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1. PURPOSE

1.1. The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) is dedicated to upholding the health, safety and well-being of all people, especially children and adults at risk.

1.2. The CRCA Code of Conduct outlines the expected behaviours of CRCA personnel, contractors and visitors so that safety, dignity and well-being are respected at all times.

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

2.1. Colossians 3:17 calls the Church to act in the name of the Lord Jesus, shaping conduct that honours Christ in word and deed.

2.2. Luke 18:16 shows Jesus welcoming children and affirming their place in the kingdom; the CRCA therefore treats children's safety, dignity and voice as central to its conduct expectations.

2.3. The Code is grounded in the call to embody love, mercy and justice; safeguarding action expresses these in practice.

3. SCOPE

3.1. Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. This policy applies at all times and equally to CRCA personnel, including Church Councils, elders, pastors, lay leaders, employees, volunteers and all those who are employed by or volunteer for CRCA churches; contractors; and visitors.

3.2. The terms personnel, members, office bearers, children and adults at risk have the meanings given in the National Safeguarding Policy.

4. VALUES

4.1. The CRCA is committed to the following values so that the safety and well-being of all people remain at the forefront of decisions and actions.

4.1.1. **Scriptural teachings - upholding safety and dignity:** central to the Church's teaching is the call to embody love, mercy and justice. Colossians 3:17 calls all things to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and Luke 18:16 shows Jesus welcoming children and affirming their place in the kingdom. The responsibilities in this policy are therefore carried out in a way that honours the dignity, voice and safety of each person.

4.1.2. **Zero tolerance:** the CRCA has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and harmful behaviour. The responsibilities in this policy must never be used to suppress, minimise or ignore concerns about safety, harm or abuse.

4.1.3. **Transparency and accountability:** the CRCA fosters a culture of openness, appropriate information sharing, feedback and accountable action.

4.1.4. **Shared responsibility:** safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and requires the participation of local churches, personnel, members and denominational safeguarding structures.

4.1.5. **Empowerment:** the CRCA supports people to understand their rights, speak up, raise concerns and contribute to the development of safer church environments.

4.1.6. **Integrity:** the CRCA fosters honest, ethical and respectful engagement at all levels of church life.

5. DEFINITIONS

5.1. Terms defined in the National Safeguarding Policy apply to this policy unless this section gives a more specific operational meaning.

5.2. **Child-safe conduct** means conduct that respects the dignity, safety, boundaries, rights and voice of children and adults at risk, and is consistent with this Code of Conduct and the wider CRCA safeguarding policy suite.

5.3. **Boundary** means a physical, emotional, pastoral, relational, digital or ministry limit that protects a person from harm, coercion, exploitation, grooming, favouritism or misuse of authority.

5.4. **Boundary breach** means conduct that crosses or weakens an appropriate safeguarding boundary, whether or not harm is already proven.

5.5. **Grooming** means a pattern of conduct that builds trust, secrecy, dependence, isolation or special access for the purpose, effect or risk of sexual, emotional, spiritual, physical or other abuse.

5.6. **One-to-one contact** means interaction between one adult and one child or adult at risk without another approved adult directly present, visible, or aware through an authorised and documented arrangement.

5.7. **Physical contact** means any touch or bodily contact and includes contact that may be pastoral, practical, accidental, recreational, disciplinary or affectionate in nature.

5.8. **Substance use** means the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, misused prescription medication or another substance in a way that impairs judgement, creates safeguarding risk, breaches this policy, or makes ministry contact unsafe.

5.9. **Unsafe person** means a person whose conduct, circumstances or risk indicators suggest that they may have been unsafe, may be unsafe, or may present a risk to a child, adult at risk or other person in a CRCA context.

5.10. **Reportable conduct concern** means a concern that may require notification under a Reportable Conduct Scheme or another statutory pathway, depending on the jurisdiction and the role of the person involved.

6. FRAMEWORK

6.1. The Code of Conduct embeds Commonwealth and State / Territory legislation, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

6.2. The CRCA does not operate aged-care facilities or aged-care services. However, the Aged Care Quality Standards may provide useful good-practice context for ministry, pastoral care, visitation and support activities involving older persons, adults at risk, CRCA members, congregants or people receiving aged-care services from another organisation.

