



CHRISTIAN REFORMED
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Procedure and Practice Manual

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Disclaimer

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The information and advice is made available in good faith, reflects current knowledge, literature, legislation, regulations and standards and is derived from sources believed to be accurate at the time of publication. **Safe Church Procedure and Practice Manual** should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and is not a substitute for it. The content will require updating in line with amendments or additions, which may supersede those cited, later in time, after the publication of this document.

Please note that this Procedure and Practise Manual is designed specifically for the operation of the Safe Church Unit – by the staff at the SCU. It may be used by the CRCA churches as a reference manual. For Policies and Procedures at churches, please use the CRCA GJIC-Church-CPP-and-COC document.

Please note: any references to the Safe Church Policy and Safe Church Code of Conduct are references to the CRCA GJIC-Church-CPP-and-COC.

Information in this manual may be subject to change, due to legislative and other changes. For the most updated information and other helpful resources visit the website at:

www.safechurchCRCA.org.au

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

What is Safe Church CRCA?

At the 2018 Synod, it was agreed that the CRCA should develop the Safe Church Concept, which includes a new policy and code of conduct, known as 'Safe Church CRCA' (from this point on, referred to as 'Safe Church' or 'Safe Church CRCA'). 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.

The decision was based on the fact that 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)

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 CRCA the church is committed to ensuring that **all our churches and organisations are safe in every respect for everyone within them**. The Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct, procedures and practice are the CRCA's expression of this commitment.

Safe Church CRCA applies to every individual, congregation and organisation within the CRCA. Safe Church CRCA complies with child safety legislation.

- Christians are required by the Lord God to think, speak and act in ways that are God-honouring, biblically obedient and motivated by the Christian values of love, mercy and justice
- The CRCA is committed to ensuring that all churches and organisations within the denomination are safe places for everyone
- The Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct/Ethics, procedures and practice are the CRCA's expression of this commitment
- Safe Church applies to all individuals, congregations and organisations in the CRCA

The Safe Church Unit

The Safe Church Unit (also referred to as 'SCU') is responsible for the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct across the whole of the CRCA.

Implementation includes providing the following services to the congregations, sessions/church councils, classes, organisations and Synod 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
- website provision
- assisting and resourcing the Church in response to concerns/allegations and in compliance with the Reportable Conduct Scheme (where applicable – NSW, VIC and ACT – Mar 2020).
- Support for Coordinators who screen those who work with children within their church
- Safe Church record keeping
- support, information, advice and referrals for Safe Church matters
- establishment and execution of compliance auditing throughout the denomination
- best practice advice for safe ministry in the CRCA
- support and local training for ChildSafe Safety Management Online
- liaison between the CRCA and relevant state government authorities and agencies in regard to Safe Church matters

The SCU is under the authority and oversight of the Safe Church Advisory Committee, a Synodical appointment of the CRCA, via the chairman of SCAC.

The SCU has the following roles: the Safe Church Facilitator and the Compliance & Administration Officer.

The SCU is advised by the Safe Church Advisory Committee and the Safe Church Panel of Reference (a sub-committee with which the Safe Church Facilitator consults in relation to cases).

CRCA Safe Church Unit Organisational Structure and Accountability



Safe Church Concerns/Reports Process

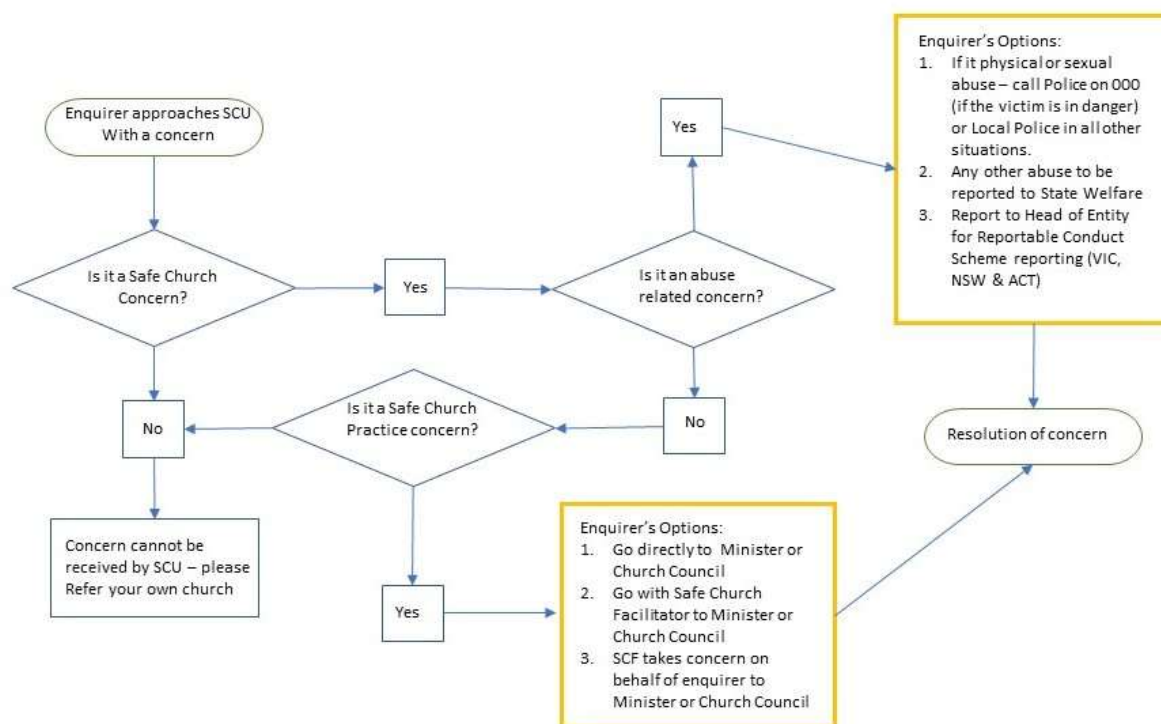
Information and guidance in Safe Church procedures

SCU provides “Best Practice” advice, legislative requirements information, resources and guidance in Safe Church CRCA practices and procedures in relation to Safe Church concerns.

Safe Church Concerns process

There are 2 kinds of Safe Church concerns:

1. A **practice** concern – this is a concern relating to how a ministry is operating in relation to abuse prevention. Most of these concerns can be resolved with routine guidance and support from SCU (for example, reference to the resources available on the website). However, from time to time, it can be difficult for the person with the concern to resolve the matter without the assistance of the SCU, due to the circumstances.
2. An **abuse** concern – this includes but is not limited to, a concern relating to known or alleged conduct that is described in the Safe Church Code of Conduct or the Specific State Reportable Conduct Scheme or is or may be a “crime against the person” – i.e. conduct in the *Crimes Act* or may be family violence. Such a concern is known as a ‘Safe Church report’. All reports trigger a response that may include support and investigation or support only (for example, in the case where the concern is a police matter the SCU response is one of support and resourcing only).



The following procedures take place within the basic Safe Church Concerns process.

Safe Church Unit Disclosure to External Authorities Protocols – Allegations of Child Sexual and Physical Abuse

In the case of current allegations (relating to alleged victims who are currently children) the local Safe Church Coordinator or Team Leader must provide full disclosure to local Police Authorities and/or Child Protection Services, as required by local State mandatory reporting law. Note – In Victoria the Failure to Disclose legislation requires that the person who received the disclosure, makes the report to the Police.

Receiving a disclosure report can be an overwhelming experience for the person listening to the disclosure. He/she may not be sure what to do next. It is acceptable that a Team Leader supports the person in this process. The support person must stress to document the reported abuse verbatim.

If the Child Sexual or Physical Abuse was perpetrated by an office bearer or church worker (including volunteers), the Head of Entity (usually the chairman) must be notified so that he can report this as Reportable Conduct to the CCYP.

Any allegations pertaining to 'Reportable Conduct' with a child, as defined by legislation, are reported to the relevant Government Department by the Head of Entity, in compliance with the individual State Reportable Conduct Scheme. (March 2020: VIC, NSW and ACT). At any time, the SCU may be contacted for support and assistance. Refer Appendix A for individual state requirements.

Historical allegations:

This section relates to allegations brought directly to the CRCA by a victim. In matters involving adults who are allegedly victims of historical child sexual abuse, they are asked early in the initial conversation if they have taken the matter to the Police. If the answer is no, it is suggested that they do so and that SCU will help them if they need help to do so.

If they do not want to report the matter to the Police they are informed that the local church or the SCU needs to report to the Police the name of the alleged perpetrator and the allegations themselves. The victim's name is not disclosed.

Police have indicated that if they want to talk to the victim they will contact the local church or the SCU and SCU will liaise with the victim. The victim still has the choice as to whether to make a formal report.

Each disclosure (current or historical) is documented as a protection for the CRCA and the individuals who are aware of the allegations.

Any historical abuse report that is not actioned by the Police, or when the Police investigation has been completed, will be investigated by the SCU in consultation with the Safe Church Advisory Committee. All final reports will be forwarded to the local church.

Any reports received via the National Redress Scheme (NRS) will be forwarded to the local church (providing the church is still operational) by the Business and Finance Committee (BFC). The local church will lead the investigation (and may be supported by the SCU), with the local church to report back to the NRS. The NRS will then make a determination and possibly make an offer to the survivor.

If that is acceptable by the survivor an amount of compensation would be payable by the local church. A Direct Personal Response may also be requested by the survivor.

The Reportable Conduct Schemes – Internal CRCA Process:

In compliance with the Scheme all allegations relating to child sexual or physical abuse are first disclosed by the local Team Member or Team Leader to the respective State Police, prior to any further action. Disclosures relating to other forms of child or vulnerable person abuse are made by the Team Member or Team Leader to Child Protection Services (at respective State Government Department). Please refer Appendix C for the relevant state departments. Once any external disclosures are completed the following process occurs:

1. Upon receiving a report that is, has the appearance of, or, possibly is a Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) report, the Safe Church Coordinator (ChildSafe Coordinator) will contact the relevant State RCS and confirm that the matter is reportable under the RCS.
2. Once advised by RCS that it is reportable the Safe Church Coordinator will call the Head of Entity (HoE) and notify the HoE of the need to make the 3-Day RCS report and also provide detailed information in the phone call. (7-Day Report in NSW, 30-Day report in ACT).
3. The HoE makes the RCS 3-Day Report and provides this report via email to the RCS and notifies the SCU Supervisor of the Report. (in different states the 3-Day report may be a 7-Day report – please refer Appendix C). The HoE makes the 30-Day Update Report and any subsequent additional updated reports in the same way.
4. Upon receipt of advice from the RCS that the CRCA must progress to a RCS investigation the HoE, in accordance with the Safe Church regulations, will appoint a suitably qualified RCS investigator.
5. The investigator conducts the RCS investigation – only when the police have completed their investigations (if the police were involved). The HoE keeps the SCF informed of the status of the matter and HoE makes reports to the RCS as per the legislative requirements, keeping the SCF and Supervisor informed at all times.
6. At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigation report will be provided to the HoE and the relevant Church.
7. The church will address itself to the findings and recommendations of the investigation report and take any actions necessary.
8. Following any actions taken by the relevant Church, a final update HoE report will be made to RCS by the HoE. The HoE will keep the SCF and SCU Supervisor informed at all times. A copy of the final report will be forwarded by the HoE to the SCU.

Abuse by Office Bearers

Any abuse alleged to have been committed by an Office Bearer will follow the normal reporting process – when this needs to be reported to the authorities.

When there are no formal charges following this report, an internal investigation will proceed. This process is defined in the “Healing a Broken Trust” document. [Link to document.](#)

Safe Church Concerns/Reports Process

When a concern or report is raised with the SCU the Safe Church Facilitator contacts the local church as most concerns and reports are managed by the Local Church. If the local church needs guidance, this will be offered by the SCU. If the report concerns an allegation against the HOE (usually the chairman), then the vice-chairman will act as HOE.

The following describes the likely process to be followed when a concern or report is raised.

