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1. OVERVIEW

1.1. This National Safeguarding Policy (NSP) sets the overarching safeguarding commitment of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). It is the parent policy for the detailed safeguarding policy suite and provides the common foundation for safeguarding governance, practice, review and accountability.

1.2. This NSP is supported by detailed safeguarding policies that address safeguarding governance, conduct, engagement, whistleblower matters, safe environments, breach response, complaints, recruitment, learning, continuous improvement, information sharing, internet use, social media and privacy.

1.3. Appendix A provides jurisdictional safeguarding references and links to support implementation of this policy suite. It is provided as a reference and source-checking aid and does not replace current legislation, regulator guidance or official sources.

2. PURPOSE

2.1. The CRCA, as part of its mission to honour God by multiplying Bible-based churches, is committed to ensuring that CRCA churches are safe places for children, adults at risk, members, visitors, office bearers, personnel and volunteers.

2.2. This policy states the denomination-wide safeguarding foundation and confirms that safeguarding is both a theological and governance responsibility. It publicly commits the CRCA to making its churches safe and to acting consistently with that commitment in decisions, conduct, systems and responses.

3. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

3.1. The CRCA safeguarding commitment is grounded in the conviction that every person is made in the image of God and must therefore be treated with dignity, care and justice.

3.2. Scripture calls the church to welcome and protect children, speak for the vulnerable, act with integrity, exercise authority as service, and pursue justice, mercy and faithful care. Safeguarding practice gives practical expression to those commitments.

3.3. The CRCA recognises that civil authorities have been ordained by God to restrain lawlessness, punish evil and maintain good order in human society. The safeguarding framework therefore recognises both the church's theological responsibility and its responsibility to comply with applicable civil obligations.

4. SCOPE

4.1. This policy applies across the CRCA safeguarding framework and informs the obligations of CRCA churches, Sessions / Church Councils, office bearers, personnel, volunteers, contractors, members and visitors where they participate in CRCA ministry, governance, programs, services, activities or records systems.

4.2. Specific operational obligations are set out in the detailed safeguarding policy suite. Where a detailed policy uses a term defined in this NSP, the definition in this policy applies unless a policy-specific meaning is expressly stated.

5. VALUES

5.1. In all ministries, services and activities, the CRCA is committed to the following values, with the safety and well-being of all people kept at the forefront of decisions and actions.

- **Scriptural teachings - upholding safety and dignity:** Central to the Church's teaching is the call to embody love, mercy and justice. Responsibilities are carried out in a way that honours the dignity, voice and safety of each person.

- **Zero tolerance:** The CRCA has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and harmful behaviour. Safeguarding responsibilities must never be used to suppress, minimise or ignore concerns about safety, harm or abuse.
- **Transparency and accountability:** The CRCA fosters a culture of openness, appropriate information sharing, feedback and accountable action.
- **Shared responsibility:** Safeguarding requires the participation of local churches, personnel, members and denominational safeguarding structures.
- **Empowerment:** Children, adults at risk and others affected by safeguarding matters are supported to understand rights, raise concerns and access appropriate pathways.
- **Integrity:** The CRCA fosters honest, ethical and respectful engagement at all levels of church life.

6. COMMON DEFINITIONS

6.1. The definitions below are the common suite-wide definitions for the detailed safeguarding policy suite. Detailed policies may include policy-specific definitions only where a more specific operational meaning is required.

Term	Definition
Adult at risk	An adult who may be at increased risk of harm because of age, disability, illness, trauma, dependency, isolation, power imbalance or another vulnerability.
Authorised CRCA record-holder	The local or denominational person, role or body authorised to hold, access or manage the relevant CRCA safeguarding record.
Child	A person under 18 years of age.
CRCA personnel	Office bearers, employees, appointed leaders, volunteers, contractors and others acting for or on behalf of the CRCA or a CRCA church.
Detailed safeguarding policy suite	The suite of detailed policies sitting beneath this NSP and addressing safeguarding governance, conduct, engagement, whistleblower matters, safe environment, breach response, complaints, recruitment, learning, continuous quality improvement, information sharing, internet use, social media and privacy.
Office bearer	A person holding a recognised office within the CRCA, including ministers, elders and deacons, according to the CRCA Church Order and local church governance arrangements.
Safeguarding concern	Any concern, disclosure, allegation, observation or information indicating possible abuse, harm, risk of harm, unsafe conduct, breach of safeguarding policy, or failure to protect a child or adult at risk.
Safe Church Representative	The local safeguarding contact and pathway-support role that supports awareness, reporting and referral at local church level.
Safe Church Administrator	The denominational role or function responsible for safeguarding administration, approved templates, registers, training records, central records, systems and official safeguarding documentation support.
Safe Church Unit	The denominational safeguarding response-support function that provides triage assistance, safeguarding advice, escalation support and pathway guidance within its authorised scope.
Safe Church Advisory Committee	The denominational governance and oversight body responsible for policy direction, high-risk review, continuous quality improvement and safeguarding governance oversight within its authorised scope.
Session / Church Council	The local church governance body responsible for local safeguarding governance, oversight, implementation and accountability within the congregation.
Worker screening	The jurisdictional screening, clearance, verification or suitability-check process required for a person to perform a role involving contact with children or adults at risk.

