spiritual affairs. This applies whether or not the person is paid.
- 2.3. Pastoral appointment or position of spiritual leadership means any role (paid or volunteer) in a local church or BUWA related ministry where the position description and duties are normally centred around the Word of God, the care of people and the equipping of God's people for service (Ephesians 4:11-16; Acts 6:2-4). Such a position must also be recognised by the local church, or BUWA as a

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<sup>1</sup> BUWA Constitution clause 3: Definitions

<sup>2</sup> BUWA Powers of the Association clause 6.9

<sup>3</sup> BUWA Membership Policy section 4 'Relationship Agreement', clause 5.

<sup>4</sup> BUWA Constitution clause 3 Definitions and clause 9.4

<sup>5</sup> Taxation Ruling TR 2019/3 Fringe benefits tax: Benefits provided to religious practitioners. 19 June 2019

formal ministry position, appropriately supervised and accountable to the local church membership, or BUWA, for the exercise of their ministry.

2.4. There are three kinds of Persons in Ministry:

- **Local Appointments** who have been appointed by a member church to a pastoral ministry position who may not meet all of the criteria for Accreditation, or may not seek to be Accredited, and have made application to BUWA to register and recognise their role.
- **Accreditation Candidates** who have met Pre-Accreditation requirements and are Pastors in Training. This can include theological students, with or without a ministry position.
- **Accredited Persons** who have:
  - o satisfied the requirements for Accreditation, as determined by the BUWA Council;
  - o requested that they be set apart to the ongoing work of the ministry, and
  - o been recommended for Accreditation by the Accreditation Team.

2.5. Member Churches, new groups, agencies and other recognised ministries are responsible for the appointment and supervision of their own staff, including Persons in Ministry.

2.6. From time to time, BUWA appoint staff and volunteers that require an appointee to be an Accredited Person in Ministry.

2.7. Registration is the successful outcome of recognition by BUWA of a Person in Ministry appointed by a member church; appointed by a group in the process of becoming a member church; appointed by BUWA; or appointed by a recognised ministry of BUWA.

2.8. Men and women are eligible to apply for Registration as a Person in Ministry, including as an Accredited Person in Ministry.<sup>6</sup>

2.9. Accreditation involves the certification of people as suitable for ministry within or on behalf of BUWA. It gives recognition of their having met specific requirements and that they possess appropriate qualifications, experience and credentials for such ministry.

2.10. Accredited Persons are those accredited as:

- Senior/Sole Pastors/Ministers, with 4 years of relevant study (Category 1) or
- Specialist Ministers, with 2 years of relevant study (Category 2)

2.11. Accreditation may also be recommended to the BUWA Council for persons who present special characteristics that do not fully comply with the requirements for Accredited Persons.

2.12. All Persons in Ministry will be expected to meet Currency requirements. Currency is re-evaluated every 3 years.

2.13. Persons in Ministry will be given a status:

- **Unregistered:** for people who have been appointed to a ministry position by a member church and have not applied for Registration with BUWA. The use of the title Pastor, Chaplain or any other title designation is not recommended, nor endorsed, by BUWA. Unregistered persons in ministry should not represent themselves as a Pastor of BUWA.
- **Interested:** for people who have not yet been appointed to a ministry position by a member church and have expressed interest in a pastoral position and/or Registration with BUWA through an 'Expression of Interest'. The use of the title Pastor, Chaplain or any other title designation is not given by BUWA, but may have been conferred by another accrediting body. Interested persons in ministry should not represent themselves as a Pastor of BUWA.
- **Local Appointment:** for people who have been appointed by a member church to pastoral positions and do not qualify for, or do not desire, Accreditation. The use of the title Pastor, Chaplain or any other title designation is the responsibility of the local church. Local

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<sup>6</sup> BUWA Statement on Men and Women in Ministry

Appointments in ministry should not represent themselves as a representative of BUWA, unless authorised to do so by BUWA.