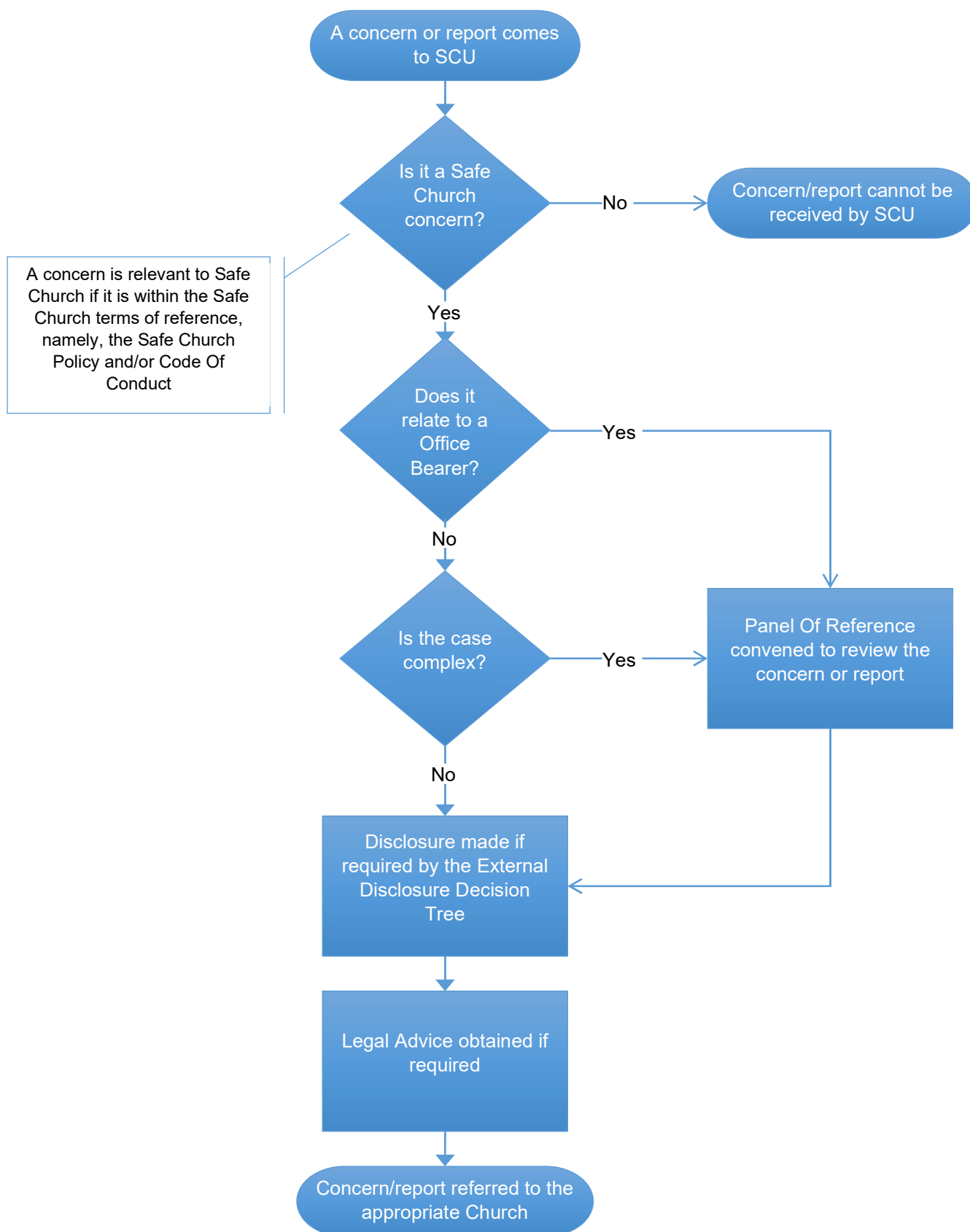
1. The local church establishes if the concern/report is within the terms of reference of the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct and, if so, step 2 takes place.
2. The local reporter then documents these concerns/reports. Any required external disclosures are made by the reporter or the HOE. This includes reporting within the requirements of the specific State Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS) with reference to the Head of Entity under the Scheme. Concerns/reports may be taken to the Safe Church Panel of Reference for them "to consult with the Safe Church Case Manager in reference to particular complaints and related procedure whenever required" (from the Panel regulations). The Panel then may instruct the Safe Church Facilitator and/or make recommendations for the consideration of the relevant leadership body. Concerns/reports relating to ministers or elders are always referred to the Panel to ensure appropriate oversight. Where required, advice from external authorities and/or legal advice are sought. Any RCS matters are referred for investigation as per the requirements of the Scheme.
3. At this point the leadership receives the information and then makes decisions about how to respond, with the support and assistance of the SCU (including any Panel or RCS investigation recommendations or legal advice), as requested.

It is the responsibility of the relevant leadership body to decide how to proceed, acting within the law of the specific state and any legal advice, Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct, Panel of Reference and/or RCS investigation findings and recommendations and the articles of the Church Order.

The process above aligns with best practice as shown in the 'Standard Safe Church Investigations Process – Religious Organisations' – this process is modelled on a standard workplace investigation template that is used across government, not-for profits and private sectors in Australia.

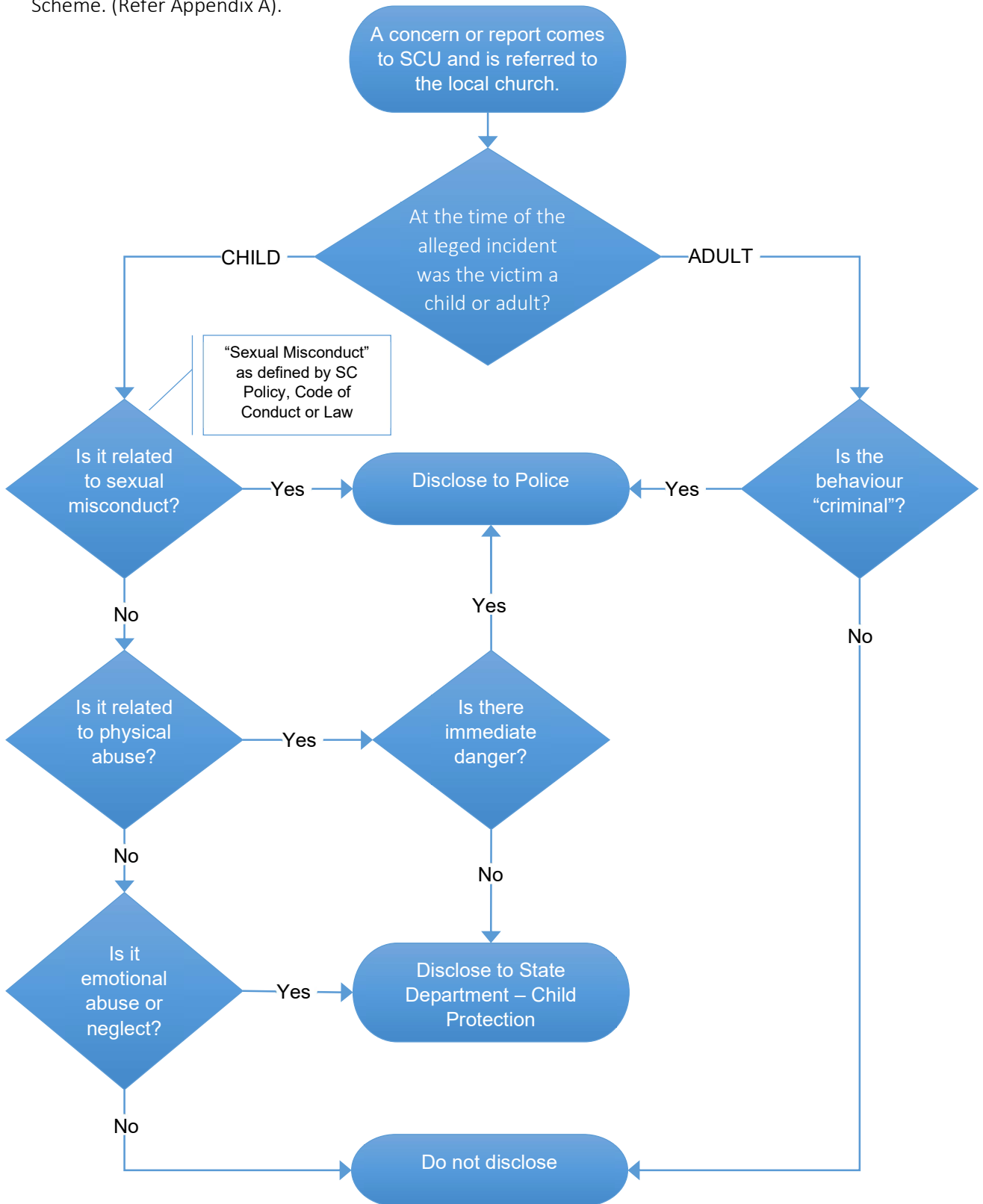
Safe Church Concerns/Reports Process – Shown as a flowchart

The following diagram describes the likely process to be followed when a concern or report is raised. Specific steps may vary at the discretion of the SCU depending on the specifics of the case.



External Disclosure Decision Tree – Shown as a flowchart

In addition to this process all concerns or reports that relate to the **Specific State Reportable Conduct Scheme** are reported to the State Reporting Scheme in compliance with the requirements of the Scheme. (Refer Appendix A).



The Safe Church Panel of Reference

The Safe Church Panel of Reference (PoR) is a sub-committee of the Safe Church Advisory Committee, whose principal duty is to 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 PoR sits under the

- State Law in the state where the enquiry is made
- CRCA Safe Church Policy
- CRCA Safe Church Code of Conduct

The PoR is also guided by legal advice provided by the CRCA Law Agent as required and “best practice” in the area of abuse prevention and response generally and specifically within Christian Churches in Australia.

The role of the PoR in regard to cases is to provide oversight to the SCF’s work in case facilitation and response, in order to ensure resolution of Safe Church cases brought to it within the

- State Law in the state where the enquiry is made
- Legal duty of care owed by the CRCA to people participating in the ministries of the Church
- CRCA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct
- polity of the CRCA
- SCU practice and process

Relevant Safe Church processes for cases:

1. Safe Church External Disclosure Decision Tree (this includes cases which are captured by a State Reportable Conduct Scheme)
2. Safe Church Unit Disclosure to Specific State Police Protocols – Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse
3. The CRCA Person of Concern Strategy – refer Guidelines for Person of Concern ([insert link](#))

The above processes adhere to the

- State Law in the state where the enquiry is made
- Legal duty of care owed by the CRCA to people participating in the ministries of the Church
- CRCA Insurer requirements
- CRCA Safe Church Policy
- CRCA Safe Church Code of Conduct
- Safe Church best practice across Christian Churches in Australia

Guiding Principles

1. The PoR does not meet to ascertain truth of allegations brought to it as it is not a Court of the Church or the State where the allegation is made. Rather it reviews cases brought to it as part of the resolution process and then makes decisions to expedite resolution and ensure that the vulnerable (both children and adults) in the CRCA are protected and the CRCA fulfils its legal duties.
2. The PoR is guided by the
 - State Law in the state where the enquiry is made

- Legal duty of care owed by the CRCA to people participating in the ministries of the Church
- CRCA Safe Church Policy
- CRCA Safe Church Code of Conduct
- Any legal advice obtained
- Any advice provided by external government authorities
- CRCA Insurer requirements
- Safe Church best practice across Christian Churches in Australia

When a case is brought to the PoR

- The SCF contacts the PoR Convenor to request the PoR meet in regard to a case brought to SCU. The SCF is responsible for preparing a pack for PoR members which is securely distributed prior to the meeting OR (in the case of an unexpected urgent matter) the information is presented to the PoR in the meeting and time allocated for the PoR to read through the material and ask any questions of the SCF in regards to it.
- In the information provided to PoR members all identifiers (names of parties and location/s relating to the allegations) are removed so that the case can be assessed purely on the information available at the time. This allows for PoR members to be entirely impartial in their approach to the information.
- The Safe Church External Disclosure Decision Tree (which aligns with the Safe Church Unit Disclosure to (Victoria) Police Protocols – Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse and Reportable Conduct Scheme reports requirements) is the process used in the first meeting for assessment and decision-making.
- After the first meeting should the PoR meet again in regard to the particular case then identifiers are made known to the PoR where required.
- In matters where a PoR member may be personally connected to a case (for example, they may know a party involved) and the case progresses to a second PoR meeting where the case identifiers are included, they must declare a conflict of interest and this shall be documented. The PoR member may be excused from their PoR duties from this point onwards. This shall be determined by the PoR, according to the processes described in the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission guidelines – see www.acnc.gov.au
- The SCF is responsible for preparing material for the PoR meetings and taking meeting notes. Meeting notes are distributed to PoR members for review prior to being filed in the relevant case file at SCU.
- If a Classis seeks conference with the PoR in regard to a matter before it as part of the Code of Ethics process they will communicate with either the SCF or PoR Convener. The SCF or Convener shall document the communication and ensure this is included in the Safe Church case file.
- When considering an issue the PoR and SCF must make recommendations in accordance with the law of State in the state where the enquiry is made and/or legal duty of care, the CRCA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct.
- If, in response to a Safe Church case where the PoR or the SCF have made recommendations, a Session fails to take appropriate safety measures to protect vulnerable people and/or comply with the law, the PoR shall write to the Session in the first instance regarding this, and to the

Classis thereafter. If action is still not taken, and the severity of the issue warrants it, appropriate third parties, such as the CRCA Law Agent or Insurers shall also be contacted.

