

Newsletter

September 2026

www.baptistinsurance.com.au

Stewardship in Uncertain Times

As we move through another season of ministry, I have been reflecting on what it means to be faithful stewards in uncertain times.

Across Australia, churches and ministries continue to face a rapidly changing environment. Cost pressures remain a reality for many families and congregations. Construction costs continue to impact ministry budgets, cyber threats are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and the governance responsibilities placed upon churches and ministry leaders continue to grow. At the same time, our communities are searching for hope, belonging and purpose as much as ever.

Yet throughout Scripture we see that God's people have often been called to serve faithfully in uncertain circumstances. The challenge has never been to predict the future perfectly, but to steward wisely what God has already entrusted to us.

Whether we are caring for people, maintaining facilities, overseeing finances, leading volunteers or serving our local communities, stewardship remains a deeply spiritual responsibility. It is an act of worship. We honour God when we faithfully manage His resources in ways that support and sustain ministry for future generations.

Many of the topics covered in this edition of the newsletter reflect that principle. Articles on cyber protection, building valuations, legal correspondence, and emerging ministry activities all point toward a common theme: preparing wisely for the future while remaining focused on our mission today. These are not merely administrative matters; they are practical expressions of stewardship that help safeguard the ministries God has entrusted to us.

At Baptist Insurance Services, we continue to see remarkable examples of faithful ministry taking place across our national Baptist family. Churches are finding new ways to serve their communities, support vulnerable people, disciple younger generations and share the hope of Christ. The feature on SportsFest is just one example of how God is using ordinary people and local churches to make an eternal difference.

I am also encouraged by the way our Baptist Mutual community continues to demonstrate the biblical principle of bearing one another's burdens. Mutuality is ultimately about more than protection. It is about partnership. It is about churches and ministries standing together, supporting one another through challenges, and helping ensure that the work of the Gospel continues to flourish across Australia.

As we enter the final quarter of the year, my prayer is that we would remain faithful in both the large and small responsibilities God has placed before us. We may not always know what lies ahead, but we can be confident in the One who does.

"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2

Thank you for the privilege of serving alongside you.

Blessings,



Chief Executive Officer – Bronson Justus



Protection and Insurance Updates

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Why Discretionary Mutual Funds?

Many new leaders, staff, volunteers and committee members join our churches and ministries each year, and a Discretionary Mutual Fund (DMF) may be unfamiliar to them. Baptist Mutual is a practical way for our Baptist community to share risk, support one another and access protection designed specifically for churches and ministries. This overview explains how it works and how it differs from traditional insurance.

What is a Discretionary Mutual Fund (DMF)?

A Discretionary Mutual Fund (DMF) is a way for Baptist churches and ministries to support one another by sharing risk. Members contribute to a shared fund that can provide support when unexpected events occur, such as property damage or liability matters. Unlike traditional insurance, a DMF is a member-focused arrangement designed around the needs and experience of our Baptist community.

Benefits for Members

- Protection specifically designed for churches and ministries: The Mutual understands the activities, buildings and responsibilities of Baptist organisations.
- Personal support when it matters: Members can speak with state-based people who understand their circumstances and can guide them when something goes wrong.
- A community working together: Members contribute to a shared fund that supports Baptist churches and ministries when unexpected events occur. Any surplus remains within the Mutual and can be reinvested in initiatives that help members reduce risk and prevent future losses.
- Careful financial management: Baptist Mutual combines the shared member fund with additional financial protection from reinsurance providers. This helps strengthen the support available when larger or unexpected events occur.
- An established and regulated approach: Baptist Mutual operates within Australia's financial services laws and oversight arrangements. Mutual arrangements are used by many churches, community organisations, professions and industries to help members with shared interests manage risk together.
- Our Baptist experience helps shape the fund: The fund's performance reflects the claims and risk experience of Baptist churches and ministries, rather than changes across the wider insurance market. This means good risk management across the Baptist community can directly support the strength and sustainability of the fund.



What This Means for You

In practical terms, Baptist Mutual gives members protection designed for Baptist churches and ministries, access to local and experienced people when an issue arises, and the opportunity to contribute to a mutual that supports the wider Baptist community.

If you would like to know more about Baptist Mutual or how your protection works, please contact your local BIS State Manager. They will be happy to explain the arrangement and answer your questions.

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Electrical Goods - Safety Comes First

Op shops play an important role in giving donated goods a second life, but reselling electrical items also brings important safety responsibilities. Faulty appliances can cause electric shock, fire, injury and property damage, placing customers, volunteers and the organisation at risk.



Before offering any electrical item for sale, op shop owners or any ministry that sells, should identify and comply with the quality assurance, electrical safety, consumer protection and testing and tagging requirements that apply in their State or Territory. Requirements can differ between jurisdictions and may depend on the type of item, its condition and how it will be used.

