

## Introduction

# Safe Church Unit



**CHRISTIAN REFORMED  
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION .....	3
SAFE CHURCH HEALTH CHECK .....	5
SAFE CHURCH UNIT – Proposed Structure .....	5
SAFE CHURCH UNIT DEVELOPMENT .....	7
MOU - PCA .....	8
Appendix 1 – Royal Commission – 10 Standards.....	10
Appendix 2 – Royal Commission Recommendations .....	12
Appendix 3 – Review of other denominations .....	16
Appendix 4 - State Government Contacts .....	17
Appendix 5 – DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILDSAFE CULTURE .....	18

## INTRODUCTION

Synod 2018, in relation to the National Sexual Abuse Complaints Committee (NSACC) decided (Article 47 (Report 9))

- *To instruct the NSACC to form a small team in Victoria to oversee a part time, as required, research person to assist the NSACC in research, collating, writing of materials, and the setting up of a dedicated website.*

This to assist the NSACC in fulfilling the Synod mandate to (Article 47):

- *develop a mandate for a Safe Church Team.*
- *draft a Code of Ethics...*
- *to continue to monitor the implementation of the recommendations by the Royal Commission by the various Commonwealth and State governments (Refer to the Appendices).*
- *work in conjunction with the SIC and Classes to ensure compliance by the CRCA churches as legislation is enacted in the various jurisdictions.*

During the 2018 Synod a motion was accepted where NSACC was challenged to develop documentation and a website in preparation to launch Safe Church for the CRCA. One aspect of being a Safe or a Healthy Church is to place a high priority on ensuring that our churches and their ministry activities are safe places, physically, spiritually and emotionally.

This is a foundational part of our missional purpose, to reach the lost for Christ, demonstrating the love of Christ to all people and we know that Jesus greatly valued children and young people and He consistently demonstrated great concern for the vulnerable.

Safe churches begin and end with the knowledge that God's love is for all people. We are called to love all others, but God also has a special concern for the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. Safeguarding is both an individual and a corporate responsibility.

It is now widely accepted that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse demands a response from organizations, including churches, to ensure that all children (and vulnerable people) can expect a safe environment where safe people engage in safe programs. The Royal Commission was preceded by the 1997 Wood Royal Commission in NSW and the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry in 2012 in Victoria, both of which triggered legislation and regulations.

The findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse are deeply disturbing. Sadly, Christian churches and organizations have caused a great deal of harm and child/church abuse is now one of the greatest barriers to Christian faith in Australian society hindering missions and evangelism. There is a sense that we need to prove again to our local community that they can trust us to love and care for their children and young people.

The Royal Commission conducted more than 8,000 interviews and uncovered thousands of people who have been sexually abused in religious organizations. McCrindle Research has identified that abuse in the church is the single biggest barrier to effective mission and outreach work of the churches. The ABC Australia Talks survey suggests that right now 70% of people in the community do not trust religious leaders!! We are called to be followers of Jesus, but this legacy has created a significant barrier. We need to regain the trust of the community, the implementation of the Safe Church concept is designed to assist that rebuilding of trust in the community.

Safe Church does focus on keeping children safe as this has had a great deal of attention through the media and the Royal Commission. However, Safe Church does not focus on children alone, it includes all vulnerable people, so people with disabilities, the elderly, families where domestic violence may occur, people with mental health issues and so on.

Most denominations have embraced the need to keep children and vulnerable people safe. In 2008, the CRCA introduced SP3, a program developed by ChildSafe (originally part of Scripture Union), which is now adopted and implemented in most churches in the CRCA. This program provides the mechanics of ensuring we engage Safe People who run Safe Programs in Safe Places.

The NSACC committee has prepared a recommendation that is focused on introducing a Safe Church Concept into the CRCA. A Safe Church Unit needs to be established to enable the development of a child safe culture to become part of the CRCA DNA.

Jesus said: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these”. Matthew 19:14

Jesus’s words teach His Church that loving children in His name means safe-guarding and protecting them from harm – in our families, in our communities and of course, in the Church.

For us as the people of God to teach His little ones the Gospel, show them the love of Christ and lead them in life-giving faith and worship, we must follow the example of the Lord Jesus and do everything we can to protect them from abuse that would hinder them from coming to Jesus for salvation.

Matthew 18:6 has a stern warning: “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea”.

In these days of child neglect and child abuse, we need to take Christ’s warning seriously. It is better to drown with a heavy millstone around one’s neck, than to abuse a child and face the judgement of God. (Wiersbe Bible Commentary).