Panel of Reference Privacy Protocols

The PoR adheres to the CRCA Privacy Policy.

Members of the PoR are required to keep case information entirely confidential and are not to discuss case information with anyone who is not a member of the PoR unless compelled to do so by either State law or where a Classis seeks further information in relation to a matter before it as part of the Code of Discipline process.

Members are to adopt the highest security in regard to information received and are not to allow, either deliberately or inadvertently through carelessness, anyone not on the PoR access to any PoR case material.

PoR members are required to have an email address that only they can access for communication within the PoR.

If PoR members print material provided to them this material must be kept securely where only they can access it.

After a PoR meeting any printed material may be

- a) Shredded immediately by the SCF or
- b) Removed by a PoR member provided it is immediately secured and treated with the highest level of confidentiality

The SCU and PoR privacy practices are documented by the SCF to prove compliance with the CRCA Privacy Policy, the Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles.

- The SCU serves and supports the congregations, sessions (church councils), classes and organisations of the CRCA in Safe Church matters

- The Safe Church Unit is located at

Address and phone details

Email: safechurch@CRCA.org.au

The Safe Church Compliance & Administration Officer, xxx, can be reached by telephoning:

www.safechurchCRCA.org.au

- Please be prepared to leave a message should your call be diverted to voicemail

The CRCA National Child Safe Database

Safe Church Record Keeping

SCU keeps records relating to:

- WWCCs (WWVP, Blue Card) holders registered with the CRCA (including those maintained by local congregations) – including contact details and specific roles held within the Church
- Compliance Audit Schedules for CRCA congregations and organisations
- Safe Church concerns/reports, enquiries, cases, incidents
- Programs/Activities approved by the Safe Church Coordinator (ChildSafe Coordinator)
- Third party information provided to SCU

These records are maintained in SMO (Safety Management Online) and are kept up to date by the local Safe Church Coordinator. Maintaining these records complies with recommendations 16.47 and 16.50 of the Royal Commission.

The CRCA National Register

The CRCA has agreed to establish a National Register, with specific reference to implementing Recommendation 16.58* of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, with the CRCA.

Requests to access records are subject to the privacy legislation and CRCA Privacy Policy. Case files may only be accessed by authorised personnel [external law enforcement agencies and appointed representatives of the SCU Advisory Committee responsible for abuse response and prevention in regard to a specific case]. Improper access will not be granted.

Once established, all CRCA Sessions, Classes and the Synodical Committees which employ and/or appoint individuals to roles within the Church will be required to contact the CRCA Safe Church Unit prior to employment/appointment, to gain clearance via the Register. The CRCA National Register records information that assists the Church to identify and respond to any risks posed to children or other vulnerable people by people in ministry.

The names of all persons who:

- apply for a Working with Children Check (or equivalent)
- are Ministers
- are paid employees or volunteer ministry workers of the Church
- have their details recorded in Safety Management Online (SMO)

will require a clearance via a check of the Church National Register by the Safe Church Unit before they may be admitted to any new role or ministry.

The National Register will include information about persons who have been involved in the life of the Church, and are or have been:

- Charged with or convicted of an offence or offences against the person – including sexual offences;

- Had a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked;
- The subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse;
- Listed on the Sex Offenders Register; and/or
- Subject to a risk management plan or party to a relevant behavioural [or safety] agreement under the authority of a relevant Court of the Church.

These above details are part of the CRCA National Register and information about these must be requested from SCU.

Once established, the procedure for requesting and attaining clearances will be communicated to all Churches, Synodical Committees, CRCA organisations and Safe Church Coordinators.

For more information about Persons of Concern and the process – please refer to the Guidelines for Person of Concern [Link to document](#)

*The recommendations can be found at www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au

Volunteer and Paid workers in CRCA ministry to children under 18 – process of approval

Volunteers are very important in sustaining the life and ministry of the church. It is critical, however, that volunteers abide by Safe Church CRCA to ensure a safe ministry environment, especially for children. Further, paid workers with children under 18 in the CRCA must also abide by Safe Church practice to ensure a safe ministry environment.

All people wishing to work with children under 18 in the CRCA must undergo the Volunteer Approval Process (VAP) prior to commencing in such a role. This process ensures that the CRCA is compliant with National Standard 5 (human resource practices).

Best practice for appointing people in volunteer roles working with children under 18 years is to only appoint people who have been in the congregation or organisation for more than a year. By adhering to this practice congregations and organisations reduce vulnerability to being targeted by potential abusers as providing an avenue to groom and access potential victims. The SCU highly recommends that all CRCA congregations and organisations embrace this practice as the standard approach to appointing volunteers in roles working with children under 18.

The local church completes this process upon receiving the volunteer application forms from the applicant of the congregation/organisation. The applicant is screened (all forms are checked for completion and the WWCC details are checked against the appropriate state websites). For new volunteer applications, an interview with the applicant and two referee checks are completed as part of this process. Following successful screening, the applicant is approved, and the persons details are then registered within the SMO (Safety Management Online) database. The person must attend Safe Church Basic Training within the first 12 months of being approved. The person must not be allowed to engage in any children's related activities until the WWCC and the training has been completed.

If the applicant is not approved by the local Coordinator or fails to secure a Working with Children Check the person cannot minister or work with children under 18 in any CRCA congregation or organisation. A person who has applied for a Working with Children Check must not commence in their role until the approval and number has arrived.

For detailed process – please refer to the CRCA Staff Recruitment Policy 2020-01.

- All people (paid staff and volunteers) who work with children in the CRCA are required to have a current Working With Children Check
- The CRCA and the SCU are committed to undertaking screening and reference checking of all people (paid staff and volunteers) who work with children in CRCA congregations and organisations, through the means of the Volunteer Approval Process
- All CRCA congregations and organisations are required to comply with the VAP requirements **prior** to allowing a person to commence in a role working with children

The Safe Church Unit and Privacy

The Safe Church Unit complies with the CRCA Privacy Policy and *The Privacy Act (1988)*, the federal law which regulates the handling of personal information about individuals. This includes the collection, use, storage and disclosure of personally identifiable and sensitive information.

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.

- The SCU complies with the CRCA Privacy Policy, *The Privacy Act (1988)* and the Australian Privacy Principles

Safe Church Training

Safe Church training is a key part of the commitment of the CRCA to abuse prevention and response in the Church.

Education and Training in Safe Church matters

As part of the CRCA's commitment to Safe Church, the SCU provides education and training to the denomination. Under State Government Standards the CRCA is required to provide basic child protection training for all people who:

- hold leadership positions, or
- minister to children under 18, or
- are involved in Pastoral Care (including all office bearers)

There are 4 forms of Safe Church Training:

1. **Basic Training/Team Member Training** – for everyone listed above.
2. **Advanced Training/Team Leader Training** - for team leaders only.
3. **Coordinator Training** – for Safe Church Coordinators (ChildSafe Coordinators).
4. **Emergency Response Team Training** – for ERT Coordinators and Directors.

Basic Training Course training are completed by:

- Ministers
- Elders
- Deacons
- Bible Study Leaders
- Music Ministry Leaders
- Camp Committee Leaders
- All those who work with children under 18 (e.g. Mainly Music, playgroup, Sunday School, youth groups, kids' or holiday clubs, crèche and any other ministry to children under 18)
- Pastoral Carers

This training provided by SCU ensures that the CRCA meets Standard 4 of the VCSS and Standard 7 of the National Standards.

Advanced Training is delivered to designated senior leaders in congregations and organisations with particular responsibility for leading and delivering ministry in both general and specific areas - including ministers, elders, bible study leaders, pastoral carers/deacons, and heads of ministries - for example, youth group leadership co-ordinator, Sunday School Superintendent, music ministry co-ordinator.

Advanced Training provided by SCU ensures that the CRCA meets Standards 1 and 4 of the VCSS and Standard 7 of the National Standards.

All training provided by SCU is offered in face-to-face training sessions. Basic, Advanced and Coordinator training may be completed on-line. The SCU recommends that the first or initial training session is completed during a face-to-face training session.

Specialised Training

Upon request SCU also provides CRCA organisations with specialised Safe Church education, training and resources.

New Ministers Training

In response to requests from the denomination SCU also provides Safe Church Training for new ministers, to assist new ministers in areas such as reporting requirements (including legal responsibilities), resourcing to aid ministering to individuals involved in an abuse-related matter, and responding to Safe Church scenarios. This training is both for recently graduated or ordained CRCA ministers as well as for those ministers and pastoral ministry workers who have recently come to a CRCA church from another denomination. Ministers who have joined the CRCA from another denomination in the previous 12 months also attend this training.

Social Media and Online Safety Training

In response to requests from CRCA churches the SCU delivers education sessions on social media and online to youth groups and parents.

- The CRCA and the SCU are committed to providing Safe Church related support, training and resources to congregations and organisations
- CRCA mandated personnel must keep their training up to date by viewing the Refresher Course

Safe Church Coordinators

For the CRCA to effectively embrace and implement the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct, Safe Church Coordinators are appointed in each congregation/organisation. Sessions and organisational leaders select and appoint a Safe Church Coordinator in their congregation/organisation.

The role of the Safe Church Coordinator is to support their own congregation/organisation in Safe Church matters, be responsible for working to ensure compliance and promote Safe Church Training.

The Safe Church Coordinator also serves in the role of SMO (Safety Management On-line) Coordinator.

Safe Church Coordinators ideally should be people

- with an interest and genuine loving concern to work towards making their own congregation/organisation a safe place for everyone within it
- of discretion and wise judgment
- able to kindly but firmly ensure compliance in areas such as Working With Children Checks and reference checking
- willing to be familiar with Safe Church CRCA and champion safe ministry within their church community

While Safe Church Coordinators need to be able to capably administer compliance within their congregation/organisation they must not act in an overly officious or “police-like” manner. Rather Safe Church Coordinators need to view themselves as primarily being helpers.

Responsibilities of Safe Church Coordinators/SMO Coordinator:

- Ensure the Safe Church Policy is displayed prominently in their congregation/organisation building/s
- Keep records of all people in their congregation/organisation who work with children and who have Working With Children Checks and updates these details in SMO.
- Keep records of all people in their congregation/organisation who by virtue of holding positions of authority have Working With Children Checks and update these details in SMO.
- Ensure the above records are kept up to date
- Ensure that when a new volunteer indicates that they wish to commence in ministry with children that they undergo the Volunteer Approval Process, as outlined in the ‘Volunteers’ page on this website (this information is also available in the section relating to volunteers in the Volunteer section in this Document). This includes ensuring the required forms are completed and conducting and documenting the referee checks
- Ensure that when a person transfers from one CRCA church to another and wishes to commence working with children in the new church that the CRCA Church Transfer Registration Form process is completed before the person commences working with children in their new church
- Promote and attend Safe Church Training
- Be responsible for completing the Compliance Audit Schedule and forwarding this document (keeping a copy for their own records) to the SCU.

Safe Church Coordinators receive regular email updates and information from the SCU.

- Safe Church Coordinators have an important role in the implementation of Safe Church CRCA
- Safe Church Coordinators are given all relevant information to enable them to fulfil this role.
- The SCU staff are available to assist the Safe Church Coordinators and support them in their role
- Safe Church Coordinators are encouraged to make use of the support available to them from SCU

Team Members

Team Members are those people, usually volunteers, who interact directly with children and young people in the various programs in the church. So, they may be Sunday School teachers, People looking after little ones in creche, etc.

Team Members are appointed following the Volunteer Application Process described in the Child Protection Policy (chapter 3).

Team Leaders

Team Leaders are those people who plan the programs for the various activities like Sunday School, Cadets, Gems, Youth Club, etc. In planning the activities, they follow the code of conduct ensure child ratios are adequate, risk assessments have been completed for the activities and the program has been approved by the Safe Church Coordinator before the program begins.

Team Leaders appointments usually follow after the individual has been an active Team Member for some time in the congregation. The Team Leader Agreement must be signed acknowledging the additional responsibility associated with being a Team Leader.

Safe Church Team

The Safe Church Team may include paid staff and/or volunteers. It is an especially important role which will report directly to the Pastor and church council. It is important that the Safe Church Team has at least one male and at least one female. We recommend that the Team includes the Child Safe (Safe Church) Coordinator and an elder. If you have an appointed Child Protection Officer, that person would make an excellent candidate.