- **Accreditation Candidate:** for people who have made application for Accreditation and have not yet fulfilled all requirements, including academic and experience requirements. Persons who are an Accreditation Candidate who also hold a pastoral position in a member church or a BUWA related ministry are entitled to use the prefix Ps (Pastor) and are endorsed by BUWA to do so. Accreditation Candidates are eligible to seek nomination as a Registered Marriage Celebrant.
- **Interim Accreditation:** for people working in a Baptist organisation but not attending a Baptist church. Reviewed annually as Accreditation is linked to being active in the role at a Baptist organisation. Persons who hold Interim Accreditation are entitled to use the prefix Ps (Pastor).
- **Provisional Accreditation:** for people who are transferring credentials from another State or Denomination; or have not yet met the normal requirements but have been approved by Council for Accreditation. Those specifically approved by Council are reviewed annually to ensure reasons for approval are still current. Persons who hold Provisional Accreditation are entitled to use the prefix Ps (Pastor), are endorsed by BUWA to do so, and are eligible to seek nomination as a Registered Marriage Celebrant.
- **Full Accreditation:** for people who have fulfilled all the normal and usual requirements. Reviewed every 3 years. Persons who hold Full Accreditation are entitled to use the prefix Ps (Pastor), are eligible to seek nomination as a Registered Marriage Celebrant and are expected to attend Assembly. Persons holding Category 1 Accreditation may use the personal prefix Reverend (Rev), and are endorsed by BUWA to do so.<sup>7</sup>

### 3 Principles

#### 3.1 General

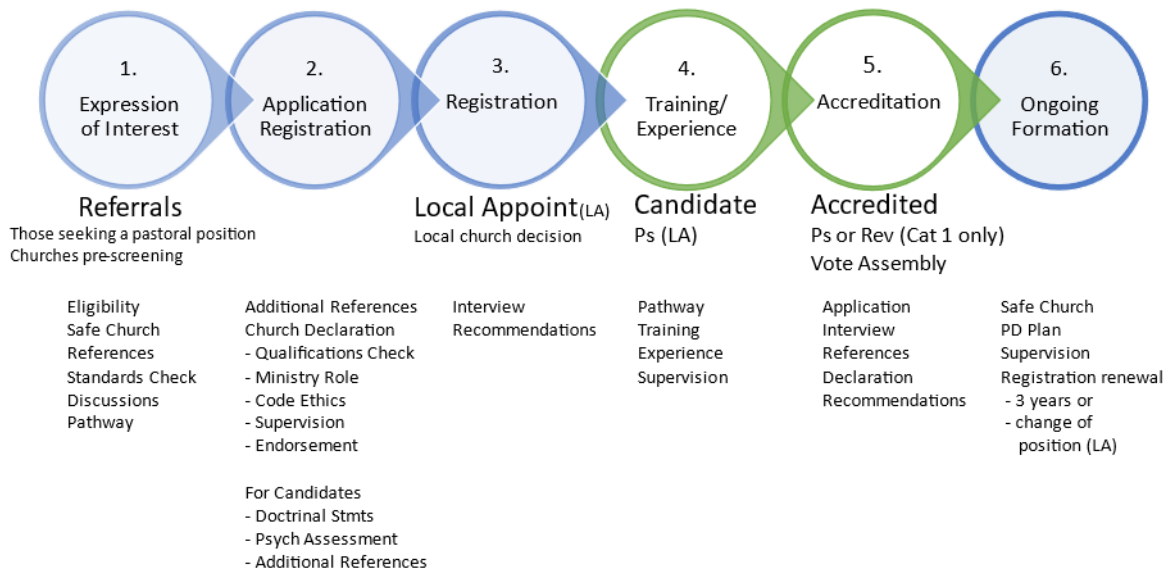
- 3.1.1. The Director of Ministries is responsible to appoint an Accreditation Team who will have oversight of the Persons in Ministry process, including Registration and Accreditation. The Director of Ministries will be a member of the Accreditation Team.
- 3.1.2. The Director of Ministries will ensure that appropriate guidelines and processes for applications for registration meet any requirements of the Constitution, including the Statement of Faith, the Membership Policy, and the Relationship Agreement.
- 3.1.3. The Director of Ministries will ensure that appropriate guidelines and processes for applications for Accreditation meet the requirements of this Policy and any requirements of any other related policies or positions as set by Council from time to time.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.1.4. The Director of Ministries will ensure that guidelines and processes exist to enable BUWA staff to support and equip churches and individuals towards eligibility for, and maintaining of, Registration and/or Accreditation with BUWA.
- 3.1.5. The Director of Ministries will ensure that procedures are in place to monitor the ongoing Registration status of all Persons in Ministry.
- 3.1.6. The Director of Ministries will ensure that procedures are in place for the cessation and de-registration as a Person in Ministry with BUWA.
- 3.1.7. The Accreditation Team is responsible for the Register of Persons in Ministry.
- 3.1.8. The Accreditation Team is responsible for recommendations to the Council regarding Accreditation in accordance with the procedures determined from time to time.