Thus, when we take Jesus’ words in Matthew seriously we also safeguard the children in our Church. For the culture of the Church to be deeply embedded with the meaning and actions that flow from the example of Jesus and His love and care for children, we must ensure that we not only include, teach and disciple children in the Church but that we also take active measures to ensure they know the adults around them care for them and will listen and act if they ask us for help.

Listening to children when they have questions, feel unsure about something, or have ideas to contribute in our children’s ministries ensures we hear their voices and take them seriously. This means that their participation in our Christian life and worship is real and meaningful. When children know that they can safely ask questions, raise concerns and ideas and seek help from the adults in leadership in the Church we truly live out the words of Jesus in the book of Matthew.

A fundamental cornerstone to improve the child safety in our churches are the 10 Standards introduced as part of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission. These Standards and Principles were endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019. That means that each state government will introduce legislation and regulations demanding that these standards form part of our Policies, Procedures and Code of Conduct.

While each state has its own legislation and regulations and some states have standards already implemented, NSACC believes it is possible to develop a common or national Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct that will be applicable to the CRCA in all states.

In developing the Safe Church concept, we have retained some of our existing documents and we have developed a number of new documents to simplify the introduction of the Safe Church concept. To make the implementation of the Safe Church Concept easier, we have developed a Safe Church Health Check.

We recognize that the legislative landscape is becoming increasingly complex and that meeting these legal obligations can leave some church leaders feeling a bit overwhelmed. So one of the reasons we are preparing the Safe Church Unit is to provide assistance to all our churches in meeting all legislative requirements and we can support you with the tasks that individual churches might find difficult to resource themselves. We exist to serve you and are here to assist and support you.

## SAFE CHURCH HEALTH CHECK

The Safe Church Health Check has been developed to assist local churches to promote a culture that reflects the love of Christ, protects individuals from harm, and fosters missional engagement with their local community, so that it fulfills the mission of reaching the lost for Christ.

The recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended ten Child Safe Standards and all states governments and territories have recently announced that compliance with the Child Safe Standards will soon become mandatory for all organisations working with children and young people. In fact in NSW and Victoria that has already happened. The Safe Church Health Check is a comprehensive review tool which will assess your church's safe church practices against the Child Safe Standards.

GJIC – the insurance brokers for the CRCA have advised that their insured Clients will need to declare that they have appropriate safe church policy and procedures in place in order to have continuing public liability insurance coverage for sexual abuse claims. The Safe Church Health Check will assist your church to have confidence in making the required declaration.

After completing the Safe Church Health Check your church will be issued with a Safe Church Certificate. You can use this on your notice board and website to help demonstrate that your church is a safe environment as it communicates your commitment to keep children and young people safe from harm and abuse.

## SAFE CHURCH UNIT – Proposed Structure

Currently, NSACC is a Synodical appointment – its current form agreed at Synod 2015 (Article 28). At the 2018 Synod, NSACC was instructed to develop a mandate for the Safe Church Team (Article 32.12). As stated above, we believe the development of a Safe Church Unit would manage the day-to-day activities as described below. The role of the existing NSACC will become an advisory body providing guidance for the SCU. It will be renamed to Safe Church Advisory Committee (SCAC). The responsibilities listed below are indicative – for a complete outline – please refer the CRCA Safe Church Mandate.

### **The SCU will be responsible for developing and maintaining:**

1. A statement of commitment
2. A child safe policy
3. A code of conduct
4. Procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers
5. Procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm

6. A plan for managing breaches of our risk management strategy
7. Policies for compliance with the requirements of the WWCC (blue card) system
8. Regularly update CRCA safe church website with updated documentation for all above mentioned policies and other documents. This includes legislative requirements in each state where the CRCA has churches registered.
9. Act as first responder for complaints or reports where members wish to report directly to SCU. This could be because a complaint is raised against the local session/church council or pastor.
10. Assist local mandatory reporters who are not certain of reporting requirement or processes.
11. Ensure all reported incidents/complaints of abuse to local authorities are followed up.
12. Report all reported abuse cases to NSACC renamed as SC Advisory Committee (SCAC).
13. Engage SCAC when local investigations are required.
14. Provide consultation for local coordinators in relation to risk management plans for high risk activities and special events
15. Provide and deliver Training programs (face-to-face and on-line)
16. Provide Database/System Administration support to all coordinators in local churches
17. Regularly review Legislative requirements/changes from all states and update CRCA safe church website and alert coordinators in effected states as well as SCAC
18. Review and analyse incidents (trend analysis) reported
19. Ensure each congregation correctly implements the national standards by conducting audits
20. Provide quarterly updates to SCAC
21. Perform audits at local churches