6.3. This Code of Conduct is foundational to the CRCA's safeguarding decisions and is to be read with the National Safeguarding Policy and the detailed policy suite.

7. PROCEDURES - DO

7.1. Treat all people with respect and dignity, and value their safety, health and well-being.

7.2. Take all reasonable steps to protect all people from abuse and harm.

7.3. Establish and maintain a safe environment for all people.

7.4. Maintain appropriate boundaries in all interactions, especially with children and adults at risk.

7.5. Conduct all activities in a transparent manner, fostering an environment of openness and trust.

7.6. Operate a two-person safeguarding model where practicable. Avoid one-to-one unsupervised situations between an adult and a child, young person or adult at risk. Where an individual pastoral, support or safeguarding conversation is necessary, ensure another adult worker or church personnel member is visible, nearby, included in the communication, or otherwise reasonably available, unless a documented role-appropriate exception has been approved in advance.

7.7. Contact Police if a person is at immediate risk of abuse or harm by calling 000.

7.8. Adhere to all CRCA safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.

7.9. Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children and adults at risk, particularly where they are telling you that they or another person may have been abused, harmed or may be unsafe.

7.10. Report all disclosures and concerns of harm in a timely manner.

7.11. Comply with statutory reporting obligations, including mandatory reporting, Reportable Conduct Scheme obligations, Police directions and other lawful information-sharing pathways.

7.12. Comply with statutory reporting obligations even where a disclosure arises in religious confession or pastoral conversation, where the law of the jurisdiction does not extend privilege to the safeguarding matter. The CRCA's commitment to confession and pastoral care is preserved, but confidentiality is not promised where statutory reporting duties apply.

7.13. Record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination or harassment.

7.14. Be professional, consistent and responsible in all actions.

7.15. Use church resources responsibly and ethically.

7.16. Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children and adults at risk, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

7.17. Provide information, complaint pathways, training and engagement in accessible formats where reasonably practicable, including plain-English materials, easy-read resources, language support, support persons or interpreters on request.

7.18. Treat everyone with the same dignity and respect as image bearers of God.

7.19. Respect confidentiality when sharing information about a person, in accordance with the limits of confidentiality, the Privacy Policy and the Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy.

7.20. Use official CRCA channels and accounts for online or direct-messaging interactions with children. Personnel and volunteers must not initiate or maintain private direct messages with a child outside the official channel without a second adult having reasonable visibility of the contact.

7.21. Respect the requirement for separate consent for taking photographs or video that include a child and for publishing such material on any CRCA channel.

7.22. Ensure that personnel and volunteers in roles involving direct contact with children hold the worker-screening clearance required by the relevant jurisdiction before commencing in those roles.

8. PROCEDURES - DO NOT

8.1. For the purpose of this policy, abuse includes but is not limited to physical, emotional or sexual harm, neglect, exploitation or harassment. Harmful behaviour refers to any action that can cause physical or emotional harm to another person.

8.2. Do not ignore or disregard suspected or disclosed abuse.

8.3. Do not put anyone at risk of harm.

8.4. Do not speak to any person in a way that could be construed as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating.

8.5. Do not discuss sexual activities with a child or adult at risk unless it is a specific job requirement, the person is trained or qualified, and it is part of an approved program or activity.

8.6. Do not have private contact with a child or adult at risk outside church activities without the knowledge and consent of leadership and, in the case of a child, the child's parent or guardian.

8.7. Do not engage in one-to-one direct messaging with a child from a personal account on any messaging or social media platform.

8.8. Do not exchange personal contact details with a child or adult at risk except as approved through the Session / Church Council.

8.9. Do not use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol while supervising children or adults at risk. Where alcohol is served at an official CRCA event at which children are present, personnel and volunteers in roles involving direct contact with children do not consume alcohol while on duty.

8.10. Do not use, possess or be under the influence of illegal drugs while performing duties.

8.11. Do not provide a child with alcohol or any illegal substance.

8.12. Do not initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or adult at risk, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves.

