



CHRISTIAN REFORMED
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

CRCA Safe Church Unit Mandate

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The CRCA wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (PCV) and in particular, its permission to use throughout this Mandate material of the PCV in connection with its Safe Church policies and practice.

The Safe Church Unit

CRCA Safe Church applies to every individual, congregation and organisation within the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. Safe Church CRCA complies with Australian individual state's child safety legislation.

The Safe Church Unit (SCU) is responsible for the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct (also referred to as 'Safe Church CRCA') across the whole of the CRCA. One of its' primary roles is to assist all churches within the CRCA to ensure that they become or are Safe Church Compliant.

The SCU acts within the terms of reference as set by the Safe Church Advisory Committee – and described in the Safe Church Advisory Committee Regulations.

Safe Church Advisory Committee Regulations

1. Title

The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), at each triennial Synod, will appoint a committee entitled the Safe Church Advisory Committee (SCAC), hereafter referred to as the committee. This committee was previously known as the CRCA National Sexual Abuse Complaints Committee (NSACC). The committee is responsible and accountable to the Synod working in a similar manner to the Synodical Deputies (Church Order 51).

2. Membership

The committee shall consist of seven members, with a representative from each CRCA Classis. Vacancies that occur during the inter-synodical period will be replaced by the respective Classis. The committee chairperson will be appointed by Synod or the Synodical Interim Committee should a chairperson resign during an inter-Synodical period. The committee Chairperson shall act in the capacity as 'Supervisor' of the SCU Facilitator and ChildSafe Administrator.

Members of the SCU must be carefully chosen by the Synod and shall include, where possible, the following:

- at least one member with expertise in sexual abuse issues
- at least one member with legal knowledge and expertise
- at least one member who is a Classis Church Visitor or Synodical Deputy
- members who are skilled in counselling supporting victims, child protection and conciliation, have general knowledge of sexual abuse issues and have knowledge and understanding of pastoral ethics and appropriate behaviour for Session members and church workers
- a balance of male and female members.

3. Meets in private

The committee meets in private unless it determines otherwise.

4. Purpose

The purpose of the committee is to:

- a) assist and encourage the CRCA in its commitment to ensuring that all its congregations and organisations are safe in respect of everyone within them, specifically helping the CRCA to:
 - i) protect and care for the young and the vulnerable in the churches
 - ii) care for the victims of abuse and the hurting
 - iii) implement and adhere to the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct
 - iv) implement and adhere to the Code of Ethics
 - iv) comply with all federal and state laws relevant to this matter;
- b) initiate care for a particular victim where the committee considers this to be appropriate.

5. Duties - The committee shall:

- a) have oversight of the Safe Church Unit and its employees
- b) encourage and support the work of the Safe Church Unit

- c) advise the Safe Church Unit on any matter that bears on the CRCA's compliance with federal and state laws insofar as they pertain to the purpose of the committee
- d) advise the classes and churches on any matter that bears on the CRCA's compliance with Federal and State laws insofar as they pertain to the purpose of the committee and bring recommendations to update the Safe Church Policy and procedures in response to the legislation
- e) advise Synodical Interim Committee and/or Synod: any pattern of noncompliance with the CRCA Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct and/or the Procedure and Practice Manual
- f) advise the respective classis of any action required to be taken by any congregation or organisation:
 - 1) to comply with federal or state law or liability insurance policies
 - 2) to implement and adhere to the CRCA Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct and/or the Procedure and Practice Manual or Code of Ethics
 - 3) to mitigate risk to the young and the vulnerable
- g) through the Safe Church Unit, in each instance that the CRCA is required by law to appoint an external investigator in respect of matters within the purpose of the committee, appoint such external investigator and notify Safe Church Unit. Such external investigator will be given the full cooperation (by committees, classes, sessions, individuals etc.) as if appointed by the Synod itself (or SIC) to investigate.

6. Employees

The committee may appoint, according to need and as approved within Synod approved budgetary constraints:

- a) the Safe Church Facilitator
- b) persons to give administrative assistance to the Safe Church Facilitator
- c) such other workers it considers to be necessary to achieve its purpose under regulation 4 above.

7. Panel of Reference

The committee shall consult with the Safe Church Facilitator in reference to particular reports and allegations of abuse and to provide advice on related procedure in such cases. The committee may decide to appoint a sub-committee entitled 'Panel of Reference', consisting of at least 3 members, to consult with the Safe Church Facilitator to deal with such reports. The committee shall appoint membership of the Panel from members of the committee plus co-opted members.

The Panel of Reference shall manage any reports of abuse by office bearers following the Healing a Broken Trust process.

8. Co-opted Members

Subject to any provision in these rules or any regulation to the contrary, persons whose advice may be particularly useful to any committee may be co-opted as members provided co-opted members do not exceed one-quarter of the committee.

No co-opted member may vote at any meeting of the committee.

Safe Church Unit Procedures

The procedures of the SCU are documented in the Safe Church Procedures and Practice Manual, which is updated each year to reflect any changes in relevant legislation, obligations and/or best practice. The Manual is reviewed and approved by the Safe Church Advisory Committee in consultation with the Synodical Interim Committee, prior to distribution. All SCU documents are subject to review at Synod.