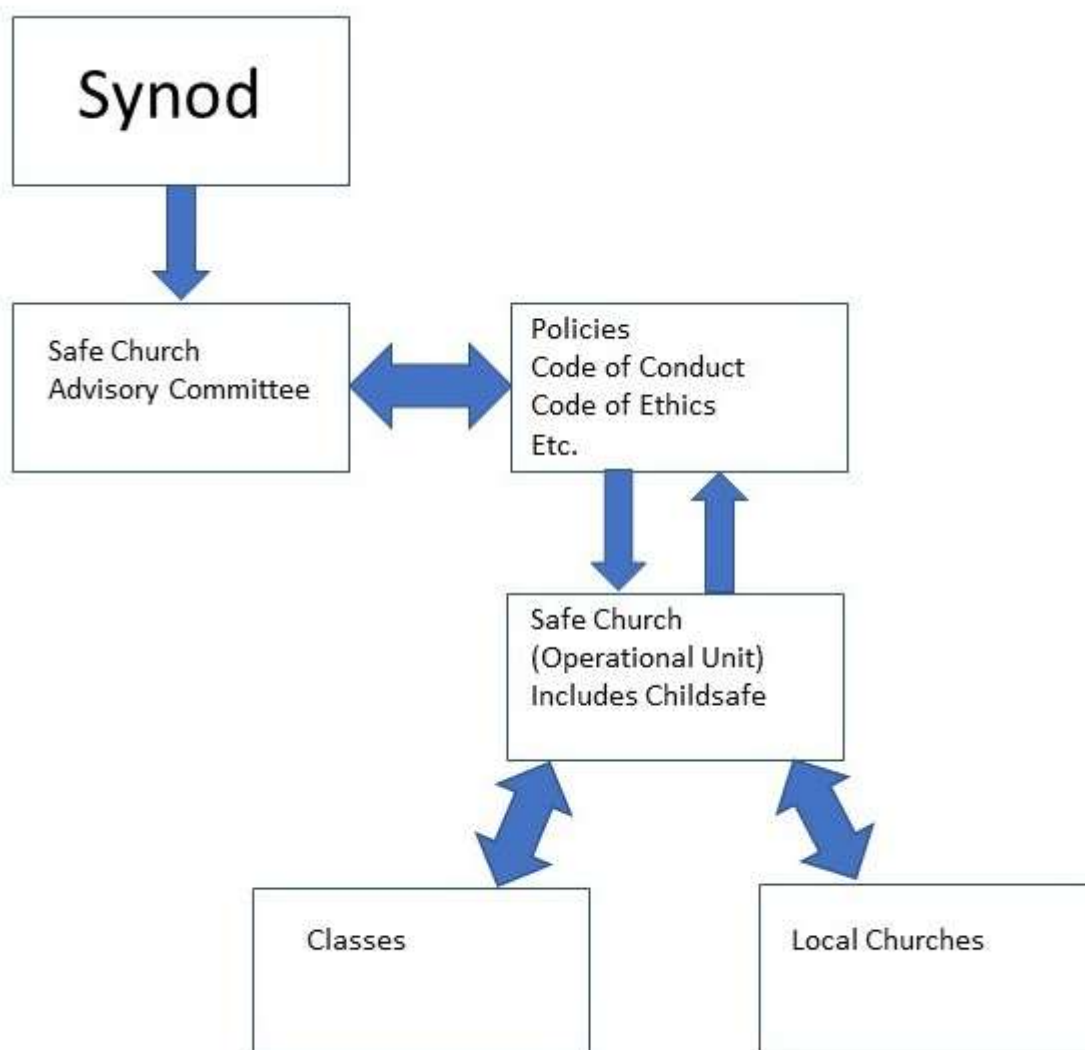
#### **SCAC Responsibilities:**

1. Review and approve the statement of commitment
2. Review and approve the child safe policy
3. Review and approve the code of conduct
4. Develop and maintain the code of ethics
5. Approve procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers
6. Review and approve the procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm
7. Receive reports of breaches of our risk management strategy (code of conduct etc.)
8. Assist SCU in handling reports of allegations of abuse.
9. Assist SCU in handling investigations or recommend resources to conduct investigations.
10. Provide oversight to SCU through quarterly meetings (more frequent if required).