Safe Church – CRCA: POLICY STATEMENT

Please refer to the CRCA A CHILD AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE PROTECTION POLICY Document ([insert link](#))

Safe Church – CRCA: CODE OF CONDUCT

Please refer to the CRCA A CHILD AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE PROTECTION POLICY Document ([insert link](#))

Creating a safe environment in the CRCA - Person of Concern

Please refer to the CRCA Guidelines for a Person of Concern ([insert link](#))

Relevant National Legislation

Our Prime Minister introducing the 10 Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse said this:

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) uncovered shocking abuse of children within institutions in Australia.

The Commission recommended taking action to make organisations across the country safe for children.

The development of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) is a key national reform in response to these recommendations.

The Principles have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, state and territory governments (at a COAG Meeting February 2019).

They provide a nationally consistent approach to embedding child safe cultures within organisations that engage with children, and act as a vehicle to give effect to all Royal Commission recommendations related to child safe standards.

Adopting the National Principles is an important step to better protecting Australia's children.

The responsibility for introducing legislation is at a state level. COAG has approved the 10 Standards/Principles prepared by the Royal Commission – so over the next few years all states will introduce legislation to comply with these 10 standards.

The 10 Standards/Principles:

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)

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 CRCA, the church is committed to ensuring that all of our churches and organisations are safe in every respect for everyone within them.

Institutions should be guided by the following core components when implementing the Child Safe 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.

This standard is all about ensuring that every church has a genuine child safe culture in place. Child Safety must be part of the church's DNA, it must be included in every program, every meeting as an

agenda item. A simple way to implement this is to ensure that Child Safety is an agenda item on your monthly church council meetings. Invite your child safe coordinator to your meeting or request a report from the coordinator and review this at your meetings.

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.

This standard is probably one of the most challenging ones. Our Team Leaders and Team Members will need to engage with children in their ministries, establishing what program they like, how to improve them etc. This is also designed to help children identify with what makes them feel safe, when they feel unsafe, who they identify as a “safe person”, a person they trust and are likely to disclose abuse to.

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.

This standard demands that we are very open with the parents of the children in our ministries. So, we need to explain the activities we involve the children in, make sure we use the correct permission forms for activities etc. We believe most churches do this quite well already. However, the standard also suggests that the communication is a two-way street, we need to listen to the parent’s requests also and they need to be involved in decisions effecting their children. The standard also suggests that parents can help develop our policies – however – we have not seen any laws about this yet – so we suggest that this is not compulsory. There are no guidelines how we should receive this feedback from parents.

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.

This standard is all about cultural sensitivity towards the participants in the programs. We need to be able to demonstrate that we cater to the specific cultural needs of the children.

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.

This standard is already law in several states, although I am not sure how well we as CRCA enforce this. In Queensland we have the “No Card, No Start” rule. This means that unless you have a current and valid Blue Card (WWCC) you cannot be involved in any children’s ministries. This is now an essential rule and must be followed. Likewise, Team Members and Team Leaders must be up-to-date with their training. Our Safety Management Online (SMO) system manages this easily – we manage by traffic lights. If you have two green lights (one for your WWCC and one for your training status), then you are safe to participate in children’s ministries. If you have a yellow or red traffic light – you must be stood down until they are green.

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.

This standard is about reporting incidents and abuse. This standard is probably one of the most significant ones to come from the Royal Commission recommendations. The commissioners were very critical about the way abuse was swept under the carpet, how children were not believed, even though 98% of children tell the truth about abuse. Consequently, Victoria, NSW and ACT already have implemented Reportable Conduct Schemes, with strict compliance for reporters. Our child safe training does focus on listening and how to report abuse. Incidents and abuse must be reported using SMO, so that adequate records are available. The RCS VIC is about follow-up by the Institution, not just reporting i.e. investigation, management etc

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.

This standard is all about training our Team Members and Team Leaders. Regular training is mandated. This is significant, as there are many changes introduced in various states regularly. The Presbyterian Church has a 3-year training cycle AND participants are required to complete an annual refresher course on-line. Child Safe standards suggest a 3-year training cycle – which is managed using the traffic lights mentioned in standard 5. The CRCA complies with this standard, however, we need to ensure training status is up-to-date (traffic light is green). If the training status is not up-to-date, the team member or leader must be stood down until the training is complete.

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.

This standard is all about Risk Management. The standard suggest we should do everything in our power to ensure the children are safe when they attend one of our programs – both physical as well

as on-line activities. Our Programs module in SMO does provide Risk Assessment tools. As long as we use these features in SMO, we (CRCA) are compliant with this standard.

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.

This standard requires that all church councils regularly review their Standards and Code of Conduct. Incidents that have been reported must be reviewed and any opportunity for improvement should be embraced and implemented.

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.

This standard should be in place in each of our churches already. All our churches should have a Child Safe Policy and Procedure manual, Code of Conduct, etc. The CRCA has been recommending the standard GJIC documentation, implemented by most churches. However, the standard does strongly suggest that these documents should not just sit in a binder on a shelf in an office somewhere in the church. All pastors, elders, team members and leaders need to know the policies and procedures and demonstrate they understand them in the way they conduct themselves.

Relevant Victorian Legislation

Mandatory Reporting - Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) Victoria

The Victorian Parliament, on September 10th 2019, passed amendments to the *Children, Youth and Families Act*, which mean that people in religious ministries are added to the list of mandated reporters to Child Protection Services.

The legislation states that a:

"person in religious ministry means a person appointed, ordained or otherwise recognised as a religious or spiritual leader in a religious institution;"

The law makes it mandatory for ministers and other appointed religious leaders to report child abuse, including when it is revealed to them during a confession. Under the law, ministers and religious leaders face up to three years' jail if they don't report child physical and sexual abuse allegations. This law was supported by both the Government and the Opposition.

Mandatory reporting refers to the legal requirement for nominated groups to report a reasonable belief of physical or sexual child abuse to authorities.

There is no significant change for the CRCA brought about by this legislation as under 'Failure to Disclose' and the existing Safe Church CRCA reporting protocols, CRCA personnel have essentially operated as mandatory reporters regardless.

Any questions about this may be directed to the Safe Church Unit.

The Victorian Child Safe Standards - Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) Victoria

The Victorian Child Safe Standards are a direct result of the 'Betrayal of Trust' Victorian State Government Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse in Religious and Non-Government Organisations, held in 2012-13.

As a result of the Inquiry the State Government have introduced a number of new pieces of legislation, which have bipartisan support among all political parties in Victoria.

These standards are an excellent development in our community. The standards are intentionally designed to increase the safety of children in all organisations, religious or otherwise.

At the heart of the standards is the desire of our community to say "Never again" to the abuse of children within organisations in Victoria – this is a great thing and something the Christian Church absolutely aligns with. For churches and Christian organisations the Child Safe Standards provide further impetus to achieve best practice in protecting children now from harm and from the lifelong effects of child abuse. The standards are a great thing for children in Victoria and for the Christian Church.

The seven standards are as follows:

1. Embedding a culture of child safety through effective leadership.
2. Making a commitment to child safety with a policy or statement.
3. Having a clear code of conduct that establishes appropriate behaviour with children.
4. Screening, supervision and training for staff, to reduce the risk of child abuse.

5. Clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.
6. Risk management and mitigation – in relation to risks of child abuse.
7. Empowering children to share their feedback and experiences about feeling safe.

The standards are designed to drive cultural change in organisations, so that protecting children from abuse is embedded in the everyday thinking and practice of leaders, staff and volunteers.

This will assist organisations to:

- Promote the safety of children
- Prevent child abuse
- Ensure effective processes are in place to respond to and report allegations of child abuse

Overarching principles

In applying each standard, organisations must reflect and embed the following 3 key principles:

1. Cultural safety of Aboriginal children
2. Cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
3. Safety of children with disabilities

The CRCA complies with the Victorian Child Safe Standards. For further detail please contact the Safe Church Unit.

See www.cyp.vic.gov.au

The Working With Children Check - *The Working with Children Act (2005) Victoria*

All people working with children under 18 years old in the CRCA are required to have a current Victorian Working With Children Check (WWC Check) OR, in the case of Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers, notify Working With Children Check Victoria (via the website) of their role with the CRCA. No person will be permitted to work with children under 18 in any CRCA ministry or activity without a current WWC Check.

See www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

Other appointed church leaders

In October 2014 the State Government of Victoria enacted changes to the Victorian Working With Children Check (WWC Check). For the purposes of the legislation a minister of religion is anyone ordained or appointed as a recognised religious leader in an organised religious institution or an appointed leader of a local religious organisation in an institution who has general authority over operations or some of the operations of the congregation in the institution.

Advice given to the Safe Church Unit during consultation with the State Government means that the broadened scope of the WWC Check will mean that the following people in the CRCA require a WWC Check in addition to those already holding a WWC Check due to participation in child-related activities:

- Ministers - regardless of whether or not their congregation includes children
- Elders and Deacons

- Appointed leaders of any ministry in the congregation – this includes music leaders, Bible study leaders, and specific ministry leaders (for example women’s ministry or English teaching ministry leaders) - regardless of whether or not their ministry area includes ministry to children
- Individuals with a preaching license

The legislation is broad in nature and on advice the CRCA will err on the side of complete coverage. The message from government is that the WWC Check is the minimum standard and organisations should be careful to ensure that all appointed leaders have a WWC Check. The updated recommendation from the SCU is that all appointed leaders acquire a WWC Check regardless of whether or not their congregation has children attending. This is the most protective approach for leaders, the local church and the denomination.

If your role in the CRCA involves participating in more than one congregation of the CRCA (for example, preaching in more than one congregation on a regular basis or your role requires you to travel and serve in other CRCA congregations) you must list the CRCA as an organisation on your WWC Check details. Simply visit the Working With Children Check website to update your details and add the ‘CRCA’ to your list of organisations. Will need to be specific as to contact person and their details – all done on-line.

The WWC Check application form is now only available online – see www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply

Please contact the Safe Church Unit via email or telephone with further queries or should any assistance be required. There is no government fee for the check for all volunteers in the CRCA.

Ministers of CRCA churches require an ‘Employee’ WWC Check rather than a ‘Volunteer’ check.

Why WWC Checks are required in appointed leadership roles that do not involve children

The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse have revealed two key areas of concern that the broadening of the Victorian WWC Check seeks to address:

- The need to change culture from "Child sexual abuse could never happen in my church" to "Child sexual abuse can and does happen in churches and everyone needs to be mindful of preventing it and ready to report it".
- The need to remove "blocks" when a concern is raised with a leader in a church and that leader is either not mindful of the possibility of child sexual abuse occurring, perhaps even disbelieving about this or doesn't believe it is their responsibility to take the concern further.

By legislating that all appointed leaders in churches and organisations have WWC Checks the state government is seeking to both broaden awareness of child sexual abuse and assist individual leaders at all levels of church authority in taking responsibility to report concerns, suspicions or known child sexual abuse.

Interim negative notices and Withdrawal notices

If an individual receives an Interim Negative Notice upon applying for a WWC Check this means that the Department of Justice and Community Safety (the Department) intends to reject the application and issue a Negative Notice. The Interim Negative Notice means that the Department has not yet made a final decision in the application and the individual may make a submission and explain why they believe they should be granted a WWC Check.

The local church will receive a copy of the Interim Negative Notice. Under the legislation, the individual must notify the local church within 7 days of being given an Interim Negative Notice. If the local church (either the Safe Church Coordinator or the Session) receive notification that an individual in the congregation has received an Interim Negative Notice this information must be immediately disclosed to the Safe Church Unit.

Any employee or volunteer of the CRCA who is issued with an Interim Negative Notice or Withdrawal Notice must cease working with children and/or stand aside from their role until the matter is resolved by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. This is to allow the CRCA to fulfil its duty of care to children in the Church, as well as to the person to whom the Interim Negative Notice or Withdrawal Notice has been issued.

Post 1 August 2017 the legislation allows for “non-conviction” charges to be considered by the Department of Justice and Community Safety in terms of granting a WWC Check to individuals, including to those who are renewing their WWC Check. This means that some individuals who currently have a WWC Check may have their WWC Check withdrawn.

Further, the term “unsupervised work with children” has been removed, meaning the WWC Check applies to all contact with children, whether supervised or not.

When an interim negative notice or a withdrawal notice has been received for an individual, the appointment status within SMO must be changed to “Refer Organization” which is represented with a black dot.

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme - (Part 5A) *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005)*

Victoria

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme legislation states at Part 2 16B (1) (a) that “the protection of children is the paramount consideration in the context of abuse or employee misconduct involving a child”. [“employee” is defined as both paid and volunteer workers in the organisation]

The RCS is further evidence of the seriousness with which the State and community of Victoria treat the safety of children from abuse. The RCS forms part of a concerted effort to build a culture of child safety in Victoria across all organisations that have children in them. The main emphasis of the RCS is to ensure that all organisations are clear about their reporting duties, risk assessment and risk management.

