Maitland Evangelical Church
Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

This Code sets the standard of behaviour expected of all who serve at MEC, including volunteers and staff members. It is an expression of our belief in the importance of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27). The gospel assures us of God's unfailing love for us in Christ, despite our many sins and failures. At the same time, it calls leaders to set an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

We recognise that those who serve at MEC are inherently representing not only the church, but the Lord Jesus, and their conduct can affect His public reputation and the advance of His mission. We also desire the behaviour of all who serve at MEC to reflect the love and goodness of Christ to those around them and to the wider community.

This Code should be read alongside the MEC Complaints Policy, which sets out the process by which a person can submit a formal complaint regarding conduct under this Code.

2. Key Principles

This Code does not seek to describe the full breadth of behaviour expected of Christians serving at MEC. Instead, it formally sets a minimum standard of conduct to which all volunteers and staff agree to be held accountable.

This Code applies to adults (18 years of age and over) serving at MEC. Those under 18 years of age who serve at MEC will do so under the supervision of adults who are bound by this Code.

3. Definitions

abuse means the following conduct: bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or spiritual abuse.

bullying means behaviour directed to a person or persons which is repeated, unreasonable and creates a risk to their health and safety.

child means a person under the age of 18.

child protection obligations means all requirements under law or according to the church with the purpose of protecting the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable people.

church means Maitland Evangelical Church (ABN 37 197 579 781).

emotional abuse means acts or omissions in relation to another person that are reasonably likely to cause them significant emotional trauma or lead to serious behavioural or cognitive disorders.

FIEC means the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches.

harassment means unwelcome conduct, whether intended or not, in relation to another person where the person feels with good reason in all the circumstances, offended, humiliated or intimidated.

offensive language includes blasphemy, verbal harassment, racial, sexual and other forms of vilification, personal insult or comment, and obscene words.

pastoral relationship means a relationship that a person under this Code has with another person for the purposes of providing pastoral care including but not limited to spiritual advice, instruction, support and counselling.

physical abuse means any intentional or reckless act, use of force or threat to use force causing injury to, or involving unwelcome physical contact with, another person.

prohibited material means images or sounds including publications, films and computer games that are considered by legal, civil or church standards to be unsuitable for a child to see, hear, read or play, and any substance or product whose supply to or use by children is prohibited by law.

prohibited substance means any substance that is banned or prohibited by law for use or consumption by adults.

restricted material means images or sounds including publications, films and computer games that are considered by civil or church standards to be offensive on the grounds of violence, sex, language, drug abuse or nudity.

sexual abuse means sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual harassment either of an adult or a child.

spiritual abuse means the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith or religion.

4. Implementation of this Code

A widespread knowledge of this Code across the church, along with its consistent application and accountability, will promote proper behaviour and a healthy culture across MEC. As an MEC volunteer or staff member, you are expected to:

a) Be familiar with and adhere to the conduct set out in this Code.
b) Undergo safe ministry training and screening at the prescribed frequency required by your ministry roles, which includes a formal commitment to conduct yourself in line with this Code.
c) Not tolerate or cover up any behaviour inconsistent with this Code, and if you become aware of any serious or persistent breaches of it, to raise the issue with MEC leadership in accordance with the Complaints Policy.
d) Submit to disciplinary steps, including being reported to authorities, if you are found to violate the Code or act in an otherwise inappropriate or illegal manner at MEC.

If you are responsible for leading a team or ministry, you must ensure that the people serving in your team or ministry are made aware of this Code.

5. Pastoral Relationships

Christian leadership of any kind bears a unique spiritual and ecclesial authority. With that authority comes a degree of power in pastoral relationships that must always be exercised with the utmost care and in the best interests of those being ministered to.

5.1 Unless required or permitted by law, or necessary and lawful in the legitimate exercise of your pastoral duties, you must not disclose confidential information received in a pastoral relationship to any other person without the prior consent of the person providing the information.

5.2 You are not to inappropriately show favouritism or discriminate between people in pastoral relationships.

5.3 Where you have a conflict of interest in a pastoral relationship, you must take appropriate steps to resolve the conflict and act in the best interests of those to whom you are ministering.

5.4 You must ensure that any staff, leaders or volunteers for whom you are responsible are provided with a safe working environment in which any abuse of power is not tolerated.