7. FRAMEWORK

7.1. The CRCA safeguarding framework recognises Scripture, the CRCA doctrinal and Church Order context, Commonwealth and State/Territory legal obligations, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, lessons from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, privacy and information-handling expectations, and online-safety practice.

7.2. The safeguarding framework is organised around four pillars that support the final detailed policy suite.



PILLAR 1: Leadership, Ethics and Conduct

Safeguarding is led through accountable governance, ethical conduct, role clarity, participation and a culture that supports safe practice.



PILLAR 2: Prevention and Protection

Safeguarding risks are prevented and managed through safe physical, relational and online environments, reporting, complaints handling and breach response.



PILLAR 3: Recruitment and Education

People in CRCA roles are recruited, screened, inducted, trained and supported so they understand and fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.



PILLAR 4: Communication and Data Management

Safeguarding information is communicated, shared, recorded, stored, reviewed and improved through clear, lawful and accountable processes.

8. DETAILED SAFEGUARDING POLICY SUITE

8.1. The detailed safeguarding policy suite operationalises this NSP. The detailed policies are to be read together and interpreted consistently with this policy.

Policy	Policy title	Function
P-02	Safeguarding Governance and Leadership	Sets denominational and local safeguarding governance responsibilities, decision pathways and oversight arrangements for implementing the safeguarding framework.
P-03	Code of Conduct	Sets expected conduct for CRCA personnel and identifies behaviours that protect children and adults at risk from harm.
P-04	Engagement	Establishes how children, families, adults at risk and church communities are consulted, informed and supported to participate safely.
P-05	Whistleblower	Provides a pathway for good-faith disclosures about safeguarding, misconduct or governance risk and protects people from retaliation.
P-06	Safe Environment and Risk Management	Requires safeguarding risks in ministries, premises, events and online environments to be identified, assessed, controlled and reviewed.
P-07	Disciplinary and Breach Response	Sets the response pathway for safeguarding breaches, including interim risk controls, procedural fairness and referral to the appropriate disciplinary authority.
P-08	Complaints Handling	Sets accessible complaint intake, assessment, response, review and escalation pathways for safeguarding concerns and complaints.
P-09	HR / Recruitment	Sets safer recruitment, screening, appointment and movement controls so people in child-related or safeguarding roles are suitable and supported.
P-10	Learning and Development	Sets role-based safeguarding learning, induction, refresher training and recordkeeping expectations for CRCA personnel.
P-11	Continuous Quality Improvement	Sets the continuous improvement cycle for safeguarding review, learning, audit, corrective action and policy maintenance.
P-12	Information Sharing and Record Keeping	Sets requirements for safeguarding records, authorised information sharing, confidentiality, retention and secure record management.
P-13	Internet Usage	Sets acceptable internet use and digital safeguards for CRCA systems, online access, unsuitable content and public-facing services.
P-14	Social Media	Sets safe social media practice, including official accounts, image use, direct messaging, online boundaries and digitally altered content.

Policy	Policy title	Function
P-15	Privacy	Sets privacy and information-handling requirements for personal, sensitive and safeguarding information, including authorised disclosure and breach response.

9. MANDATORY REPORTING AND REPORTABLE CONDUCT RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1. The CRCA is committed to meeting applicable statutory, regulatory and Police reporting obligations. Safeguarding concerns must be referred through the relevant CRCA pathway and, where required, through external statutory, regulatory or Police pathways.

9.2. Mandatory reporting, Reportable Conduct Scheme obligations, worker-screening requirements and child-safe regulatory settings differ across Australian jurisdictions. Appendix A provides jurisdictional reference material to support implementation and source checking. It is not a substitute for checking current legislation, regulator guidance or advice before publication or operational reliance.

9.3. Internal pastoral, disciplinary, employment, volunteer-management, safeguarding and statutory processes may run in parallel where required.

10. ROLES AND GOVERNANCE ALLOCATION

10.1. The Session / Church Council retains local governance accountability for safeguarding implementation within the local church. Local implementation may be supported by committees, management bodies or appointed personnel, but local governance accountability is not displaced.

10.2. The Safe Church Representative supports local safeguarding awareness, contact, referral and pathway access. The Safe Church Administrator supports central administration, records, templates, registers and training documentation. The Safe Church Unit provides safeguarding response support, triage assistance, advice and escalation support. The Safe Church Advisory Committee provides denominational oversight, high-risk review, policy direction and continuous quality improvement within its authorised scope.

10.3. All CRCA personnel are expected to follow the safeguarding policy suite, report concerns, protect children and adults at risk from harm, and contribute to a safeguarding culture that is consistent with Scripture, the Church Order and applicable civil obligations.

11. BREACHES

11.1. Where a breach of this policy is identified, the response will be determined under the Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy and consistent with the CRCA Church Order.