8.13. Do not engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a person in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.

8.14. Do not engage in any sexual contact with a child or adult at risk for any purpose.

8.15. Do not take a child or adult at risk to your home or encourage meetings outside program activities, except as approved.

8.16. Do not be naked in the presence of a child or adult at risk.

8.17. Do not possess sexually explicit materials in the presence of a child or adult at risk.

8.18. Do not sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag, room or tent with a single child or adult at risk.

8.19. Do not treat any person disrespectfully, unfairly, harshly or discouragingly based on age, gender, race, culture, disability or any other difference.

8.20. Do not show favouritism through gifts or inappropriate attention.

8.21. Do not photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and the child's parent or guardian. Publication requires separate, informed consent.

8.22. Do not act in contravention of CRCA policies, procedures or this Code.

9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1. The CRCA expects all people within the scope of this Code to protect all people, especially children and adults at risk, from all forms of abuse; create and maintain a positive safeguarding culture; and follow all safeguarding policies and procedures at all times.

9.2. **Session / Church Council:** supports local implementation of the Code, ensures personnel understand conduct expectations, and refers concerns through the appropriate safeguarding pathway.

9.3. **Safe Church Representative:** supports local awareness of the Code and assists people to understand reporting and safeguarding pathways.

9.4. **Safe Church Administrator:** maintains approved templates, declarations, training records and administrative resources supporting Code of Conduct implementation.

9.5. **Safe Church Unit:** provides safeguarding response support, triage assistance, advice on response pathways and escalation support where conduct concerns are referred or identified. The Safe Church Unit supports local churches and the Safe Church Advisory Committee but does not replace local church governance responsibility.

9.6. **Safe Church Advisory Committee:** provides oversight, policy direction and review of high-risk or systemic conduct matters as required by the CRCA safeguarding framework.

10. BREACHES

10.1. If any person within the scope of this Code is found to be in breach, action is taken under the Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy. Where the breach engages a statutory criminal-offence section, mandatory reporting obligation or Reportable Conduct Scheme threshold, the statutory or scheme pathway operates in parallel.

11. CODE OF CONDUCT DECLARATION

11.1. On engagement, and before commencing a role or activity for which a Code of Conduct declaration is required, personnel, office bearers, employees, volunteers, contractors and other role-holders sign a Code of Conduct declaration.

11.2. The Session / Church Council is responsible for ensuring that declarations are completed, securely retained and reviewed for local-church personnel, volunteers and role-holders. Practical

administration may be delegated locally, including to the Safe Church Representative or another authorised local record-holder.

11.3. The Safe Church Administrator maintains the approved declaration template and any central records, registers or reporting tools required by the CRCA safeguarding framework. This denominational administration supports, but does not replace, local church responsibility for ensuring that declarations are completed, retained and reviewed.

11.4. Access to Code of Conduct declarations is limited to people with a role-based need. Retention is managed in accordance with the Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy. Re-signing is required on each policy review cycle, when the Code is materially updated, and when a person's role or scope of responsibility materially changes.

11.5. **Declaration:**

11.5.1. I have read, understand and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. I understand that compliance with this Code is a condition of my employment, engagement, ministry service, volunteer work or role participation, and that breach of this Code may result in disciplinary or safeguarding action.

12. RELATED POLICIES

12.1. National Safeguarding Policy; Safeguarding Governance and Leadership Policy; Safe Environment and Risk Management Policy; Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy; Complaints Handling Policy; Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy; Privacy Policy; Internet Usage Policy; Social Media Policy; Learning and Development Policy.

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.

Document	Control	History			
Version	Approval date	Effective date	Approved by	Author or review lead	Summary of changes
0.1	16/09/2025	16/09/2025	Not approved	Align Safeguarding	Initial consultation draft.
0.2	09/07/2026	09/07/2026	SCAC	Align Safeguarding	Statuary updates
0.3	28/07/2026	28/07/2026	SCAC (SIC)	Align Safeguarding	SCAC feedback
1.0	16/09/2026	16/09/2026	SCAC (SIC)	Align Safeguarding	First approved issue.