The CRCA must comply with the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme (RCS). This means that any historical and current child abuse allegations relating to employees and volunteers who work for the Church must be reported by the Head of Entity to the Commission for Children and Young People.

Any allegations of criminal conduct will be reported to Victoria Police as the first priority.

The Church must also provide evidence to the Commission for Children and Young People of a legislative-compliant investigation and appropriate response to the allegation(s).

There are five types of 'reportable conduct':

- sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

The RCS requires the Churches to **risk assess and risk manage known risks to children's safety from abuse in the CRCA**. This legislative requirement aligns with the requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

For more details, please see the Commission for Children and Young People information sheet "What is reportable conduct?" – at www.cyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/What-is-reportable-conduct.pdf

Please contact the Safe Church Unit with any RCS enquiries, concerns or allegations – phone 9999 999 999.

Alternatively anyone may report directly to the Commission for Children and Young People - phone: (03) 8601 5281 – and then advise the Safe Church Unit of the report – phone 9999 999 999.

Relevant New South Wales Legislation

Legislation consolidating the powers and functions of the NSW Children's Guardian and reinforcing the role's independence as the key regulator of child protection services in NSW came into effect today.

The Children's Guardian Act 2019 commenced on 1 March 2020 to give the Children's Guardian greater powers to help organisations create safer environments for children in NSW.

The new Act consolidates the Children's Guardian's functions for registration or accreditation and monitoring of voluntary and statutory out-of-home care agencies as well as regulating children's employment in the entertainment industry.

The new Act also extends the Children's Guardian's functions to include the Community Visitor Scheme (relating to children and young people) and an expanded Reportable Conduct Scheme, which transfer to the Office of the Children's Guardian from the NSW Ombudsman.

From 1 March 2020, the Reportable Conduct Scheme is operated by the Office of the Children's Guardian the [Children's Guardian Act 2019](#).

The scheme monitors how certain organisations ('relevant entities') investigate and report on types of conduct ('reportable allegations' or 'reportable convictions') made against their employees, volunteers or certain contractors who provide services to children. The scheme will also cover religious bodies, in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

From 1 March 2020, when the head of a 'relevant entity' becomes aware of a reportable allegation or a reportable conviction, the head of that entity must notify the Office of the Children's Guardian within seven business days and conduct an investigation into the allegations. If the final entity report is not ready to submit within 30 calendar days, the head must provide an interim report with information about the progress of the investigation and an expected timeframe for completion.

There are 12 Parts and 6 Schedules to the Children's Guardian Act 2019.

This government department also administers the [Child Protection \(Working with Children\) Act 2012](#), along with the following regulations:

[Child Protection \(Working with Children\) Regulation 2013](#)

[Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) \(Child Employment\) Regulation 2015](#)

[Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Regulation 2012](#)

[Adoption Regulation 2015](#)

Regulations under Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and Adoption Act 2000 remain in force until new Regulations are made under the Children's Guardian Act.

For further details about the Reportable Conduct Scheme, please refer Appendix A in the SCU Mandate document.

Relevant Australian Capital Territory Legislation

Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) has a statutory responsibility to support children, young people and families requiring a care or justice response.

CYPS is the statutory child protection agency which services the ACT region. CYPS has legislative responsibility under the *Children and Young People Act 2008* for facilitating and coordinating services across government for the care and protection of children and young people believed to be at risk of harm. This involves assessing risk and working with families and other professionals to resolve issues that compromise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. CYPS provides a continuum of service delivery to children and young people considered 'at risk' of serious abuse and harm.

CYPS receives reports of concern relating to the safety and well-being of children and young people. Concerns may be related to:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse (including exposure to family violence)
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

If you suspect a child is at risk of abuse or neglect by a **family member or guardian**, use the [online form](#) [↗] to report your concerns, call 1300 556 729 or email childprotection@act.gov.au

If your concerns relate to abuse **outside** of a family context, contact ACT Policing on 131 444 to make your report.

If you believe a child is in **immediate danger**, contact the Police now by calling 000.

From **1 September 2019**, new child sexual abuse reporting laws come into effect which make it offence for anyone in Canberra over 18 years old who reasonably believes a sexual offence has been committed against a child must make a report to Police.

- If there is an **immediate risk of harm**, call 000, otherwise call ACT Policing on 131 444 to make a **report**.
- If you are a mandated reporter, you only have to have a report to Child and Youth Protection Services. You **do not** have to *additionally* report to the Police.
- For more information go to the ACT Government's webpage on [new laws to improve reporting of child abuse](#) [↗]

Legislation in the ACT is represented in the following acts:

[Children and Young People Act 2008](#)

[Crimes \(Child Sex Offenders\) Act 2005](#)

For further details about the Reportable Conduct Scheme, please refer Appendix A in the SCU Mandate document.

Relevant Queensland Legislation

The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (the Act) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 require regulated organisations to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy which aims to keep children and young people safe. The other relevant legislation is the Child Protection Act 1999.

To comply with the legislative framework, a child and youth risk management strategy must include eight minimum requirements. These requirements:

- address an organisation's commitment to creating a safe and supportive service environment
- strengthen an organisation's capability to provide such an environment
- assist an organisation to manage any particular concerns with respect to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who are involved with the organisation, and
- promote the consistency of an organisation's approach to risk management, both within the organisation and with respect to compliance with the requirements under the Act.

The eight requirements are:

Commitment

1. A statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm, and
2. A code of conduct for interacting with children.

Capability

3. Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers.

Concerns

4. Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines
5. A plan for managing breaches of your risk management strategy, and
6. Risk management plans for high risk activities and special events.

Consistency

7. Policies and procedures for managing compliance with the blue card system, and
8. Strategies for communication and support.

These obligations are to reduce the risks children may face and ensure safe environments for Queensland's children.

All people over the age of 18 years must have an active Blue Card before becoming involved in Children's Ministries. Blue Card Services administers the blue card system—Queensland's Working with Children Check.

All children in Queensland have a right to be safe and protected from harm. The blue card system regulates activities which are essential to children's lives. These include child care, education, sport, cultural activities and foster care. We check and monitor people who work in these industries and help organisations to create safe environments for children.

The blue card system is made up of 3 parts: screening, ongoing monitoring and risk management strategies.

The blue card check is more than a police check, it looks at:

- a charge or conviction for any offence in Australia, even if no conviction was recorded (this includes spent convictions, pending and non-conviction charges)
- child protection prohibition orders (both respondents and subjects to the application)
- disqualification orders
- reporting obligations under the [*Child Protection \(Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order\) Act 2004*](#) or [*Dangerous Prisoners \(Sexual Offenders\) Act 2003*](#)
- disciplinary information from certain organisations (this includes information about teachers, child care licensees and foster carers)
- police investigative information relating to allegations of serious child-related sexual offences, even if no charges were laid.

Relevant Western Australia Legislation

The WWC Check is only one strategy to keep children safe. There are many things employers and organisations that work with children can do to make sure their organisations are child-safe and child-friendly.

[The Australian Human Rights Commission has released new National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.](#) These National Principles reflect the ten child safe standards recommended by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*.

As a child-safe organisation, your safety strategies should include:

- a commitment and culture, focussed on protecting children,
- creation of a safe physical and online environment,
- child safety policies and procedures,
- good recruitment and screening, including reference checking,
- ongoing education and training of staff and volunteers,
- good communication and involvement of parents and community,
- empowering children to know their rights and actively participate in the organisation, and
- effective complaints management, including making sure children know who they can talk to about their concerns.

The Working with Children Check (WWC Check) is a compulsory screening strategy in Western Australia and the Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The WWC Check aims to protect children by:

- deterring people from applying to work with children where they have a relevant charge or conviction on their criminal record that indicates they may harm a child;
- detecting new charges and convictions of those people who hold a current WWC Card and preventing them from continuing to engage in [child-related work](#) where their criminal record and behaviour indicates they may harm a [child](#); and
- protecting children by creating awareness that child safety is a whole of community responsibility.

You have responsibilities under the *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004*.

Some of your responsibilities include that:

- all employees, volunteers, [students](#) and self-employed people who engage in [child-related work](#) have applied for a WWC Check or hold a current WWC Card;
- you validate WWC Cards of any new employees, volunteers or [students](#) who already hold current WWC Cards from other [child-related work](#) they engage in;
- all current WWC card holders renew their WWC Card before it expires if they are continuing to engage in [child-related work](#);
- you keep records to demonstrate your compliance. [For more information about record keeping please click here](#);
- you do not engage a person in [child-related work](#) if you know that they have been convicted of a Class 1 offence committed when an adult;

- you do not engage a person in [child-related work](#) if they have been issued with an [Interim Negative Notice](#), [Negative Notice](#) or if they have withdrawn their application for a WWC Check; and
- notify the WWC Screening Unit if you reasonably suspect an employee, volunteer or [student](#) has been charged with or convicted of an offence which makes it inappropriate for them to engage in [child-related work](#).

The *Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004* was passed by State Parliament on 26 November 2004, and was proclaimed on 1 January 2006. Since proclamation a number of amendments have been made to the Act and Regulations.

Legislation can be accessed from the website of the State Law Publisher of Western Australia, which is the official publisher of all Western Australian legislation.

[Working with Children \(Criminal Record Checking\) Act 2004](#)

[Working with Children \(Criminal Record Checking\) Regulations 2005](#)

Note – checking the websites 30 July 2020 was not possible – the website was under maintenance

Relevant South Australian Legislation

New child safety laws come into effect in full on 22 October 2018, representing the biggest change to child protection in 25 years.

The new [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#) ensures greater safety, wellbeing and stability for children, young people and families within our communities.

To report a suspected case of child abuse or neglect call the child abuse report line (CARL): 13 14 78.

The report line is available 24 hours a day.

All serious concerns must be reported via the report line and **not** via the online reporting system.

Serious concerns include when you suspect a child or infant is in imminent or immediate danger of:

- serious harm
- serious injury
- chronic neglect
- or when a child is in care of the department and you suspect they are being abused or neglected.

See [preparing to report suspected child abuse or neglect](#) for details on what to provide in a report.

After a child has told you about abuse or neglect, you can show your care and concern by:

- remembering the child may be experiencing a crisis
- listening carefully
- controlling your own expressions of panic or shock
- taking what the child says seriously
- using the child's own vocabulary
- telling the child that this has happened to other children and that some adults do wrong things
- reassuring the child that they have done the right thing by telling you
- telling the child you will do your best to support them but do not make promises you may not be able to keep
- explaining to the child that you need to tell someone who can help them.

A mandated notifier is required by law to notify the Department for Child Protection if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm.

This obligation arises when a mandated notifier forms this suspicion in the course of their employment (whether paid or voluntary).

A mandated notifier must make the notification as soon as is reasonably practicable after forming the suspicion. Refer to the [Mandatory Reporting Guide \(PDF, 603.0 KB\)](#) for helpful guidance around deciding when to report concerns to the Child Abuse Report Line.

If a mandated notifier forms a suspicion outside of their work (whether paid or voluntary) that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm, they may make a notification to the Department for Child Protection voluntarily.

Always call 000 if it is an emergency.

Stronger, more effective and transparent screening laws for people working or volunteering with children come into effect on 1 July 2019 – working with children checks.

From 1 July 2019 any person who works or volunteers with children in South Australia must have a working with children check. This includes:

- foster carers, kinship carers and respite carers
- adult household members and regular guests of a carer household
- volunteers
- foster care agencies
- child protection workers
- prospective adoptive parents.

The 'Working with Children Check Guidelines' (the Guidelines) are made pursuant to section 4 of the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016* (the Act).

A working with children check in respect of a person consists of the central assessment unit assessing assessable information in relation to a person against the prescribed risk assessment criteria to determine whether or not the person poses an unacceptable risk to children.

On completing a working with children check, the central assessment unit must determine whether the person is, or is not, to be prohibited from working with children. Persons who pose an unacceptable risk to children are to be prohibited from working with them.

The Department for Human Services Screening Unit performs the functions and exercises the powers of the central assessment unit for the purposes of the Act.

The Guidelines are to be read as a whole and in conjunction with the Act and the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations 2019* (the Regulations).

They provide the framework for how the central assessment unit will conduct a working with children check for the purposes of the Act; i.e. how the central assessment unit will identify and assess assessable information against the risk assessment criteria to determine whether the person is, or is not, to be prohibited from working with children.

The Guidelines are intended to be subject to continuous improvement and will be reviewed periodically to determine whether they are meeting the requirements of the Act and Regulations.