#### **LOCAL CHURCH Responsibilities:**

1. Accept and implement the statement of commitment
2. Accept and implement the child safe policy
3. Accept and implement the code of conduct
4. Accept and implement the code of ethics
5. Ensure all Team Members and Team Leaders are formally appointed
6. Ensure all Team Members and Team Leaders are up-to-date with their training.
7. Prepare any reports relating to incidents, complaints, abuse, etc.
8. Prepare reports of breaches of our risk management strategy (code of conduct etc.)
9. Report incidents etc. to authorities as per legislative requirements as well as the SCU.
10. Approve programs ensuring risk assessments have been completed. Forward any high risk activities to the SCU for discussion and approval.
11. Maintain all Team Member and Team Leader details in SMO.
12. Participate in audits conducted by SCU

## Structure Diagram:



## SAFE CHURCH UNIT DEVELOPMENT

The development of the Safe Church Unit has been modelled on the experiences of the Presbyterian Church, the Churches of Christ, the Baptist Churches and with some input from the Anglican Church. This is the Presbyterian Church (Vic) motivation for their development and introduction of the SCU:

In 2013 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV) voted to replace the existing policy regarding abuse in the church, known as 'Breaking the Silence', with a new policy and code of conduct, known as 'Safe Church - PCV' (from this point on, referred to as 'Safe Church').

The Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct reflect the significant developments in child protection legislation, mandatory and protective reporting procedures, and government requirements surrounding child safety education in voluntary organisations such as churches.

In the ensuing period since the General Assembly enacted Breaking the Silence there have been two significant changes that have resulted in voluntary organisations altering their operations in this area:

- A greater legal duty placed on churches due to increased compliance levels and legislative requirements set by government

- A greater public moral duty placed on churches to proactively prevent abuse in churches rather than respond to the occurrence of abuse. The highest duty placed on the church is the duty required in all our thoughts, words and deeds by the Lord God.

Colossians 3:17 teaches: “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” In Luke 18:16 Jesus said "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (NIV, 1994)

These are but two of the scriptures that highlight the central Christian values of love, mercy and justice. The Lord Jesus Christ set the example for Christians and the church to model life upon. In the life of the PCV the church is committed to ensuring that all of our churches and organisations are safe in every respect for everyone within them.

The proposed development of the SCU for the CRCA is very much modelled on the structure currently in place in the Presbyterian Church and the Churches of Christ. Both these denominations have the advantage of having larger memberships. These denominations do provide additional services (e.g. Care Services) as well – but their respective SCU’s have no involvement with these services. As the National Redress Scheme claims start to flow in from these services – this may change. A SCU is established in each state. (some SCU’s provide services for more than one state).

Survey of delivery of SCU services time required:

PCQ	54 hours/week – 2 staff
PCV	46 hours/week – 2 staff
PCN	>100 hours/week – 4 staff
CoC Qld	38 hours/week – 1 staff
CoC Vic	40 hours/week – 1 staff
Baptist Vic	48 hours/week – 2 staff

It is our expectation that the ChildSafe Administration role will be rolled into the responsibilities of the SCU. The ChildSafe Administrator job description is attached. Currently that role is funded by the CRCA at 8 hours per week. Accurate record keeping since 1 January 2019 has demonstrated it takes 12 hours per week to provide this service.

Based on the responsibilities described above we would expect a requirement of about 50-56 hours per week to cover the tasks. This is supported by comparing the way these services are delivered in the Presbyterian Church and the Churches of Christ in Queensland. Both these churches have a similar number of members in each state as the CRCA has nationally. The Presbyterian Church has two part-time staff members and the Church of Christ has one FTE.

We recommend two part-time staff sharing the workload and in particular, in keeping up-to-date with legislative requirements in the various states. One significant difference with the CRCA Safe Church Unit and other denominations is that within the CRCA has to engage with each State Government, whereas the Presbyterians and CoC’s only need to engage with one or two state governments.

## MOU - PCA

In 2019 we have seen the signing of the MOU between the CRCA and the PCA. In itself this is a very encouraging development. So, we started to imagine and research what this could mean for the development of the SCU within our denomination. Could a close cooperation simplify the development of the SCU within the CRCA? Could we perhaps outsource the task to the PCA?



The Presbyterians in Victoria and Queensland have a SCU, however, their documentation and systems approach and tools are different. New South Wales has a Conduct Protocol Unit that serves NSW, ACT, Tasmania and WA. Much of the documentation is similar to Victoria's documentation but the processes are not the same. So, within the PCA there are 3 different approaches, dependant on the state you reside.

Should the CRCA continue to provide its own oversight through NSACC, then this would be rather complex. In addition, the approach towards the Reportable Conduct Scheme might also be problematic. In the PCV the Head of Entity (HOE) delegates the reporting requirement to the SCU Facilitator who acts on behalf of the PCV. The SCU Facilitator in turn keeps the HOE and the local church informed. In the PCV there is a General Assembly in each state and the Head of Entity is within that office, in the CRCA each church has appointed their own HOE. We concluded that the MOU did not consider the requirements in relation to the structural differences for reporting purposes.

Within the CRCA we currently have great oversight regarding implementation of ChildSafe. All data related to this resides in one system – SMO (Safety Management Online). As a result we have great oversight over all volunteers and professional staff in regard to their appointment status and their training requirements. As at March 2020 only 2 churches within the CRCA remain to be included in this reporting and management system. This oversight is one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission (16.58).