6. Children and Vulnerable People

Vulnerable people including children, families, the disabled and the elderly are at particular risk of abuse and exploitation. It is vitally important that vulnerable people in Christian communities and churches are respected, listened to and protected.

6.1 If you are responsible for leading a team or ministry, you must ensure that:

a. proper systems and policies for the safety and welfare of vulnerable people are implemented, maintained and adhered to in your team or ministry; and

b. all persons in your team or ministry who have a pastoral relationship with vulnerable people comply with all civil and church child protection obligations.

6.2 You are not to abuse vulnerable people.

6.3 You must not make any prohibited material available to a child.

6.4 You must comply with all civil and church child protection obligations, including but not limited to any Working with Children Check requirements.

6.5 You commit to reporting any concerns or reasonable suspicions about harmful behaviours and significant risks to a MEC Safe Ministry Supervisor without bias or partiality. You must contact the police in emergency situations.

6.6 If you know or reasonably suspect that a child is at risk of harm from any form of child abuse, you must comply with all mandatory reporting obligations under law.

6.7 In your interactions with vulnerable people, you are to be above reproach and avoid situations that may give rise to any real or perceived improper conduct.

7. Personal Conduct

The personal behaviour of a Christian is key to their qualification for public ministry and can significantly affect the reputation of the gospel and the church. A Christian's use of his or her position, and their relationship with the community at large, are of particular importance.

7.1 You are not to engage in any abusive conduct including but not limited to:

a. bullying;

b. emotional abuse;

c. harassment;

d. physical abuse;

e. sexual abuse; or

f. spiritual abuse.

7.2 You must not abuse your spouse, children or other members of your family, or engage in any form of abuse in a family or domestic context.

7.3 You are not to knowingly make any statements that are false, misleading or deceptive or use offensive language, including in online contexts.

7.4 If you consume alcohol or any other addictive substances, you must do so responsibly and in moderation.

7.5 You are not to use any prohibited substance at any time.

7.6 You are not to view, possess, produce or distribute any restricted material without a legitimate purpose.

7.7 You must obey civil and criminal laws other than any law that is contrary to the Bible or unjustly prohibits the practice of religion.

7.8 You are to inform an MEC Safe Ministry Supervisor if you are being investigated in relation to or being charged with a criminal offence.

8. Gender and Sexual Conduct

God created humanity as male and female and gave human sexuality as a gift. It is important that Christians honour their biological gender as given by God, and maintain sexual chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage. It is never appropriate for a Christian to take advantage of their role to engage in sexual activity with a person.

8.1 You must not engage in sex outside of a heterosexual marriage or any disgraceful conduct of a sexual nature.

8.2 You must not sexually abuse an adult or a child.

8.3 You are not to engage in prostitution, or visit brothels or places associated with the sex industry without a legitimate purpose.

8.4 You are not to view, possess, produce or distribute any form of pornography or child pornography.

8.5 In your interactions with members of the opposite sex, you are to be above reproach and avoid situations that may give rise to any real or perceived improper conduct.

9. Financial Management

Maintaining integrity in financial affairs is an essential matter of trust and confidence. Christians must guard against greed in their personal financial dealings. When handling money belonging to others, they must seek to be honest, transparent and accountable at all times.

9.1 You must not seek personal advantage or financial gain from your position or a pastoral relationship, beyond your remuneration and any recognised allowances and deductions.

9.2 You are not to engage in tax evasion and must comply with all tax laws, regulations and rulings at all times.

9.3 You must not allow yourself to be unduly influenced by offers of financial gain or show partiality or bias in your pastoral relationships on the basis of a person's financial means or activity.

9.4 You are to avoid situations of conflict between your personal financial interests and your pastoral responsibilities, including with respect to any monetary or non-monetary benefits provided to you by persons with whom you have a pastoral relationship.

9.5 With respect to all monies which you handle or receive in the exercise of your pastoral and administrative duties, including any honoraria or substantial gifts, you must abide by the appropriate MEC policies.

Note: MEC pastors who are an FIEC Representative (Senior Pastor) or FIEC Associate (marriage celebrant registered by FIEC) are also subject to the FIEC Code of Conduct and Complaints Policy.

Review Log

Review Date	Reviewed By	Summary of Changes
31/7/2025	Admin Committee, Pastors	Clarified definition of emotional abuse, updated required frequency of safe ministry training

References

This document has been adapted from the FIEC Code of Conduct and Ansvar Insurance Safe Ministry Leader Commitment (Code of Conduct).