Implementation includes providing the following services to the congregations, sessions, classes and organisations of the CRCA:

- Assistance to congregations/organisations in matters of compliance
- Education and training in Safe Church matters
- Information and guidance in Safe Church procedures and practice
- SCU related Website provision
- Assisting and resourcing the congregations in response to concerns/allegations and in compliance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme – in those states where this is in place (March 2020: Victoria, New South Wales and ACT).
- Support, information, advice and referrals for Safe Church matters; case facilitation
- Establishment of compliance auditing throughout the denomination
- Bi-Annual audits of church compliance of Safe Church Policies and record keeping
- Liaison with legal professionals, law enforcement and government departments, interstate bodies, other Christian denominations and organisations, as required and in regard to Safe Church matters
- Membership of the appropriate Professional Standards Networks and the Safe Church Trainers Network
- Best practice advice for safe ministry within the CRCA
- Regular (bi-annual) review and updates to the CRCA Policies and Procedures
- Maintenance of the Persons of Concern register
- Support all churches in dealing with any breaches of the Code of Ethics
- System Administration and support for Safety Management Online and ChildSafe matters

The SCU consists of the Safe Church Office, the Safe Church Advisory Committee (a sub-committee which consults with the Safe Church Facilitator in relation to cases). The Safe Church Office includes the services provided by the Safe Church Facilitator, the ChildSafe Administrator.

The SCU is under the authority and oversight of the Safe Church Advisory Committee.

SCU resources and assists the CRCA in Safe Church (and ChildSafe) matters via a number of avenues including the Safe Church CRCA website, verbal and written advice and information and the referral of individuals to relevant resources external to the CRCA.

Throughout this mandate, references to Working With Children Check (WWCC) includes similar screening systems in states where they are referred to as “Blue Card”, “Ochre Card”, “Working With Vulnerable People (WWVP)”, “Registration to Work with Vulnerable People (RWVP)”.

Website Provision

www.safechurchCRCA.org.au is provided for Safe Church reference and resourcing of the CRCA. SCU is responsible for maintaining the website and ensuring that the information therein is both relevant and up to date.

Privacy

The SCU collects personally identifiable and sensitive information in order to implement its function within the CRCA and in accordance with the 'Australian Privacy Principles' as described in the Act.

SCU maintains a central database of all CRCA employees and volunteers in a leadership position or working with children in the Church (who by law must hold a current Working With Children Check), in order to comply with the requirements of the state government legislation. SCU holds information relating to Safe Church issues, concerns and cases that have been brought to the attention of SCU.

The SCU complies with the CRCA Privacy Policy and *The Privacy Act (1988)*, the federal law that regulates the handling of personal information about individuals. This includes the collection, use, storage and disclosure of personally identifiable and sensitive information. The SCU has prepared privacy compliance documentation.

The SCU staff continuously review SCU operations and processes to ensure that the CRCA is:

- Compliant with all relevant State Government laws
- Exercising proper duty of care to those who the Church ministers to, in the area of Safe Church practice
- Operating at best practice in implementation of the Safe Church programme

Compliance

Assistance to congregations/organisations in matters of compliance

For a CRCA church to be Safe Church Compliant the church must have:

- Appointed a Safe Church Coordinator (ChildSafe Coordinator)
- Appointed a Safe Church Team (Coordinator and at least one other person)
- Completed and returned the Compliance Audit Schedule to the SCU (Initially referred to as the Safe Church Health Check)
- Completed and updated the Working With Children Check Records (with all appropriate personnel and volunteers having a WWCC) within the SMO (Safety Management Online) Database
- Completed and updated the Training Detail Records within the SMO (Safety Management Online) Database of all Team Members and Team Leaders
- Have had appropriate personnel undertake Safe Church training
- Ensured the Volunteer Approval Process is in operation on a permanent basis
- Ensured Incident Reporting Process is in operation for all incidents, complaints, near miss accidents, etc.
- Ensured all activities and programs have been approved by the local Safe Church Coordinator (ChildSafe Coordinator)
- Ensured that all Team Members and Team Leaders have current WWCC's and their training is up-to-date (Two green traffic lights in SMO) before they engage actively in Children's ministries.

Compliant churches can be issued with a Compliance Certificate, which may be displayed at the church. The SCU provides compliance certificates upon request.

The CRCA SCU seeks to maintain accurate records of all people who hold WWCCs that are registered with the various State Government Departments as being attached to the CRCA. These records are created and maintained by Safe Church Coordinators in the CRCA churches and maintained within the SMO (Safety Management Online) Database.

The CRCA is compliant with all States Child Safe Standards via the work of SCU in implementation of Safe Church CRCA across the denomination. Compliance documentation has been prepared by SCU should the State Government Authorities make formal enquiry into the operations of the CRCA in regard to the Standards.

The CRCA is compliant with the Victorian, New South Wales and ACT Reportable Conduct Schemes via the work of SCU. Compliance documentation has been prepared by SCU should the State Government Authorities make formal enquiry into the operations of the CRCA in regard to the various Schemes.

Other Safe Church Services

Education and Training in Safe Church matters

For details please refer Procedure and Practise Manual.

Screening for those individuals who work with children within the CRCA

For details please refer the Procedure and Practise Manual.

Safe Church Record Keeping

For details please refer the Procedure and Practise Manual.

Safe Church Concerns

For details please refer the Procedure and Practise Manual.

Safe Church Incident or Abuse reporting

For details please refer the Procedure and Practise Manual.

People Risk Management

For details please refer the Persons of Concern [Guidelines](#).

Safe Church and ChildSafe Policies

For details please refer the Safeguarding Children - A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY, CODE OF CONDUCT AND PROCEDURES DOCUMENT.

Reportable Conduct Schemes

For details please refer the Safeguarding Children - A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY, CODE OF CONDUCT AND PROCEDURES DOCUMENT.

Pastoral support for abuse cases

For details please refer the Justice and Healing Document.

Management of abuse by Office Bearers or CRCA staff

For details please refer the Healing a Broken [Trust](#) Document.

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