In Victoria and NSW, training with the Presbyterian Church is delivered very much like we do in the CRCA – with the expectation that Team Members and Team Leader will attend face-to-face training sessions. In Queensland, all processes and training are conducted on-line using the church management system Elvanto. We notice that there is not a uniform approach in the PCA.

While we could investigate the possibilities of the MOU further – at this stage we believe this will only complicate our own destiny.

John Van Dijk.

## Appendix 1 – Royal Commission – 10 Standards

### Royal Commission Child Safety Standards

#### **Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture**

- a. The institution publicly commits to child safety and leaders champion a child safe culture.
- b. Child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels of the institution.
- c. Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children.
- d. Staff and volunteers comply with a code of conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children.
- e. Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

#### **Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously**

- a. Children are able to express their views and are provided opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- b. The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and be less isolated.
- c. Children can access sexual abuse prevention programs and information.
- d. Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns.

#### **Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved**

- a. Families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and participate in decisions affecting their child.
- b. The institution engages in open, two-way communication with families and communities about its child safety approach and relevant information is accessible.
- c. Families and communities have a say in the institution's policies and practices.
- d. Families and communities are informed about the institution's operations and governance.

#### **Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account**

- a. The institution actively anticipates children's diverse circumstances and responds effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities.
- b. All children have access to information, support and complaints processes.
- c. The institution pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

#### **Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported**

- a. Recruitment, including advertising and screening, emphasises child safety.
- b. Relevant staff and volunteers have Working With Children Checks.
- c. All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their child safety responsibilities, including reporting obligations.
- d. Supervision and people management have a child safety focus.

#### **Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused**

- a. The institution has a child-focused complaint handling system that is understood by children, staff, volunteers and families.
- b. The institution has an effective complaint handling policy and procedure which clearly outline roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report.
- c. Complaints are taken seriously, responded to promptly and thoroughly, and reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

**Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training**

- a. Relevant staff and volunteers receive training on the nature and indicators of child maltreatment, particularly institutional child sexual abuse.
- b. Staff and volunteers receive training on the institution's child safe practices and child protection.
- c. Relevant staff and volunteers are supported to develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.

**Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur**

- a. Risks in the online and physical environments are identified and mitigated without compromising a child's right to privacy and healthy development.
- b. The online environment is used in accordance with the institution's code of conduct and relevant policies.

**Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved**

- a. The institution regularly reviews and improves child safe practices.
- b. The institution analyses complaints to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

**Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe**

- a. Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards.
- b. Policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand.
- c. Best practice models and stakeholder consultation inform the development of policies and procedures.
- d. Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.
- e. Staff understand and implement the policies and procedures.
- f. Staff and volunteers are actively supported by training

## Appendix 2 – Royal Commission Recommendations

### Royal Commission Recommendations to all Religious Institutions in Australia

#### **Recommendation 16.31**

All institutions that provide activities or services of any kind, under the auspices of a particular religious denomination or faith, through which adults have contact with children, should implement the 10 Child Safe Standards identified by the Royal Commission.

#### **Recommendation 16.32**

Religious organisations should adopt the Royal Commission’s 10 Child Safe Standards as nationally mandated standards for each of their affiliated institutions.

#### **Recommendation 16.33**

Religious organisations should drive a consistent approach to the implementation of the Royal Commission’s 10 Child Safe Standards in each of their affiliated institutions.

#### **Recommendation 16.34**

Religious organisations should work closely with relevant state and territory oversight bodies to support the implementation of and compliance with the Royal Commission’s 10 Child Safe Standards in each of their affiliated institutions.

#### **Recommendation 16.35**

Religious institutions in highly regulated sectors, such as schools and out-of-home care service providers, should report their compliance with the Royal Commission’s 10 Child Safe Standards, as monitored by the relevant sector regulator, to the religious organisation to which they are affiliated.

#### **Recommendation 16.36**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, each religious institution in Australia should ensure that its religious leaders are provided with leadership training both pre- and post-appointment, including in relation to the promotion of child safety.

#### **Recommendation 16.37**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, leaders of religious institutions should ensure that there are mechanisms through which they receive advice from individuals with relevant professional expertise on all matters relating to child sexual abuse and child safety. This should include in relation to prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling. These mechanisms should facilitate advice from people with a variety of professional backgrounds and include lay men and women.

#### **Recommendation 16.38**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, each religious institution should ensure that religious leaders are accountable to an appropriate authority or body, such as a board of management or council, for the decisions they make with respect to child safety.

**Recommendation 16.39**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 1, each religious institution should have a policy relating to the management of actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in relation to allegations of child sexual abuse. The policy should cover all individuals who have a role in responding to complaints of child sexual abuse.