Relevant Tasmanian Legislation

The role of Child Safety Service is to protect children and young people who are at risk of abuse or neglect. In Tasmania, the safety of children and young people is covered by the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 amended in August 2009 and December 2013.

If you have concerns for the safety or welfare of a child, call the Advice and Referral Line on **1800 000 123**.

If a child is at immediate risk and Police or medical assistance is required, dial **000**.

In Tasmania, mandatory reporting requirements are outlined in the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*.

People who are legally obliged to report child abuse or neglect are sometimes called 'mandatory reporters' or 'prescribed persons'. They include medical practitioners, nurses, dentists, police officers, psychologists, probation officers, child welfare officers, school principals, ministers of religion, teachers, kindergarten teachers, people who manage child care services and people employed by or volunteering in government agencies or organisations funded by the Crown that provide health, welfare, education or care for children.

If you are a mandatory reporter and you believe, suspect or know that a child has been or is being abused or neglected you must contact the Advice and Referral Line as soon as possible. If you don't do this you could face penalties

When to Make a Report

As a mandatory reporter you need to contact the Advice and Referral Line as soon as possible if you know, believe or suspect that an unborn baby, child or young person:

- is being abused or neglected or is an affected child within the meaning of the *Family Violence Act 2004*; or
- may be killed, abused or neglected by a person who they live with; or
- if the baby isn't born yet, that he or she may need medical treatment or other intervention as a result of behaviour by the pregnant woman or another person.

You don't need to wait until you have evidence. Staff at the Advice and Referral Line will always want to hear from you if you're worried about a child's safety or wellbeing. You might be worried because:

- a child has told you something themselves;
- Another person has told you something;
- you've personally observed things; or
- you've come across information that makes you think a child might be unsafe.

Anyone wanting to work with children must be registered – You may need to apply for registration if you:

- are 16 years of age and over
- work or volunteer with children (that is, anyone under 18 years of age)
- would be expected to have more than incidental contact with children as a normal part of your duties

Child-related religious activity

Examples of roles where registration is likely to be required:

- religious leaders including Ministers of Religion, Chaplains, Rabbis, Priests, Muftis, Acolytes and other like religious leaders or spiritual officers where the usual duties of these leaders involve contact with children
- adults who volunteer their services for Sunday school, church youth activities, children's religious storytelling
- adults engaged in any other role in the organisation involving activities primarily related to children, including youth groups, youth camps, teaching children and childcare
- adults that deliver children's religious storytelling.

If you are still not sure if you need to register: [Complete this quick survey to check \(external link\)](#).

Examples of roles that are likely to require registration are listed below. Exemptions apply in certain circumstances. See [exemptions from registration](#) for more information.

An employer or volunteer organisation may also require a person to be registered.

For the legal definitions of each regulated activity, see the [Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Regulations 2014 \(external link\)](#).

Online and Smart Phone Usage Guidelines

The following guidelines (also available at www.CRCA.org.au) are to assist all people who work with young people and all people who are in positions of authority within the CRCA. Where the phrase “young person” or “young people” is used it is always defined as a person or people under 18 years of age. This advice provides useful general guidance in regards to online and smart phone communication (i.e. all electronic communication).

In cases where ministry outcomes are in part effected through the use of social media then it is recommended that particular practice guidelines pertaining to that ministry are developed and clearly communicated to the leaders. The SCU is available for assistance in establishing such particular guidelines.

Safe Church

The Safe Church Code of Conduct states: “As a person in a position of authority within the church you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position, likely perceptions of the church and the wider community, and the need to acknowledge the real or perceived power given to you as a result of holding this position. You should avoid situations where you are vulnerable to temptation or where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of this Code of Conduct. You will make yourself familiar with the provisions of Safe Church - CRCA.”

This point has application to your use of all electronic communications as a person of authority or person working with young people in the CRCA.

Basic Principles

There are three basic principles when having any type of conversation with a young person:

- 1) Remember God is listening:
 - The ‘God test’ – is this conversation honouring God?
 - The ‘parent test’ – if this young person’s parents were listening/reading this, would they feel comfortable with this conversation?
- 2) Seek transparency in conversations with young people and do not converse where you can’t be observed by others.
- 3) Don’t get in deeper than you can handle – if issues arise that are greater than your ability or in an area of your weakness refer the young person to others who are better equipped to deal with it. When in doubt, ask for help.

Online and smart phone communications can create an intense, relational situation because of the ease of access, the comfort of distance and its unobserved nature. A relationship can be developed far more quickly than was possible before online communication was common. Therefore, the church considers talking with young people online and via smart phone to be exactly the same as talking to them face to face. **The same code of conduct for leaders interacting with young people face to face applies to all types of online and smart phone communication.**

Specific conduct guidelines:

Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/blogs/websites

If your church ministry or organisation establishes any of the above social media platforms as a method of communication within the group this is the best place for leaders to converse with members of the group as all conversations may be held in public. Ensure there is no option for private conversations to take place on this facility.

Best practice is for leaders not to be individual friends on social media with young people within the church or organisation. This is due to the risks inherent in private relationships which may develop over social media. These risks affect both young people and leaders.

However it is recognised that leaders may be individual friends on social media with young people where the relationship is pre-existing or established via other connections, for example they may be related or may have formed the friendship via knowing each other external to the leader/group member relationship. In circumstances where leaders are individual friends with young people on social media leaders are at all times to adhere to the basic principles above.

SMS Text messaging/emails

Best practice is to only use the above methods of communication as a “one-way” avenue for communicating within the group. Make it clear to all members of the group that while SMS texts/emails will be used for communication leaders will not reply individually to any response from group members, unless a matter of urgency arises and in every case, with a fellow leader copied in on the reply. Give parents the option of always being copied in on any communication from the ministry or organisation leaders and add those parents to the contacts list.

When sending group emails always remember to send any email to yourself first and put all contacts into the blind copy (BCC) field to ensure you do not distribute email addresses without permission. Always copy in fellow leaders. Follow the same privacy protocols if using SMS texts to do mass communication within the group.

Phone/Skype/FaceTime/Messaging Apps/In-game messaging

In the main seek to avoid where possible individual contact with young people via online and smart phone communication. Aim to have 100% of communication to young people via group communication. Should a need arise to use phone/Skype/FaceTime you should be accountable – always get parental permission **before** you talk with a young person over the phone and tell a co-leader that you are conversing with a young person by phone. If using Skype or FaceTime again always get parental permission **before** you talk with a young person using this facility. Ensure both you and the young person are using this form of communication in an open area where people can see you or there are others present, e.g. not alone in your room.

Do not use Messaging Apps or in-game messaging to communicate individually with children or people under your pastoral care in your Church role.

In the case where an inappropriate message or image is sent to a leader by a child or a person under pastoral care/leadership via any online or smart phone communication, whether publicly or privately, the leader should not reply under any circumstances. Do not delete the image or message. The leader must immediately notify the ministry or organisation leader that this has occurred. The ministry or organisation leader may then contact the SCU for advice on how to proceed.

Cyber bullying and image based abuse

Sadly, there is an increase in the prevalence of cyber bullying and image based abuse targeting both adults and children in Australia, mostly via social media. Both State and Federal parliaments have begun to address this societal problem through legislation and the provision of assistance to Australians via the Office of e-safety – www.esafety.gov.au

If you become aware of cyber bullying or image based abuse within the church context visit www.esafety.gov.au and contact SCU for assistance and reporting.

- Online and smart phone communication has significant potential risk involved for all users
- Adhering to these guidelines will help minimise risk
- Always seek transparency in online and smart phone activities
- Practice online and smart phone behaviour that demonstrates a true witness to the Christian faith
- As much as possible adopt an approach that uses electronic communication as a ‘broadcast’ communication tool to a group
- If a situation develops online that you need advice or guidance about **call the Safe Church Unit 9999 999 999**

Safe Church – Children

The Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct applies to all interactions between adults and children within the CRCA. Within the legislative environment of Australian states, a child is always defined as a person under 18 years of age and the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct adhere to this definition. In this manual the following terms are interchangeably used to describe a person or persons under the age of 18 years: **child/children, young person/young people.**

The Safe Church Unit works to ensure that all CRCA congregations and organisations are compliant with State government child-related legislative requirements that are applied to voluntary organisations including churches.

In particular the SCU ensures the CRCA is compliant with the various state Child Safe Standards and can demonstrate this to both the CRCA and the State Government.

See the following website for the information about the standards:

www.childsafestandards.org.au

Contact SCU for further information about the CRCA compliance with the various State Government Child Safe Standards.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is an act by a person or persons that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. **In legislation in Australian States and in the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct a child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.**

There are different kinds of child abuse:

Neglect

Failure to provide the basic necessities of life, such as love and affection, safety, food, clothing, hygiene, medical care and education.

Emotional Abuse

Depriving a child or young person of love and attention which can include but is not limited to constant criticism, isolation, excessive teasing or terrorising. These actions and others are used by a person in a position of power to make the child feel worthless. It may also include actions that cause serious mental anguish without any legitimate disciplinary purpose as judged by the standards of the time when the incidents occurred.

Physical Abuse

All non-accidental physical injuries. This can include but is not limited to hitting, beating, burning, scalding or shaking, and actions that cause serious pain without any legitimate disciplinary purpose as judged by the standards of the time when the incidents occurred.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes involvement in sexual activities with anyone who is older, bigger, in authority or perceived authority or more powerful where a **child or young or vulnerable person** is unable to give informed consent. It also includes sexual activities with a person under 18 years of age (such as another child or sibling) where a **child or young person** is unable to give informed consent. These activities may be initiated by either party. This includes but is not limited to:

- touching in a sexual way
- masturbating
- flashing
- oral sex
- sexual intercourse
- eroding the sexual boundary between two people through sexual innuendo
- kissing
- unwanted or unnecessary touching
- overly long hugs
- online child exploitation (the grooming of children online to create online material that is sexually exploitative of a child)

It can involve apparently consensual intercourse or sexual activity but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential or the fact that one person has a moral and spiritual responsibility towards the other.

It also includes permitting another person to undertake these activities with your knowledge or in your presence. **It is not possible for a person under the age set by legislation (16 or 18 years) to legally consent to sexual activity.**

Domestic and Family Violence and Children under 18

Statistics indicate that children who witness abuse are at least twice as likely to continue the cycle of domestic and family abuse into adulthood. In fact, witnessing abuse from one caregiver to another is the strongest risk factor for the transmission of violent behaviour from one generation to the other. Children who have been abused are also 15 times more likely to be abused by others.

These are just some of the many reasons why domestic and family abuse cannot be tolerated and must be acted upon. Child protection is everybody's business and we all have a responsibility to ensure that children are safe.

(Source: Jericho Road Tip Sheet 9 - See www.jerichoroad.org.au/breaking-the-silence/domestic-violence)

While it can be emotionally tough for church leaders and pastoral carers to consider making a report under such circumstances it is essential to remember that family violence situations can escalate very quickly and children are at real risk of harm when left living with family violence. Children cannot change their own circumstances and are entirely vulnerable to the adults around them. That is why, even though it is difficult, and church leaders and pastoral carers can feel emotionally conflicted and torn, **a report must be made**. Making a report also assists in the provision of guidance and resourcing for the minister and any other person ministering in the situation.

- Child abuse is an act by a person or persons that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development
- It is imperative that all individuals and organisations in the CRCA understand and recognise the different forms of child abuse
- Family violence involves violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or instil fear. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or other types of abuse. If a person has an immediate concern that a child is exposed to or subject to family violence, an urgent report must be made
- Mandatory Reporting of child abuse applies
- Contact Safe Church Unit with any child abuse concerns or reports or to seek advice

Signs of Abuse

The following chart gives **examples** of possible indicators of child abuse. Note it is not an exhaustive list - for a more detailed list of indicators see <http://www.safechurchcrca.org.au/resources> or the **ChildSafe Team Member Guide** booklet. Note that the presence or absence of any indicators listed does not necessarily mean the child is or is not experiencing abuse.