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<sup>7</sup> BUWA Constitution clause 3: Definitions and clause 9.4.1

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Divorce and the Ministry; Marriage Celebrants; Human Sexuality; Men and Women in Ministry; Complaints Policy.

## 3.2 Registration



- 3.2.1 Registration is the successful outcome of an application for recognition as a Person in Ministry in a member church but does not necessarily result in Accreditation. It is the first step towards Accreditation.
- 3.2.2 The Director of Ministries will ensure that a process is in place for individuals and/or churches to check eligibility for Registration prior to appointment. This will include appropriate Safe Church screening (Expression of Interest).
- 3.2.3 The Director of Ministries will not allow the Registration of a Person in Ministry that does not meet the following:
- hold membership, in good standing, with a BUWA church OR are working in a Baptist organisation recognised by the Council, but are not a member of a Baptist church;
  - hold a pastoral position in a member church, or a group seeking membership, that would meet the requirements to be considered a 'Minister of Religion' under the Australian Taxation Office definitions<sup>9</sup> and recognised by the member church, or group, as a Person in Ministry;
  - meet Safe Church endorsement requirements with BUWA;
  - sign and abide by the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for the BUWA.
- 3.2.4 Where an application is received from a person who does not meet the requirements for Registration, the Director of Ministries will ensure that sufficient steps are undertaken to liaise with the member church and the applicant to either meet the requirements for recognition, or that the employer reconsider any use of the title 'pastor'.
- 3.2.5 The Accreditation Team has the authority to advise the applicant and their place of ministry of the outcome of an application for Registration, the status granted to the Registration and the next steps needed towards Accreditation (if any).
- 3.2.6 The Accreditation Team will report Registrations to Council in the format agreed by Council from time to time.

<sup>9</sup> Australian Taxation Office Taxation Ruling TR2019/3 Fringe benefits tax: benefits provided to religious practitioners; 19 June 2019.

### 3.3 Accreditation Candidates

- 3.3.1 The Director of Ministries will not allow Registration as an Accreditation Candidate that does not meet the following:
- requirements for Registration as set out in 3.2.3;
  - baptised by immersion;
  - undertaking, or completed, theological training relevant to the category of Accreditation being sought;
  - demonstrate evidence of exemplary Christian character and behaviour in community, church, and personal relationships;
  - satisfactory psychological assessment;
  - satisfactory references;
  - current independent supervision arrangements;
  - a signed undertaking of having read the BUWA Constitution, Policies and Positions; and undertaking to follow any directives of the Accreditation Team.
- 3.3.2 The Accreditation Team will ensure that each person Registered as an Accreditation Candidate is provided with the steps needed to fulfil the requirements for Accreditation, including approving the course of theological studies, the experience required, supervision requirements, psychological and any other assessments.
- 3.3.3 All Candidates are responsible to the Accreditation Team which will provide counsel and encouragement in their progress and development in the ministry. This may include requesting an annual Pastoral Review and reports from the local church.

### 3.4 Gaining Accreditation

- 3.4.1 It is the responsibility of a Registered Person who has satisfied the conditions for Accreditation to apply to the Accreditation Team for Accreditation six (6) months prior to the proposed date of their recognition at Assembly.
- 3.4.2 The Director of Ministries will not allow applications for Registration as an Accredited Person to be presented to Council that pose a significant risk to BUWA, or does not meet the following:
- requirements for Registration as an Accreditation Candidate as set out in 3.3.1;
  - demonstrate attestation of their Call;
  - demonstrate personal leadership characteristics, training and experience (calling, character and competence) relevant to the category of Accreditation being sought;
  - a period, immediately prior to accreditation, of continuous and satisfactory supervised pastoral service, as determined by the Accreditation Team. Normally such pastoral service is to be at least two (2) years full time equivalence;
  - have successfully demonstrated relevant personal leadership characteristics including relevant training as well as psychological, psychosexual, personality and aptitude assessment;
  - have completed at least two (2) years theological training relevant to the category of Accreditation being sought, including Denominational Distinctives, and Supervised Field Education; OR have met specific academic requirements approved by the Accreditation Team;
  - demonstrate active professional development and training, as well as engage satisfactorily with independent supervision;
  - a signed declaration confirming that they have met the Accreditation requirements; confirming their commitment to their calling; and submitting themselves to the Constitution and policies relating to Accreditation, of BUWA.