**Recommendation 16.40**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 2, wherever a religious institution has children in its care, those children should be provided with age-appropriate prevention education that aims to increase their knowledge of child sexual abuse and build practical skills to assist in strengthening self-protective skills and strategies. Prevention education in religious institutions should specifically address the power and status of people in religious ministry and educate children that no one has a right to invade their privacy and make them feel unsafe.

**Recommendation 16.41**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 3, each religious institution should make provision for family and community involvement by publishing all policies relevant to child safety on its website, providing opportunities for comment on its approach to child safety, and seeking periodic feedback about the effectiveness of its approach to child safety.

**Recommendation 16.42**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should require that candidates for religious ministry undergo external psychological testing, including psychosexual assessment, for the purposes of determining their suitability to be a person in religious ministry and to undertake work involving children.

**Recommendation 16.43**

Each religious institution should ensure that candidates for religious ministry undertake minimum training on child safety and related matters, including training that:

- a. equips candidates with an understanding of the Royal Commission's 10 Child Safe Standards
- b. educates candidates on:
  - i. professional responsibility and boundaries, ethics in ministry and child safety
  - ii. policies regarding appropriate responses to allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse, and how to implement these policies
  - iii. how to work with children, including childhood development
  - iv. identifying and understanding the nature, indicators and impacts of child sexual abuse.

**Recommendation 16.44**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, are subject to effective management and oversight and undertake annual performance appraisals.

**Recommendation 16.45**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, have professional supervision with a trained professional or pastoral supervisor who has a degree of independence from the institution within which the person is in ministry.

**Recommendation 16.46**

Religious institutions which receive people from overseas to work in religious or pastoral ministry, or otherwise within their institution, should have targeted programs for the screening, initial training and professional supervision and development of those people. These programs should include material covering professional responsibility and boundaries, ethics in ministry and child safety.

**Recommendation 16.47**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 7, each religious institution should require that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, undertake regular training on the institution's child safe policies and procedures. They should also be provided with opportunities for external training on best practice approaches to child safety.

**Recommendation 16.48**

Religious institutions which have a rite of religious confession for children should implement a policy that requires the rite only be conducted in an open space within the clear line of sight of another adult. The policy should specify that, if another adult is not available, the rite of religious confession for the child should not be performed.

**Recommendation 16.49**

Codes of conduct in religious institutions should explicitly and equally apply to people in religious ministry and to lay people.

**Recommendation 16.50**

Consistent with Child Safe Standard 7, each religious institution should require all people in religious ministry, leaders, members of boards, councils and other governing bodies, employees, relevant contractors and volunteers to undergo initial and periodic training on its code of conduct. This training should include:

- a. what kinds of allegations or complaints relating to child sexual abuse should be reported and to whom
- b. identifying inappropriate behaviour which may be a precursor to abuse, including grooming
- c. recognising physical and behavioural indicators of child sexual abuse
- d. that all complaints relating to child sexual abuse must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity of the behaviour.

**Recommendation 16.51**

All religious institutions' complaint handling policies should require that, upon receiving a complaint of child sexual abuse, an initial risk assessment is conducted to identify and minimise any risks to children.

**Recommendation 16.52**

All religious institutions' complaint handling policies should require that, if a complaint of child sexual abuse against a person in religious ministry is plausible, and there is a risk that person may come into contact with children in the course of their ministry, the person be stood down from ministry while the complaint is investigated.

**Recommendation 16.53**

The standard of proof that a religious institution should apply when deciding whether a complaint of child sexual abuse has been substantiated is the balance of probabilities, having regard to the principles in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw*.

**Recommendation 16.54**

Religious institutions should apply the same standards for investigating complaints of child sexual abuse whether or not the subject of the complaint is a person in religious ministry.

**Recommendation 16.55**

Any person in religious ministry who is the subject of a complaint of child sexual abuse which is substantiated on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the principles in *Briginshaw v Briginshaw*, or who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, should be permanently removed from ministry. Religious institutions should also take all necessary steps to effectively prohibit the person from in any way holding himself or herself out as being a person with religious authority.

**Recommendation 16.56**

Any person in religious ministry who is convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse should:

- a. in the case of Catholic priests and religious, be dismissed from the priesthood and/or dispensed from his or her vows as a religious
- b. in the case of Anglican clergy, be deposed from holy orders
- c. in the case of Uniting Church ministers, have his or her recognition as a minister withdrawn
- d. in the case of an ordained person in any other religious denomination that has a concept of ordination, holy orders and/or vows, be dismissed, deposed or otherwise effectively have their religious status removed.