Form of Abuse	Possible Indicators
Sexual abuse	Verbally reports or discloses sexual abuse , aggressive, overt sexual behaviour, age-inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts, wary of physical contact (especially with an adult), physical signs of injuries (generally to the genital area), poor self-esteem, poor peer relations, inappropriate expressions of friendship between a child and an adult, self-harm, discloses online sexual behaviour as a result of online grooming or coercion, produces sexually explicit drawings, delinquent and/or aggressive behavior, sleep-related difficulties
Physical abuse	Verbally reports or discloses physical abuse , unexplained welts, bruises, burns, fractures, lacerations, abrasions, head injuries, appears frightened of carer, seeks affection from any adult with no discrimination, extreme aggression or withdrawal or other behavioural extremes, complaints of soreness or injuries, expresses little or no emotion when hurt, offers unlikely explanations for injuries, wears long-sleeved clothes on hot days
Emotional Abuse	Verbally reports or discloses emotional maltreatment , speech disorders, lags in physical development or failure to thrive, attempted suicide, low self-esteem, toileting problems, apathetic, withdrawn, habit disorders (such as rocking, biting, sucking)
Neglect	Verbally reports there is no carer/parent at home or a consistent lack of supervision consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress, chronically unclean, unattended physical problems, medical or dental needs, underweight, developmental delays, begs or steals food

- Child abuse is not usually a single incident but rather takes place over time
- Individuals and organisations in the CRCA must be aware of and look out for all forms and indicators of child abuse
- Online sexually exploitative abuse of children is growing exponentially in Australia due to the popularity of online activity and in particular, social media use by children. Always report online sexually exploitative abuse of children to police and SCU

What to do if a child discloses abuse

It is possible for any person in the church, whether in a position of authority or not, to have a child disclose abuse. In such circumstances it is extremely important that the situation is not compromised in any way. The following advice is intended to assist if a child discloses abuse to someone in the church:

What to do if a child discloses abuse

1. Listen, listen, listen...and do not add anything.
2. When listening to a child **remember**:
 - that children often talk about difficult or painful things in a roundabout way
 - that children need assurance from adults that it is OK to talk about upsetting things
 - children often feel ashamed and frightened and find it hard to find the right words to explain
 - being observant will help you pick up non-verbal clues about what is wrong
 - a child may drop hints when something is wrong, for example, "I don't like so and so. Do you like him/her?"
3. Tell the child, "You are not to blame". Assure the child that you "believe him/her".
4. Do not press the child for information or push the child to reveal the details of the abuse. Do not ask leading questions, rather listen carefully and if possible take notes of what the child states, including any dates, times or locations of the alleged abuse.
5. Reassure the child, "You are right to tell and I take what you say very seriously."
6. Tell the child that you and the church are there to help and you will be telling the Safe Church Unit (might be mandated to tell Police etc. so better not to be specific) what has been said so that the child can receive help.
7. Do not promise not to tell anyone else. Rather, say "There are people who can help you and I will tell them."
8. Finish on a positive note and tell the child "I am pleased you told me this. You are not alone."

If you consider that the child is in immediate danger call the Victoria Police 000. Stay with the child and then call the SCU 9999 999 999.

If there is no immediate danger then as soon as possible after the disclosure make handwritten notes of exactly what the child said and the date and time of the meeting. See *When to make a report (page 50)* for further details about the next step.

- Sometimes a child discloses abuse to a person who the child feels safe with or trusts. In this situation carefully **listen, reassure the child and tell them you will help them.**
- Make notes of exactly what the child has said and note the date and time
- Contact the Police if you consider the child is in immediate danger and then contact the SCU
- If no immediate danger contact the local police or DHHS - Child Protection and then contact the SCU
- **The SCU must be contacted in all cases of disclosure of abuse regarding a child.**

When to make a report

A report to the SCU, Police or to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection is to be made when an individual or organisation within the CRCA **forms a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from abuse**. A separate report must be made to the appropriate state department where a Reportable Conduct Scheme is in place (Vic/NSW/ACT).

Here, the following guidelines from the Child Protection Practice manual apply:

“Forming a Belief”

To form a belief, the reporter must be aware of matters and hold any opinions in relation to those matters that lead them to reasonably believe a child is in need of protection (s.186 *Children, Youth and Families Act* Victoria).

Reasonable Grounds

A belief on reasonable grounds is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds (s.184 (4) *Children, Youth and Families Act* Victoria).

For example, there may be reasonable grounds when:

- A child states that they have been physically or sexually abused
- A child states that they may know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves)
- Someone who knows the child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused
- Signs of physical or sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been abused”

Other kinds of child abuse are also reportable – for example, neglect.

Suspicious of Harm

Further to the above, suspicions of harm of children must be reported. Reporting is necessarily and intentionally victim-focused. Where a child’s welfare is at stake, it is always better to act and report than to fail to do so.

A suspicion of harm exists when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm. The descriptions in the bullet points above also apply to determining whether there is a suspicion of harm. Any person who witnesses abuse of a child by an adult must also report this.

The ‘Betrayal of Trust’ Laws

Three pieces of legislation relating to child protection issues have been added to the Victorian *Crimes Act (1958)* (the following information is extracted from the Department of Justice and Community Safety fact sheets for each offence):

Failure to Protect:

The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation

will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

A relevant child is a child who is, or may come, under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation. The child does not need to be identified. This means that the risk is not that a particular child will become the victim of sexual abuse. Instead, the substantial risk could be posed to any child who is, or who may be in the future, under the organisation's care, supervision or authority.

The maximum penalty for failing to protect a child is five years' imprisonment for each individual who failed to protect children in the organisation from a known substantial risk to their safety from sexual abuse in the organisation.

Failure to Disclose:

Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to Victoria Police or DHHS - Child Protection. Failure to disclose the information to the relevant authorities is a criminal offence.

The maximum penalty for failing to disclose child sexual abuse is three years' imprisonment.

This law has in effect made every person aged over 18 years in Victoria a mandatory reporter of child sexual abuse.

The 'Grooming' offence

The offence of grooming concerns predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

The offence can be committed by a person aged 18 years or over.

The maximum penalty for grooming is ten years' imprisonment.

Contact Details for child related issues

Reporting

If a child is in immediate danger call the Police 000

If there is no immediate danger – call your local police station

If the reporting does not relate to sexual or physical abuse – contact your state’s Social Services / Human services / Child Protection Department

Then call the **SCU 9999 999 999**

For all reporting contacts – please refer the CRCA Child Protection Policy Document.

Information about the Reportable Conduct Schemes can be found in Appendix A.

Safe Church – Adults

The Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct apply to all interactions between adults in the CRCA. Everyone in the CRCA has the right to feel safe as they worship God and fellowship with one another. Safe Church aims to ensure that CRCA congregations and organisations are places of spiritual, emotional, mental and physical safety for everyone.

In the life of the church, however, issues and circumstances may occur where an adult feels unsafe in any one of these aspects through their interactions with other adults. Examples include where an adult may be a victim of sexual or indecent assault, or be harassed in the church environment. In these and other such situations adults in the CRCA may choose to contact the SCU for information, support, advice or assistance. The SCU is a resource for the CRCA in such matters.

What are adult-related Safe Church issues?

The following list includes the sort of situations experienced by adults in the CRCA that may be described as Safe Church issues. Note that this is not an exhaustive list but is indicative only. If uncertain about a particular circumstance contact the SCU for further clarification.

- Indecent assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual assault
- Disclosure and/or allegations of past sexually abusive behaviour
- Disclosure and/or reports of previous convictions for sex offences
- Disclosure and/or reports of being on the Sex Offender Register
- Rape
- Threatening behaviour
- Violent behaviour
- Assault
- Duress
- Fraud
- Domestic and Family Violence
- Grooming
- Online coercion behaviour towards children for the purposes of sexual exploitation
- Stalking
- Inappropriate relationships
- Bullying
- Possession or dissemination of pornography or child abuse material
- Illegal sexting (sexting between an adult and a child)
- Image based abuse of adults via digital communications

In the case of employees and volunteers who work for the CRCA any conduct defined as 'Reportable Conduct' within the relevant States Reportable Conduct Scheme is also a Safe Church issue. Contact SCU for enquiries relating to this.

What must be reported?

In the context of adult related Safe Church issues conduct or behaviour within the CRCA that is classified as criminal under the State's specific *Crimes Act* or as misconduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme must be reported. If a person is in immediate danger always contact the Police and then contact the SCU to report. If there is no immediate danger but an allegation or evidence is brought that indicates a criminal act has occurred then contact the Police and the SCU. If in doubt or unsure about contacting police then call the SCU in the first instance. The SCU can then guide you as necessary with reporting to police. All crime or reasonable beliefs that a crime has occurred are reported to the Police.

The following **must be reported**:

- Indecent assault
- Sexual assault (including sex offences against children)
- Rape
- Threatening or enacting violence
- Assaults
- Stalking
- Grooming
- Illegal sexting (sexting between an adult and a child)
- Domestic and Family Violence
- 'Reportable Conduct' (as defined within the Reportable Conduct Scheme) by any employee or volunteer working for the CRCA

Where there is uncertainty if a concern is reportable contact the SCU for advice.

Disclosures of past abusive behaviour

If an adult in the church makes a disclosure that they have sexually abused a child in the past, whether they were under 18 years of age or not, and whether the abuse was familial or not, this is not information that the listener can keep to themselves. This kind of disclosure must be reported to SCU, as individuals with sexual abuse behaviour in their background are understood as individuals who carry risk to the safety of children.

"There is a tendency to minimise or dismiss young people's sexually abusive behaviour as experimentation or play, or as a 'phase' that will pass with age...Such minimisation belies the seriousness of the abuse and the harm that is caused to the victims...[There are well-established] clear boundaries about what constitutes sexual abuse by young people - coercive or forceful sexual behaviour with children (or with peers) is always abusive, and should not be regarded as 'normal' adolescent behaviour." ('Young People who sexually abuse: Key Issues' by Cameron Boyd and Leah Bromfield, 2006, Australian Institute of Family Studies)

When it comes to these kinds of disclosures it is no longer the case that church leaders can keep such information to themselves and take no action in the form of risk management measures. When church leaders know such things about people in the church and take no risk management measures churches become places where children are at greater risk from sexual abuse. This approach led to thousands

of children being sexually abused in churches across Australia. Further, legal duty of care and specific Victorian legislation make this approach such that the Church will be legally exposed.

It should be noted that disclosure and risk management are not inherently inconsistent with pastoral care and ministry if the process is handled well and with compassion.

Domestic and Family Violence

The presence of Domestic or Family Violence in a marriage or a family falls short of the abundant life God promises us in Christ. It deprives victims of the peace, comfort, safety and joy that God intends for marriage and family.

Where it exists in the body of Christ it undermines the truth and love of the Gospel, with devastating effect on the victims, those who love and care for them and the witness of Christ in both the Church and the world.

The CRCA is firmly opposed to all forms of Domestic and Family violence. Husbands are specifically told "...Love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph.5:25) and are warned, to love their "...wives and not be harsh with them..." and to live with them "...in an understanding way" (Col. 3:19; 1Pet. 3:7).

Therefore, any attempt to twist the biblical teaching to tacitly sanction domestic violence or abuse is a gross perversion of the Bible's teaching. Domestic and Family Violence is repugnant to God and an anathema to the biblical model of sacrificial love and service.

The *Victorian Family Violence Protection Act 2008* has the following explanation of family violence:

"Family violence is any behaviour that in any way controls or dominates a family member and causes them to feel fear for their own, or other family member's safety or well-being.

It can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic abuse and any behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of that behaviour."

A violent family member may use several forms of abuse and violence over time. An ongoing pattern of control, intimidation and fear is the most usual pattern of family violence that police respond to.

Family violence where there are children in the household is child abuse. Abuse where there are children involved must follow child protection procedures as the priority is the protection of children and their need to live and grow in a safe home.

What may be reported

The following list gives examples of what kind of conduct and behaviour may be reported or be the subject of complaints to the SCU. Note this is not a definitive list but rather indicative. Contact the SCU for further clarification or to discuss any concerns or complaints.

Adult behaviour that may be reported:

- Bullying
- Inappropriate relationships
- Misuse or abuse of authority
- Professional misconduct
- Suspicion of grooming or stalking
- Spiritual abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Conduct, behaviour or speech that is sexually threatening or inappropriate

Historical Complaints

Historical complaints relating to **all** CRCA congregations and organisations may be brought to the CRCA. Such historical complaints can be made to the SCU and may relate to any current or former CRCA congregation or organisation.

A historical complaint may also have been made via the National Redress Scheme that was established following the Royal Commission. These complaints and claims will be forwarded to the local church council for assessment and response. The SCU will be able to assist the church council if required.

The CRCA understands that the denomination has a moral responsibility in such historical cases and seeks to work with complainants towards resolution and healing.

Where the complainant wishes to report historical abuse but does not wish to proceed with any further action the SCU makes a confidential report to the relevant Church for their information. In such cases the complainant may wish to be referred to other support services, such as Christian counselling (competence and expertise needs to be a priority when recommending a counsellor) and the SCU can make recommendations/referrals.