A sound process should include a documented visual inspection, testing by a competent or appropriately qualified person where required, clear tagging and record-keeping, and removing unsafe or non-compliant goods from sale. Staff and volunteers should also be trained to recognise damaged cords, plugs, casings, switches and other warning signs.

Following the relevant State or Territory requirements protects customers, supports legal and insurance obligations, and strengthens community confidence in the op shop. If there is any doubt about an item or the applicable rules, do not sell it until advice has been obtained from the relevant electrical safety regulator or a qualified testing provider.

Cyber Protection Requirements

BIS has secured comprehensive Cyber Protection cover to help safeguard your organisation from cyber threats, including data breaches, ransomware and fraud.

As cyber risks continue to increase, securing quality cyber protection is becoming more challenging across the insurance market. Insurers want to be assured that every organisation they cover is taking adequate responsibility to mitigate any risks of attack. This is why you see regular communications from BIS providing updates and education on cyber awareness. Cyber-attacks can happen at any time, making vigilance essential.

Two simple yet highly effective protections you can employ, are enabling Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), which adds an extra layer of account security, and using strong, unique passwords. These measures can significantly reduce your risk of becoming a target. If you experience a cyber incident, contact Chubb Incident Response on 1800 027 428 for immediate assistance and support, as well as your BIS State Manager.

Further information on responding to a cyber incident can be found on our website in the Resources tab. Search for Cyber Incident Response.

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Responding to Unsolicited Requests from Lawyers

Many of our constituents have been in situations where they receive letters from plaintiff law firms. The nature of these approaches varies, but the common thread is that these firms are making broad and speculative requests for records, documents, and information, often in the absence of any filed proceedings, court order, or properly particularised claim.

This in turn has led to some of our churches, schools and ministry organisations to be understandably unsettled by this contact and uncertain as to their legal rights and obligations in responding.



What is your obligation in these circumstances? Are you legally obliged to provide the documentation requested or is it a breach of privacy?

Firstly, these letters are NOT court orders. Such letters have no legal force and you are not in breach of anything by not immediately complying.

BIS, with the assistance of Gilchrist Connell law firm have compiled written response templates to various scenarios. Should you receive such communications, please contact your local State BIS Manager immediately, so they can assist with an appropriate written response. We strongly advise you not to respond without contacting your local BIS State Manager.

To find further information, as well as a recent video presentation by Gilchrist Connell, please go to our website, www.baptistinsurance.com.au, sign in to the Members Portal. You will find the presentation in the Presentation tab.

Church Ministries

As our churches seek to further reach out to their communities, we are seeing more creative or tailored approaches in ministry. The need to understand community needs and how best to connect and care is foundational to bringing God's Kingdom into the lives of those we connect with.

For many churches it will mean moving beyond what is considered a traditional ministry. Some churches have set up care arms. Examples of these areas are community food pantries, boarding accommodation, wellbeing and fitness centres, leasing to commercial businesses, provision of financial advice/mentoring/training, etc.

Our tailored policy protections are designed to incorporate activities that serve the Kingdom. However, to ensure that you are protected, we are required to advise our Reinsurers and Insurers of all activities. Whilst we have provided a long list of ministries to them on your behalf, there are some that have not been disclosed to BIS. Should a claim arise out of such an activity that could be considered higher risk, this could complicate the claims process and its potential outcome.

Many of you will have provided this type of information in the recent questionnaires from Bastion. But if not, please contact your BIS State Manager to update them of any non-standard church activities. If you are unsure what is considered 'standard,' it's best to let us know.

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Building Valuations: Keeping Pace with Rising Rebuilding Costs

Building valuation is an important part of arranging adequate protection. It helps establish the amount that may be required to rebuild a property after a major loss. With construction costs continuing to rise from an already elevated base, regularly reviewing valuations is essential to reduce the risk of underinsurance. We employ an external valuer to value the buildings in the Baptist Family portfolio each year on a four-year rotation basis – three desktops and one onsite. An onsite valuation generally brings the properties up to date with the current building industry costs. So we generally see an elevated increase once every four years for our constituents.



What is a building valuation?

An insurance building valuation estimates the cost of reinstating or replacing the insured building following serious damage or total loss. It is not the same as a real estate valuation. Market value reflects factors such as land value, location and buyer demand, while an insurance valuation focuses on the cost of rebuilding the physical improvements at current prices.