**Recommendation 16.57**

Where a religious institution becomes aware that any person attending any of its religious services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, the religious institution should:

- a. assess the level of risk posed to children by that perpetrator's ongoing involvement in the religious community
- b. take appropriate steps to manage that risk.

**Recommendation 16.58**

Each religious organisation should consider establishing a national register which records limited but sufficient information to assist affiliated institutions identify and respond to any risks to children that may be posed by people in religious or pastoral ministry.

The complete set of recommendations by the Royal Commission can be found at:  
[https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final\\_report\\_-\\_recommendations.pdf](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf)

## Appendix 3 – Review of other denominations

Researching Safe Church Concepts based on experiences in other denominations, has allowed us to create a network of like-minded individuals, which is still growing. The Presbyterian Church, Churches of Christ, Uniting Church, Baptist Church and even the Anglicans have readily shared their experiences and documentation. It should be noted that each of these churches have a SCU based in their respective states. There is some collaboration in some denominations between Victoria and Tasmania and between Queensland, NT and South Australia, where the one office will provide services for these states – there is variation in state boundaries and collaboration between various denominations.

The Presbyterian Church have a state assembly and their SCU reports to that body. The State based Safe Church Facilitator/Administrator has control over the development and the implementation of the programs in that state. They also facilitate the in-house training based on 4 different levels. Their training is on a 3-year cycle with an annual refresher course mandatory. They also have a strict appointment process for all volunteers and ministry workers. If the appointment details or training is not up-to-date, these people are not allowed to be involved in any children's ministry and will be asked to stand down.

The Presbyterian SCU in Queensland have developed their entire administration – including Child Safe/Safe Church details and all on-line training around Elvanto (a church administration software package). They made a significant investment in developing specific routines around the appointment process, the training, risk management, incident/abuse reporting so that all churches can be administered from the central office. The implementation of this package is not optional – all churches are participating.

Our observation of the Presbyterian Church is that in Victoria the SCU development was very much in response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry (and recommendations). The main focus is on abuse and how to deal with abuse – with very little attention to general risks in churches. The State Facilitator acknowledged this and stated that general risk management is their next development phase. The Presbyterian Church in Queensland has embraced a complete risk management strategy in their deployment of Safe Church.

The Churches of Christ has a similar organization and governance as our denomination. While they have state based SCU's, they do not have the opportunity to force specific applications and processes into individual churches. The Safe Church Facilitator has to convince local congregations of the benefits of using the documentation and system prepared by the SCU. Churches of Christ does use SMO (the ChildSafe database and management system) but does not use the ChildSafe training. They have their own trainers endorsed using the NCCA Safe Church Awareness Program-

The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) began the Safe Church Training Initiative in 2007-2008 to assist churches of Australia to ensure that churches, church organizations and Christian Faith communities are safe environments, with particular focus on the safety, protection and care of vulnerable people and especially of children.

Over 35 different Church traditions, synods, dioceses and Christian organizations across Australia are currently members of the Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA) and are committed to working together to ensure that church ministries and services to the community are safe at all



times for all people. Training is held throughout the States and Territories of Australia according to a framework of national training standards developed by SCTA. Over 50,000 people have undertaken a SCTA Awareness workshop.

The workshop is delivered in one event, using 4 sessions:

- Framework of a Safe Church
- Safe People
- Safe Leaders
- Safe Environments

A comprehensive workbook is issued to each participant and many topics are covered in the 4 sessions. The training session lasts between 6 and 7 hours and there is an expectation that the participant reviews the workbook in detail – as not all topics are covered at the level of depth as shown in the workbook. There are references to the new 10 principles but the program will be reviewed to ensure that these 10 principles are properly integrated.

This form of training is an alternative – but we recommend we wait and see the updated training to be delivered by ChildSafe. SCTA Awareness workshop attracts a \$35.00 fee for each participant.

The advantage of engaging with the SCTA program is that there are many accredited trainers around the country and that training events are regularly advertised. Thus, any team member or team leader who needs to update their training can attend any training event. The SCTA approach is to promote face-to-face training. However, if we keep training in-house, we can control the content of the program. The in-house training will also keep costs down significantly.

The Baptist Church follows similar principles. The Safe Church Health Check proposed for the CRCA is based on the development of the NSW Baptist Church. Training for all participants in children's ministries is mandatory and consists of an on-line and face-to-face training session. Both must be completed by all participants and is repeated in a 3-year cycle.

## Appendix 4 - State Government Contacts

For the SCU role to be effective, regular updates from each state government are essential. Fortunately, we have been able to sign up to most State Government notification services, so any changes in legislation or regulations (along with Newsletters) are now received automatically. The only state not offering such a service is Tasmania.

