

Brethren outlaw drugs, sex.

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A RECLUSIVE religion in WA has launched a crackdown on sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll among its members.

Sydney-based **Exclusive Brethren** world leader Bruce Hales has warned members they face being banned from church events if they continue ignoring the Brethren's strict rules.

The Brethren, which has a large presence in Dalwallinu, Kalannie and Perth, shuns the outside world in favour of a regimented life devoted to the church.

It recently established communities at Albany and Northam and has more than 1000 followers in WA.

Members are governed by edicts from their leader which have included bans on using computers, fax machines and mobile telephones or owning red cars.

In a letter to church members, Mr Hales said a relaxation of rules to allow greater contact between members had led to an unacceptable increase in "worldliness and substandard activity".

He said the church had received substantial reports of drug use, "physical contact", and the listening to recorded music, particularly among its younger members.

Singled out as being unacceptable were excessive drinking, exposed midriffs, exposed thighs, wearing stockings, long hair or sideburns on men, attending entertainment venues such as restaurants and the use of cameras at church meetings.

"In addition, there have been substantial reports of unsuitable behaviour and liaison between younger Brethren, including illicit conduct that even the world regards as unacceptable and dangerous," he said.

"It would seem that if the Brethren individually and collectively do not accept the need for control and agreement to adhere to respectable standard of dress, behaviour and social activities, we have no basis to continue the program of increased fellowship contact."

Outsiders claim the backlash is in response to greater liberalisation within the group since the death of its former world leader more than a year ago.

The Brethren's so-called extension of fellowship has allowed greater contact between church members, which has extended to those outside the church.

Mr Hales said Brethren in all parts of the world must declare they would follow the regulation and controls of the church. "Failure to accept and submit to regulation would raise the question 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?' " he said.

WA Brethren members are among those attending an international meeting of their group in the UK this weekend.

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