A qualified valuer reviews the property's size, age, construction, use, condition, location, services, fixtures and finishes. Plans, asset registers and previous reports may be examined, and an inspection undertaken. Current local construction rates are then applied, with adjustments for the building's particular characteristics and site conditions. Factors include:

- Demolition, debris removal and site preparation
- Materials, labour, plant, freight and contractor costs
- Architectural, engineering, surveying and project management fees
- Council applications, permits and other statutory charges
- Work required to comply with current building codes and standards
- Allowances for cost escalation during design, approval and reconstruction
- Site access, heritage, hazardous materials and other property-specific constraints
- Applicable taxes and contingencies

Why building valuations are increasing

Recent valuation increases do not necessarily mean that a building has become larger or more valuable in the property market. They generally reflect the higher cost and greater complexity of reinstatement. Although the pace of inflation has moderated from earlier peaks, construction cost escalation remains above historical averages in many Australian markets and continues from a substantially higher cost base.

- Labour shortages: Limited availability of skilled trades can increase wages, tender prices and project delays.
- Higher material costs: Steel, timber, concrete, electrical products and specialist components remain sensitive to energy prices, freight costs, exchange rates and global supply conditions.
- Strong demand: Major infrastructure programs, housing activity and post-disaster reconstruction can compete for the same contractors and materials.
- Building standards: Reinstatement may need to meet current requirements for fire safety, accessibility, energy efficiency, resilience and structural performance.

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Building Valuations continued . . .

- Longer rebuilding periods: Planning approvals, engineering, procurement and contractor availability can extend the time required to rebuild, increasing escalation and professional costs.
- Site and risk complexity: Restricted access, remote locations, heritage features, asbestos, contaminated land and specialised church or community facilities may add significant cost.
- Contractor risk and insolvency: Market uncertainty and business failures can lead contractors to allow larger margins for delivery risk.
- Catastrophe demand: Bushfires, floods, storms and cyclones can create sudden regional demand surges and raise repair and rebuilding costs.
- Properties that have heritage listed buildings: Heritage-listed buildings are more expensive because maintaining, repairing, and insuring them requires rare materials, specialist labor, and strict council approvals.



Building valuations will continue to move as construction conditions change. A higher valuation can be difficult to absorb, particularly where it contributes to increased contribution fees. BIS does try and absorb those increases as much as possible, but it reflects the real financial exposure involved in rebuilding. While BIS can't control the values of your buildings, we work hard to keep the rates Insurers and Reinsurers charge down to offset the total increase.

We do get requests from some of our Baptist Family to reduce their asset valuation/s. However, we are legally obliged to keep them in line with current market valuations, ensuring the protection remains aligned with the true cost of recovery. For this reason an independent valuer is employed.

For constituents who are not part of our valuation program, we do require your buildings to be valued by a professional insurance valuer with relevant insurance covers in place.

Contents reminder: It is the responsibility of each constituent to ensure its content valuation/s are up to date. In the event of a total loss, such as a fire, you will be provided with the lump sum you have specified to replace contents. If you want to make an adjustment, email your BIS State Manager.

Member Spotlight

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Sportsfest

SportsFest is a sporting outreach event proudly run by Baptist Churches Western Australia (BCWA) — with over 35 sport. This event falls over the long weekend in September each year, and creates an amazing opportunity for youth and young adults from all over WA to come together.

SportsFest is one of the most significant outreach opportunities run by BCWA, with more than one-third of participants indicating they do not regularly attend church. Through sport, hospitality and Christian community, churches can build relationships and create pathways for connection with other local congregations. This year over 28 Baptist Churches are involved with the total number of churches sitting well above 44.

SportsFest provides a wonderful networking opportunity with strong connections formed between local churches and their youth and young adults. Quinns Baptist College brings a student team each year and shared this quote at the last event: “17 of our young adults from the team made a commitment to follow Jesus on the Saturday night with 30 more asking questions and for prayer. Some exciting conversations started that evening.”



Website

www.baptistinsurance.com.au

Contact your local State Manager for login details

Renewals & Administration

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Renewal Invoicing & Documentation

By now, you should have received your renewal documentation containing the Renewal Agreement, Asset Schedule, Summary of Limits & Deductibles and Letter from the CEO, as well as your invoice.

Attached to your invoice, you would have received options for payment by instalments. Should you wish to take up this option, please contact Baplink (Queensland only) or Christian Finance (all other States). If you haven't received your invoice, please check your spam/junk folder before contacting us.

When making payment, please follow the instructions provided on the invoice and **use the invoice number as your payment reference** so we can match that payment with your church/organisation. If funds are deposited without this reference, it becomes very difficult for us to identify and allocate the payment correctly. Correctly matched payments also means you won't receive reminder emails from us.

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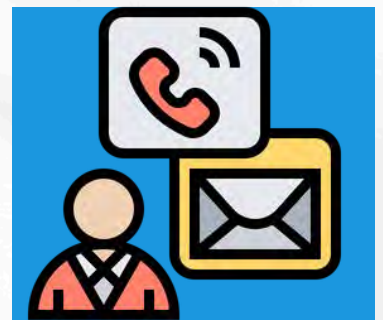
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