11.2. For office bearers, the response may include temporary relief of duties while the matter is investigated and, where special discipline is warranted, suspension or deposition from office, in each case with the agreement of the relevant assemblies as required by the Church Order. Release from office is not used as a disciplinary mechanism.

11.3. For employees and volunteers, the response may include disciplinary, employment or volunteer-management consequences appropriate to the role and the conduct. Where conduct meets a statutory reporting threshold, it will also be referred to the relevant authority.

12. IMPLEMENTATION, LEARNING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

12.1. The CRCA supports implementation through training, role clarity, approved documentation, review, audit, incident learning, complaints learning, feedback and continuous quality improvement.

12.2. The detailed policy suite provides the operational standards by which local churches and denominational roles apply this policy in practice.

13. MONITORING AND REVIEW

13.1. This policy is reviewed every three years, or earlier where required by legislative change, regulator guidance, audit findings, serious incidents, a substantiated complaint, material safeguarding risk, or a decision of the Safe Church Advisory Committee. Feedback on this policy may be sent to the Safe Church Unit at scu@crca.org.au at any time.

APPENDIX A: JURISDICTIONAL SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE SUMMARY

A.1. This appendix provides jurisdictional summary material as a reference point for implementation planning and source checking. It is not a substitute for checking current legislation, regulator guidance and official sources before publication or operational reliance.

A.2. Child-safe, mandatory-reporting, reportable-conduct and worker-screening requirements differ across Australian jurisdictions. Local churches and denominational safeguarding roles must follow the requirements that apply in the relevant jurisdiction.

New South Wales

The NSW Mandatory Reporting system is overseen by the Department of Communities and Justice and governed by the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. The Reportable Conduct Scheme is administered by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, which also governs the Working with Children Check system and implementation of Child Safe Standards.

- NSW Office of the Children's Guardian
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice - Mandatory Reporting
- NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme

Victoria

Victoria has legislated the Child Safe Standards from the Royal Commission recommendations and includes a standard specifically addressing the needs of Aboriginal children and young people. The Social Services Regulator oversees implementation of the Child Safe Standards, alongside co-regulators. The Social Services Regulator also administers the Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Working with Children Check Scheme is governed by the Victorian Government.

- Working with Children Check - Victoria
- Social Services Regulator - Victoria
- Reportable Conduct Scheme - Victoria

South Australia

In South Australia, the Department of Human Services is responsible for ensuring organisations that work with children provide safe environments. Organisations are required to lodge a compliance statement to the Department of Human Services, indicating how they are meeting the National Principles. The Department for Child Protection administers the Mandatory Reporting system under the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. The Working with Children Check scheme is also implemented through the South Australian Government.

- South Australian Department of Human Services
- Working with Children Check - South Australia

Western Australia

In Western Australia, the Reportable Conduct Scheme came into effect in January 2023 and is administered by the Ombudsman of Western Australia under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971. Mandatory Reporting and the Working with Children Check scheme are managed through relevant Western Australian government agencies.

- Western Australian Ombudsman
- Mandatory Reporting - Western Australia
- Working with Children Check - Western Australia

Queensland

Queensland's mandatory reporting system is administered by the relevant child-safety department under the Child Protection Act 1999. Child-safe work screening is known as the Blue Card and is applied for and managed through the Queensland Government. Queensland's Reportable Conduct Scheme commenced on 1 July 2026 and is administered by the Queensland Family and Child Commission. In Queensland, ministers of religion are not mandated notifiers under the Child Protection Act 1999 mandatory reporting system. A separate obligation to report child sexual

offences applies to all adults, including ministers of religion, under the failure-to-report offence (section 229BC) inserted by the Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020 (Qld), which commenced on 5 July 2021.

- Queensland Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety
- Queensland Blue Card
- Reportable Conduct Scheme - Queensland

Tasmania

Tasmania has introduced a Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework under the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023. Within the framework sit the 10 Child and Youth Safe Standards, which organisations are legally required to implement. A Reportable Conduct Scheme also sits within that framework. Mandatory reporting remains administered by the Department for Education, Children and Young People, and worker screening is undertaken through Service Tasmania as registration to work with vulnerable people.

- Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework - Tasmania
- Mandatory Reporting - Tasmania
- Reportable Conduct Scheme - Tasmania

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Government has authority for its working-with-children check scheme, known as the Ochre Card, and the Mandatory Reporting Scheme under the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007. Local churches and denominational safeguarding roles should check current Northern Territory child-safe and reportable-conduct settings before operational reliance.

- Northern Territory Ochre Card
- Mandatory Reporting - Northern Territory

Australian Capital Territory

The Reportable Conduct Scheme in the ACT is run through the ACT Ombudsman. Mandatory reports must be made to Child and Youth Protection Services and worker screening is implemented through Working with Vulnerable People registration. Organisations providing services to children and young people are required to commence implementing the ACT Child Safe Standards Scheme.

- Mandatory Reporting - ACT
- Working with Vulnerable People - ACT
- Reportable Conduct Scheme - ACT

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0.1	16/09/2025	16/09/2025	Not approved	Align Safeguarding	Initial consultation draft.
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