- 3.4.3 The Accreditation Team will make recommendations for Accreditation to the Council for approval.
- 3.4.4 All applications for Accredited Persons approved by Council will be presented to the annual Assembly.

### 3.5 Maintaining Registration

- 3.5.1 All Registered Persons in Ministry will be required to keep their registration current according to the processes outlined by BUWA. Currency will be re-evaluated every three (3) years.
- 3.5.2 The Accreditation Team will not allow a Person in Ministry to remain Registered who does not have:
- current Safe Church endorsement with BUWA, including Mandatory Reporting; Safe Church training and a Standards check;
  - an agreed external supervisory arrangement that is verified by their Supervisor;
  - fulfilled an agreed programme of Professional/Pastoral Development;
  - proposed a Professional/Pastoral Development Plan for the coming registration period;
  - a signed commitment to abide the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for the BUWA.
- 3.5.3 Persons Registered as a Local Appointment who move from one position to another will be required to renew their Registration.
- 3.5.4 The Accreditation Team will not allow a Person in Ministry to remain Registered as a Local Appointment who is not in a current ministry position in a member church, by a group in the process of becoming a member church; or with BUWA or a recognised ministry of BUWA.
- 3.5.5 The Accreditation Team may approve a 'leave of absence' for a Person in Ministry for up to two (2) years.
- 3.5.6 A Person in Ministry who does not hold current Registration will have their Marriage Celebrant license removed.

### 3.6 Ceasing Registration

- 3.6.1 A Registered Accreditation Candidate or Accredited Person in Ministry is responsible for informing the Accreditation Team of any changes to their ministry position, or eligibility to maintain Registration.
- 3.6.2 A member church, group or organisation who has confirmed the registration of a Person in Ministry is responsible to report changes in position, ministry or eligibility for a person to maintain registration to the Accreditation Team.
- 3.6.3 The Accreditation Team will cease the Registration of a Local Appointment if:
- the requirements of 3.5.2 are not met;
  - the specific position concludes;
  - investigation of allegations of serious moral or ethical misconduct are proven, as per the Complaints Management Policy;
  - there is a failure to comply with discipline recommendations.
- 3.6.4 The Accreditation Team will ensure that Persons Registered as an Accreditation Candidate or Accredited Person are automatically de-registered when the person:
- commences pastoral service with another denomination, church or ministry agency not affiliated with the BCWA;
  - becomes a member of another denomination or church not affiliated with the BCWA;
  - has not had their Accreditation transferred to another body within twelve (12) months of leaving Western Australia;

- has not maintained membership with a church affiliated with the BCWA except where distance, age or health prevents such membership being maintained;
- has not fulfilled the obligations of maintaining Registration.

3.6.5 The Accreditation Team may also recommend to Council the de-registration of a person Registered as an Accreditation Candidate or Accredited Person if that person gives the Accreditation Team cause to recommend re-registration, or has been found:

- to cease to adhere to the Statement of Faith of BUWA;
- guilty of serious moral or ethical misconduct;
- to have a negative notice issued on a Working with Children Check;
- to be non-compliant in any disciplinary process, or requirements set by the Accreditation Team;
- in gross breach of any qualifications for accreditation.

The Accreditation Team is authorised to suspend Registration pending a decision by Council.

3.6.6 Council will act on the recommendation of the Accreditation Team without discussion of details. Persons in Ministry are not permitted to resign Accreditation in order to avoid discipline.

3.6.7 All notifications to Persons in Ministry considered for de-accreditation or discipline are to be advised in writing and the Persons in Ministry are required to be involved in the restoration process which the Accreditation Team recommends.

## Document History and Version Control Record

<b>Document Title:</b>	BCWA Accreditation Policy		
<b>Source Documents:</b>	BUWA Constitution BUWA Members Policy		
<b>Associated Internal Documents:</b>	Relationship Agreement Becoming a Member of BUWA: Application Guidelines Guidelines Concerning Congregational Government Divorce and the Ministry Human Sexuality and The Church Complaints Policy		
<b>Associated External Documents:</b>	ATO TR Ruling 2019/3 and Compendium		
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1.0	12 June 2023	Victor Owuor	Approved by Council
1.1	21 Sept 2023	Victor Owuor	Document control updated to new format
1.2	4 May 2026	Vanessa Chang	Minor wording changes and grammatical editing made by Nathan Seinemeier. Added clarification to registration status section.