### **Implementation of the New Standards/Principles**

While COAG has endorsed the 10 Standards/Principles (Recommendation of the Royal Commission), it is still up to each state government to update their own state legislation to ensure implementation. This is starting to happen now – with NSW, Victoria, Queensland and ACT introducing legislation regularly.

ChildSafe is currently updating their training program to make sure it complies with the 10 standards. This will be available April/May 2020. In the meantime, the NSW government has developed an introduction to the 10 standards through an on-line training tool. The Australian

Human Rights Commission has also provided a more detailed on-line training program. The National ChildSafe Administrator has completed both programs.

The National ChildSafe Administrator attended a Queensland Government presentation late October 2019, where they suggested that the current 8 Qld state standards in place more or less overlap the 10 standards approved by COAG. During this presentation they stated that we should not expect a lot of change or new legislation. Then they went on to present the many changes to the Queensland legislation that they are currently working on – and the ones that were introduced in July 2019. (Although most of these were simplifications to complex regulations). Then in November 2019 the Queensland Government introduced 3 very significant changes that were legislated in October 2019, demonstrating the need to continually monitor government activities in this space.

## Appendix 5 – DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILDSAFE CULTURE

Discussing the ChildSafe system and the associated requirements and meeting people during the various ChildSafe Training sessions that we have completed during the last 5 years – we can share that the whole approach and attitude towards the culture of safety in our churches is improving.

When we started the ChildSafe Administration role – we very much experienced some resistance to “yet another system or program”. So in 2015, child safety was clearly not yet part of the CRCA DNA. At the time just 30 churches were participating within ChildSafe, that has now (March 2020) grown to 58 churches. An intensive training program rolled out regularly to each state (and new churches) which has been updated every year to address specific requirements and highlighting the Royal Commission Recommendations along with enthusiastic support for local churches has started a shift to understanding why we need to do everything we can to prevent abuse and to keep children and vulnerable people safe.

We discussed the concept of improving the culture with PCV and PCQ. Their primary focus is to develop a Christian Culture. Start with the theology in your development. Then focus on your training program – make sure the program has elements that enable child empowerment – so that team members and team leaders engage and listen to the children. (This aligns with standard/principle 2). In Victoria, the facilitator conducted all the training sessions herself for more than 3 years. It is essential that training is done face-to-face as this allows relationship building and ensures attendees “get it”. You cannot achieve that with on-line training and that is why on-line training can never deliver a cultural change.

Logically, Child Safety should be on the agenda of the session/church council meeting. But if it is a separate item – then it is once again an “add-on”. So Safety should be part of every topic on the agenda – then it becomes part of the culture. How do we involve children and vulnerable people?

Ultimately, the PCV will also start compliance audits. Let your deeds confirm the programs you teach.

The 10 Principles/Standards do assist in improving awareness of the need for a Childsafe Culture. Principle 1 addresses this directly. **“Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture”**.

Key action areas for Principle 1 include:

- 1.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety.
- 1.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and the bottom up.
- 1.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- 1.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- 1.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- 1.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

Indicators that this principle is upheld include:

- The organisation can demonstrate they have publicly available and current documents such as a child safety and wellbeing policy, practice guidance, information sharing protocols, staff and volunteer codes of conduct and risk management strategies.
- The organisational leadership models and regularly reinforces attitudes and behaviours that value children and young people and a commitment to child safety, child wellbeing and cultural safety. This commitment is clear in duty statements, performance agreements and staff and volunteer review processes.
- Staff, volunteers, children and young people have a sound knowledge of children’s rights, including their rights to feel safe and be heard, and the accountabilities that accompany these rights.
- Leaders promote sharing good practice and learnings about child safety and wellbeing.

The second principle is also fundamental to the development of a Childsafe Culture: **“Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously”**.

Key action areas for Principle 2 include:

- 2.1 Children and young people are informed about all their rights, including to safety, information, and participation.
- 2.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.
- 2.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children may be offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.
- 2.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.

Indicators that this Principle 2 is upheld include:

- The organisation has programs and resources to educate children and young people on their rights including their right to safety and right to be listened to.
- The organisation is proactive in providing age-appropriate platforms to regularly seek children's and young people's views and encourage participation in decision-making.
- Staff and volunteers have a good understanding of children and young people's developmental needs.
- Opportunities for participating are documented and regularly reviewed.
- The organisational environment is friendly and welcoming for children and young people.
- Children and young people participate in decision-making in the organisation, including in relation to safety issues and risk identification.
- Children and young people can identify trusted adults and friends.
- Children and young people are informed of their roles and responsibilities in helping ensure the safety and wellbeing of their peers.

In our opinion, the CRCA is on its way to implement the details of Principle 1, however, Principle 2 will require quite some effort to fully implement.