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1. PURPOSE

1.1. The CRCA recognises its paramount responsibility for the welfare and protection of children and adults at risk. This policy is designed to support safe environments where children and adults at risk are protected from harm, abuse and exploitation while participating in church-related activities.

1.2. While the CRCA seeks spiritual growth and faithful discipleship, its commitment to the physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological safety of children and adults at risk remains unwavering.

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

2.1. Jesus' welcome of children (Matthew 19:14) reminds the church that children belong safely within the life of the people of God.

2.2. Proverbs 31:8-9 calls God's people to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and to defend the rights of the vulnerable. Safe-environment and risk-management practice is one way the CRCA gives practical expression to that calling.

3. SCOPE

3.1. This policy applies to pastors, staff, volunteers, members, contractors and others involved in CRCA church-associated events, services or activities, both in physical venues and online platforms.

3.2. This includes activities conducted on CRCA premises, third-party premises, leased venues, shared sites and digital or online settings.

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. **Safe environment** means a physical, relational, online, program, ministry or activity setting in which foreseeable safeguarding risks are identified, assessed, reduced and monitored.

5.3. **Safeguarding risk** means the possibility that a child, adult at risk or other person may experience abuse, harm, unsafe conduct, neglect, exploitation, boundary breach or failure of protective response.

5.4. **Risk assessment** means a documented or otherwise accountable process for identifying safeguarding risks, assessing likelihood and consequence, and determining proportionate controls before or during an activity.

5.5. **Risk control** means a practical measure used to eliminate, reduce, monitor or respond to a safeguarding risk.

5.6. **Activity approval** means the local or denominational authorisation required before an activity, program, event or ministry proceeds where safeguarding risks must be considered.

5.7. **Supervision** means the arrangements used to ensure people, activities and environments are appropriately observed, supported and accountable, including adult-to-child ratios, visibility, role allocation and escalation pathways.

5.8. **Environmental risk** means a safeguarding risk arising from premises, transport, visibility, access, isolation, online platforms, activity design, staffing, supervision or other conditions of the ministry environment.

5.9. **Immediate risk management** means prompt action taken to reduce or control a safeguarding risk before a full assessment, investigation or governance decision is completed.

6. POLICY

6.1. The CRCA commits to rigorous safeguarding practices so that children and adults at risk are protected, respected and empowered in all church-related environments.

6.2. The CRCA manages safe environments through risk identification, risk assessment, preventive measures, risk mitigation, reporting mechanisms, response pathways, monitoring and review.

6.3. Worker screening is a frontline safeguarding control and is governed by the HR / Recruitment Policy and supported through training, records and renewal processes.

6.4. Where CRCA activities use third-party premises or involve external ministers, services or contractors, the Session / Church Council records the arrangement, identifies risk controls and confirms reporting pathways.

6.5. Where a person is identified as a Person of Concern, safety agreements and proportionate risk controls are coordinated through the relevant safeguarding pathway and recorded by the Safe Church Administrator in the appropriate restricted register.

6.6. Online and digital environments are governed by the Internet Usage Policy, Social Media Policy and Code of Conduct. Adult-to-child direct messaging from personal accounts is not permitted in connection with CRCA activities.

6.7. Where CCTV or other monitoring is used at premises where children, young people or adults at risk are present, clear notice is given, access to recorded material is restricted to need-to-know, material is retained only as necessary, and handling is consistent with the Privacy Policy and Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy.

7. PROCEDURES

7.1. **Worker screening for personnel and volunteers:** Personnel and volunteers in roles involving direct contact with children, young people or adults at risk must hold the worker-screening clearance required by the jurisdiction in which the role is carried out. The Session / Church Council is responsible for ensuring that required clearances are obtained, verified, current and recorded before a person commences an in-scope role. Practical administration may be delegated locally, including to the Safe Church Representative or another authorised local record-holder. The Safe Church Administrator may maintain central screening templates, jurisdictional guidance, renewal schedules, training records and central records where required by the CRCA safeguarding framework. This denominational administration supports, but does not replace, local church responsibility for ensuring that required clearances are current and role requirements are met. A person whose

required clearance has expired, been suspended, been refused or not yet been verified must not continue in an in-scope role until the matter is resolved.