- Historical complaints relating to current and former CRCA congregations and organisations may be brought to the CRCA
- The CRCA undertakes a moral responsibility to hear **all** historical complaints and seeks to work with complainants towards resolution and healing
- Historical complaints can be made at any time by contacting the SCU

Contact Details for adult-related issues

Reporting

In the case of immediate danger or criminal acts:

1. First call the Police on 000
2. If there is no immediate danger – call your local police station
3. Then call SCU on 9999 999 999

Support and Referrals

Safe Church Unit: 9999 999 999

Lifeline: 13 11 14

1800 Respect [Expert Domestic and Family Violence Helpline]: 1800 737 732

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria: 1800 737 732

Centre Against Sexual Assault - Sexual Assault Crisis Line: 1800 806 292

Safe Church Audits of CRCA congregations and organisations

In order to ensure compliance with various government legislated requirements, Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct, the SCU undertakes three-yearly audits of CRCA congregations and organisations. Sessions and congregations are required to complete a Safe Church Compliance Audit form every three years and forward the completed form to the SCU, keeping a copy for their own records. The process of audit is:

- The Safe Church Compliance Audit form will be sent to all Safe Church Coordinators for completion by the Safe Church Coordinator working with the session
- Session or the governing body of the organisation check practice within the congregation or organisation complies with the items listed on the form
- For help and guidance in audit-related matters contact the SCU
- Once the form is completed session or the governing body of the organisation must sign the declaration stating the congregation or organisation is compliant
- If there are outstanding items that need to be completed the session or the governing body of the organisation contacts the SCU to discuss these and come to an agreed timeframe within which these items will be completed
- A copy of the form is kept for session or organisational records. The signed original Compliance Audit form is forwarded to the SCU.
- A Safe Church compliant congregation must have appointed a Safe Church Coordinator, completed the Compliance Audit Schedule and Working With Children Checks records and returned these to SCU and have ensured mandated personnel have attended Safe Church training. Compliant congregations are issued certificates (commencing 2021). The initial audit will be completed using the Safe Church Health Check.
- Subsequent Audits will be completed every three years using an audit to be finalized in 2021 that will be based on an audit similar to the CPSL Audit.
- An initial self-audit is included in the Safe Church Health Check introduced in September 2020. This document is designed to allow CRCA churches to implement the 10 Child Safe Standards by completing the Health Check and starting local conversations to ensure the 10 Child Safe Standards are implemented and the church is compliant with the respective state laws.

- Compliance Audits are a crucial part of ensuring CRCA organisations and congregations are compliant with Safe Church CRCA and any relevant various Government legislation, including the Child safe Standards
- Compliance Audits are undertaken every three years. The SCU provides assistance and guidance in completion of Safe Church Compliance Audits and can be contacted at any time for help
- Safe Church compliant congregations are issued with a Compliance Certificate

APPENDIX A – Reportable Conduct Schemes

VICTORIA

Summary of the Reportable Conduct Scheme

In summary, the scheme:

- requires some organisations to respond to allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against their workers and volunteers, and to notify us of any allegations
- enables us to independently oversee those responses
- facilitates information sharing between organisations, their regulators, Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Regulation's Working With Children Check Unit and us.

For more details, see our information sheet [About the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

What type of conduct is reportable?

There are five types of 'reportable conduct':

- sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- significant neglect of a child.

For more details, please see our information sheet [What is reportable conduct?](#)

Who is the head of my organisation?

Depending on the structure of your organisation, the 'head' may be:

- the chief executive officer (CEO) or principal officer
- the Secretary of a Victorian Government Department.
- In most of our churches it will be the Chairman of Church Council

Determining who is the CEO or Principal Officer may depend on each organisation's structure, governance and legal obligations. Some organisations may wish to obtain their own legal advice to identify that position.

Guidance to help you identify the head of your organisation can be found in the [Information Sheet: Identifying the head of an organisation](#).

Nominating a head of organisation

It may be possible that an organisation has no CEO or principal officer.

In such cases, a person nominated by the organisation, and approved by the Commission can be the head for the purposes of the scheme.

To find out more about nominating a head of organisation and what you will need to prepare before nominating, please see [Information Sheet: Identifying the head of an organisation](#)

To make a nomination, please fill in our [Head of organisation nomination form](#)

What does the scheme require the head to do?

Importantly, the scheme requires heads to:

- respond to a reportable allegation made against a worker or volunteer from their organisation, by ensuring that allegations are appropriately investigated
- report allegations which may involve criminal conduct to the police
- notify us of allegations within three business days after becoming aware of the allegation
- give us certain detailed information about the allegation within 30 days after becoming aware of the allegation
- after the investigation has concluded, give us certain information including a copy of the findings of the investigation
- ensure that their organisation has systems in place to:
 - prevent reportable conduct from being committed by a worker or volunteer within the course of their employment
 - enable any person to notify the head of a reportable allegation
 - enable any person to notify us of a reportable allegation involving the head
 - investigate and respond to a reportable allegation against a worker or volunteer from that organisation.

For more details, please see our information sheet [Responsibilities of the head of an organisation](#)

How do I tell the Commission about a reportable allegation?

Heads of organisations must use our online form [Notify and update reportable allegations](#)

Members of the public may make disclosures either through our online form, by phone or letter.

When should I tell the Commission?

Within three business days of becoming aware of an allegation, heads of organisations must notify us that a reportable allegation has been made against one of their workers or volunteers.

Within 30 calendar days heads of organisations must provide certain detailed information about the allegations and their proposed response.

It is a criminal offence for a head of an organisation to fail to comply with the three-day and 30-day notification obligations without a reasonable excuse.

For more details, please see our information sheet [Reporting to the Commission](#)

Who does the scheme apply to?

People

Reportable conduct can apply to the following people associated with an organisation in scope:

- employees
- volunteers
- contractors
- office holders
- ministers of religion
- officers of a religious body
- foster and kinship carers in a formal care arrangement.

We can only accept an allegation about a person who is 18 years or older.

New South Wales

NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme – helping to keep children safe

The Office of the Children’s Guardian works with organisations to help keep children safe in NSW and an important part of the child safe framework is the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

The scheme monitors how an organisation responds to an allegation of child abuse or sexual misconduct that has been made against a relevant worker (employees or volunteers) and contractors where a Working With Children Check is required for the role.

Following a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse the NSW Government expanded the Reportable Conduct Scheme to the religious and faith-based sector, which will be in effect from 1 March 2020.

Under the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019* relevant entities (organisations in the scheme), including religious bodies, are required to have systems in place for identifying and responding to ‘reportable conduct’ from 1 March 2020.

Your organisation will need to update or develop child protection and reporting frameworks, policies and procedures, staff education or training so they can meet their compliance obligations under the scheme.

Religious bodies need to make sure they have systems in place that include:

- a code of conduct
- policies, including
- child protection policies that cover identification, prevention and reporting of reportable allegations, conduct and convictions (including by other employees)
- processes for dealing with reportable allegations (including procedural fairness and protections for making reportable conduct complaints/notifications/reports)
- recordkeeping and information management handling policies and procedures
- training on those codes and policies.

The systems developed by entities for the prevention and identification of reportable conduct may be audited by the Office of the Children’s Guardian.

There are also new obligations on employees of relevant entities, including religious bodies. Specifically, once an employee is aware of a reportable allegation or reportable conviction of another employee (including contractors and volunteers) they must report the allegation or conviction to the head of the entity (or to the Children’s Guardian if it relates to the head of the entity).

The head of entity must, within 7 business days of becoming aware of a reportable allegation or a reportable conviction, give a written notice about it to the Children’s Guardian. However, penalties will not apply for three months to assist entities to prepare for the Scheme. The head of the entity is

also required to investigate or arrange for an investigator to investigate the reportable allegation or determine whether the conviction considered to be a reportable conviction is a reportable conviction.

After an investigation or determination is completed, the Head of Entity must prepare a report for the Children's Guardian within 30 days of receiving the report of the reportable allegation or conviction. If it is not possible to provide a final report within this time frame, the head of entity must prepare an interim report within 30 days of receiving the report of the reportable allegation or conviction with the reason for not providing the final report within 30 days and an estimated time frame for completing the final report.

From 1 March 2020, the definition of a 'mandatory reporter' in NSW will expand to include persons in religious ministry or persons providing religion-based activities to children.

This includes both clergy (such as minister of religion, priest, deacon, pastor, rabbi, Salvation Army officer) and appointed (voluntary) leadership roles (such as church elder, religious brother or sister).

A mandatory reporter must make a report to the Department of Communities and Justice when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm (and those grounds arise in the course of, or from their work or role).

Mandatory reporters can call the NSW Child Protection Helpline on 132 111. The Child Protection Helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mandatory reporters are protected from liability for defamation and civil and criminal liability. A mandatory report does not constitute a breach of professional etiquette or ethics, or amount to unprofessional conduct. All mandatory reporters are legally protected against retribution for making or proposing to make a report.

The mandatory reporting requirement is in addition to obligations under the reportable conduct scheme. For more information about mandatory reporting in NSW go to <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids/mandatory-reporters>

From 1 March 2020, the Reportable Conduct Scheme is operated by the Office of the Children's Guardian the [Children's Guardian Act 2019](#).

The scheme monitors how certain organisations ('relevant entities') investigate and report on certain conduct (known as 'reportable allegations' and 'reportable convictions') made against their employees, volunteers or certain contractors who provide services to children. The scheme will also cover religious bodies, in line with recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Australian Capital Territory

Organisation-related child protection

The Reportable Conduct Scheme aims to improve child protection within organisations in the ACT.

The scheme requires certain organisations who work with children to:

- report allegations of child abuse and misconduct to the ACT Ombudsman
- develop policies and procedures to prevent and respond to child abuse.

The Ombudsman provides support and practice [guidelines](#) to help organisations do this.

If organisations suspect criminal conduct, they must also report to the police.

What is reportable conduct?

Reportable conduct covers allegations or convictions of child abuse or misconduct toward children. Organisations must report allegations of reportable conduct by an employee or volunteer, including:

- ill-treatment of a child (such as emotional abuse or use of force)
- neglect
- psychological harm
- misconduct of a sexual nature
- sexual or physical offences and convictions where a child is a victim or is present
- inappropriate discipline or not protecting children from harm.

For more information see the [ACT Ombudsman Practice Guide No. 2: Identifying Reportable Conduct](#).

Which organisations are in the scheme?

Organisations covered by the scheme are called designated entities and include:

- all ACT directorates
- health services
- kinship and foster care organisations
- residential care organisations
- government and non-government schools
- religious bodies
- child care services
- education and care service providers, including after school care.

Organisations providing services to children that are not covered under the scheme include:

- sporting clubs
- organisations which provide instruction in a particular activity (e.g. ballet, piano, swimming)
- Scouts and Girl Guides
- universities.

The scheme does not cover personal arrangements such as babysitting or private tuition.

How long will it take?

When we receive a new notification from an organisation about an allegation of reportable conduct (s 17G notification) we assess the initial response by the organisation, such as its reporting to other bodies, its risk assessment and investigation plan. This enables the organisation to take into account our feedback during its investigation. We aim to do this within 7 days in 80 per cent of cases.

When we receive a final report from an organisation following its investigation into reportable conduct allegations (s 17J report) we consider whether there was a proper investigation and appropriate action taken and whether we need further information from the organisation. This gives the organisation reasonable opportunity to act on our feedback or provide further information. We aim to complete this within 28 days in 80 per cent of cases.

References

Child Protection Policy

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Staff Recruitment Policy

CRCA Privacy Policy

CRCA SCU Mandate

Relevant legislation and legislated requirements:

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) Victoria

The Working with Children Act (2005) Victoria

Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) Victoria

Crimes Act (1958) Victoria

Information Privacy Act (2000) Victoria

The Privacy Act (1988) Commonwealth

The Summary Offences Act (1966) Victoria

Children's Guardian Act 2019 New South Wales

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 New South Wales

Children and Young People Act 2008 – ACT

Crimes (Child Sex Offenders) Act 2005- ACT

Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 - Queensland

Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2011 - Queensland

Child Protection Act 1999 – Queensland

Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 – Western Australia

Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 – South Australia

Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 – South Australia

Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 – Tasmania

Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Regulations 2014 - Tasmania

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme

The New South Wales Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Australian Capital Territory Reportable Conduct Scheme

Other publications:

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Recommendations

A Guide for Creating a Child-safe Organisation (2006) Victorian Government Office of the Child Safety Commissioner

A step-by-step guide to making a report to Child Protection or Child First State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services – Child Protection

Child Protection Practice Manual State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services

Young people who sexually abuse: Key Issues (2006) Cameron Boyd and Leah Bromfield, Australian Institute of Family Studies

www.childsafestandards.org.au

www.ccyp.vic.gov.au

www.esafety.gov.au

www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au