7.2. **Risk identification:** Local churches regularly inspect physical spaces and online platforms, encourage feedback and identify risks to children, young people and adults at risk.

7.3. **Risk assessment:** Identified risks are assessed according to likelihood, impact and the effectiveness of controls. Local churches maintain a local risk register and record residual risk after controls are applied.

7.4. **Preventive measures and risk mitigation:** Local churches establish and communicate protocols to manage identified risks, including supervision arrangements, changes to physical spaces, online safeguards, behavioural expectations, activity-specific controls and training.

7.5. **Reporting mechanisms:** A confidential process is available for reporting concerns or incidents. Reporting, logging and case-management systems are supported administratively by the Safe Church Administrator. Where a reported matter requires safeguarding response, triage, statutory pathway advice or escalation support, the Safe Church Unit may provide response support in accordance with the CRCA safeguarding pathways.

7.6. **Responding to concerns:** Immediate action is taken to ensure safety. Complaints, allegations and concerns are handled in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy and the Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy.

7.7. **Monitoring, review and audit:** The effectiveness of safeguards is regularly monitored. Feedback and audit findings inform continuous improvement through the Continuous Quality Improvement Policy.

7.8. **Documentation:** Risks, actions, decisions, reviews, safety agreements and relevant communications are recorded and stored securely in accordance with the Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy and the Privacy Policy.

7.9. **Training and awareness:** Personnel, volunteers and members are informed about safe-environment expectations and receive training appropriate to their role.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1. Role definitions used in this policy are consistent across the CRCA policy suite.

8.2. **Session / Church Council:** The Session / Church Council retains governance accountability for local implementation of this policy. Implementation may be undertaken with or through an appointed committee or management body, provided the Session / Church Council remains informed and accountable. This includes the local risk register, third-party premises, local controls, required clearances and training, and identified local risks.

8.3. **Safe Church Representative:** The Safe Church Representative serves as the local point of contact for safeguarding concerns and supports local awareness, reporting and referral through CRCA safeguarding pathways. The Safe Church Representative may assist with local follow-up of safe-environment requirements where authorised by the Session / Church Council.

8.4. **Safe Church Administrator:** The Safe Church Administrator maintains approved templates, screening and training records, central registers, reporting tools, referral lists and administrative resources that support safe-environment and risk-management practice across the CRCA safeguarding framework. The Safe Church Administrator may maintain restricted central registers, including Persons of Concern, ministry restrictions, safety agreements and other centrally managed safeguarding records where required. This does not replace the Session / Church Council's responsibility for local implementation and local risk controls.

8.5. **Safe Church Unit:** The Safe Church Unit provides denominational safeguarding advice, triage assistance, response support and escalation support where safety concerns, complaints, statutory matters, Reportable Conduct Scheme matters, Police matters or other safeguarding risks are identified or referred. The Safe Church Unit may support local churches in risk-response pathways

but does not replace the Session / Church Council's responsibility for local safe-environment implementation.

8.6. **Safe Church Advisory Committee:** The Safe Church Advisory Committee reviews the effectiveness of the safe-environment and risk-management framework, identifies systemic risks, recommends mitigation measures, and supports continuous quality improvement.

8.7. **Personnel, volunteers and members:** Personnel, volunteers and members follow established safe-environment protocols, participate in training, provide feedback and report perceived risks or concerns.

9. BREACHES

9.1. Failure to adhere to this policy or its procedures is dealt with under the Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy. Responses may include mandatory training, restriction of duties, suspension, removal from role or other action proportionate to the breach and the risk involved.

10. RELATED POLICIES

10.1. National Safeguarding Policy; Code of Conduct; HR / Recruitment Policy; Complaints Handling Policy; Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy; Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy; Privacy Policy; Internet Usage Policy; Social Media Policy; Learning and Development Policy; Continuous Quality Improvement Policy.

11. MONITORING AND REVIEW

11.1. 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.

External framework reference: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

Document	Control	History			
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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.