SCAC	Document Control
Document title	CRCA Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy
Document identifier	SCAC-Pol-07-DABRP
Document owner	Safe Church Advisory Committee
Approved by	SCAC & Synodical Interim Committee (Interim approval)
Version	1.0
Date approved by SCAC	16 September 2026
Next review date	15 September 2028
Authoritative location	www.safechurch.crca.org.au/documents
Document status	Controlled

1. PURPOSE 2
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS 2
3. SCOPE 2
4. VALUES 2
5. DEFINITIONS 2
6. POLICY 3
7. PROCEDURES 3
8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES 5
9. BREACHES 5
10. RELATED POLICIES 5
11. MONITORING AND REVIEW 5

1. PURPOSE

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide a consistent and transparent framework for addressing breaches of CRCA policies, particularly those related to safeguarding children and adults at risk. Breaches are dealt with promptly, justly and in line with legislation, the CRCA Church Order and reformed Christian theology.

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

2.1. Micah 6:8 calls the people of God to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. This policy seeks justice for those affected by breaches while preserving fairness and care for all involved.

2.2. 1 John 3:18 calls the church to love not merely in words but in action and truth. Disciplinary and breach-response processes are a practical expression of truth, accountability and care.

2.3. James 1:27 reminds the church to protect the vulnerable. A clear breach-response process helps safeguard those at risk and strengthens integrity in the life of the church.

3. SCOPE

3.1. This policy applies to all members, pastors, elders, staff, volunteers, contractors and any person representing or acting on behalf of the CRCA in any capacity.

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. **Breach** means conduct, omission or failure to comply with the CRCA safeguarding policy suite, Code of Conduct, lawful direction, role requirement or safeguarding obligation.

5.3. **Safeguarding breach** means a breach that creates or may create risk to a child, adult at risk or other person in a CRCA context.

5.4. **Serious safeguarding breach** means a breach involving serious harm, possible criminal conduct, reportable conduct, abuse, exploitation, grooming, retaliation, significant boundary violation, concealment, or another high-risk safeguarding matter.

5.5. **Misconduct** means conduct that may warrant pastoral, volunteer-management, employment, disciplinary, Church Order, statutory or legal response, depending on the person's role and the nature of the conduct.

5.6. **Interim risk control** means a temporary safeguarding action, such as role restriction, supervision, stand-down, contact limit or access control, imposed to manage risk while a matter is assessed. It is not a finding of breach or guilt.

5.7. **Disciplinary pathway** means the applicable process for considering consequences after a breach or misconduct matter, including local church, employment, volunteer-management, Church Order or statutory processes where relevant.

5.8. **Church Order pathway** means the ecclesiastical pathway required by the CRCA Church Order for matters involving office bearers, discipline, appeal or assembly authority.

5.9. **Procedural fairness** means a fair process that provides notice of the matter, an opportunity to respond, impartial consideration, and a decision made by the person or body with authority to decide.

6. POLICY

6.1. **Commitment to safeguarding:** The CRCA is committed to the safety and well-being of children and adults at risk. This includes preventing harm and responding appropriately to allegations, disclosures and breaches.

6.2. **Rights and dignity:** Every person involved in a disciplinary or breach response process, whether reporting a breach, affected by a breach or subject to an allegation, is treated with respect, dignity and fairness.

6.3. **Transparency and accountability:** Allegations of breaches are addressed fairly, transparently and consistently, while preserving confidentiality, privacy, statutory reporting requirements and the integrity of any Police or regulatory process.

6.4. **Statutory and scheme overlay:** Where alleged conduct meets a Reportable Conduct Scheme threshold, a criminal threshold, a mandatory reporting obligation or another statutory threshold, the relevant external reporting pathway operates in parallel with internal CRCA processes.

6.5. **Police priority:** Where the matter is also a Police matter, internal investigation or internal process is managed so it does not compromise Police action.

6.6. **Religious confession and pastoral conversations:** Disclosures of conduct that may meet criminal, mandatory reporting or reportable conduct thresholds are reported and responded to in accordance with applicable law, including where the disclosure arises in religious confession or pastoral conversation and the law does not extend privilege to that safeguarding matter.

6.7. **Protection from retaliation:** A person who reports conduct or participates in good faith in a process under this policy must not be subject to detrimental conduct, retaliation or victimisation because of that participation.

7. PROCEDURES

7.1. **Reporting breaches:** A breach or concern may be reported to the leadership of the local church, the Safe Church Representative, the Safe Church Unit, or another pathway recognised by this policy. Reports may be made anonymously, although detail assists assessment, safety planning and procedural fairness. Where a matter is raised locally, the Session / Church Council remains responsible for local governance action within its authority. The Safe Church Representative may support local intake and referral. The Safe Church Unit may provide safeguarding response advice, triage assistance and escalation support where the matter requires denominational safeguarding support, statutory pathway advice, Reportable Conduct Scheme consideration, Police interaction or high-risk review.

7.2. **Initial assessment:** The local church leadership conducts the initial local assessment where the matter is raised locally, with support from the Safe Church Representative and, where appropriate, advice or triage assistance from the Safe Church Unit. The assessment identifies immediate safety needs, the nature and seriousness of the alleged breach, whether local precautionary measures are required, and whether Police, statutory, Reportable Conduct Scheme, mandatory reporting or other external pathways may be engaged. Where the matter is high-risk, conflicted, complex, concerns a person in authority, or may engage a statutory or scheme threshold, the matter is escalated through the relevant CRCA safeguarding pathway, including the Safe Church Advisory Committee where required.

7.3. **Interim risk controls:** Interim measures may include temporary changes to duties, contact arrangements, access to premises, access to organisational systems or other proportionate measures needed to protect people and preserve the integrity of the process. Where Police are involved, the CRCA seeks Police guidance before implementing controls that may affect evidence integrity. Controls are documented, reviewed at defined intervals and updated when new information becomes available. Interim risk controls are not a finding of breach or confirmation of guilt; they are protective and process-preserving measures used while a concern, complaint or investigation is being assessed or resolved.

7.4. **Investigation:** Parties are interviewed discreetly, evidence is gathered and the rights of all involved are upheld. External experts may be engaged where a matter is complex, high-risk or conflicted.

7.5. **Notification:** The respondent is notified of the allegations and their rights where doing so does not compromise safety, a Police process, statutory notification or the integrity of an investigation.

7.6. **Outcomes and sanctions:** The Safe Church Advisory Committee may make recommendations to the relevant Session / Church Council or denominational governance body. For office bearers, any temporary relief of duties, special discipline, suspension or deposition is considered through the CRCA Church Order, including Articles 80, 81, 82 and 83, where applicable. For employees and volunteers, consequences may include counselling, mandatory training, restriction of duties, suspension, removal from leadership, termination of employment or volunteer-management action, depending on the nature and seriousness of the matter. Civil, statutory, Police, employment, volunteer-management, pastoral, disciplinary and safeguarding processes are distinguished and may run in parallel where required.

7.7. **Rights of the respondent:** The respondent has the right to be heard, to be represented, and to seek review through the Complaints Handling Policy and applicable CRCA governance processes. Safeguarding review mechanisms do not displace Church Order discipline, employment processes, statutory reporting, Police processes, regulator directions, civil proceedings or any decision reserved to a legally authorised decision-maker.

7.8. **Record-keeping:** Every step, from reporting to conclusion, is documented. Records relating to safeguarding complaints, allegations and investigations are retained in accordance with the Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy and Privacy Policy, and are retained for at least 45 years from the date of last action on the file, or longer where law or regulator direction requires.

7.9. **Support and referral options:** People affected by a disclosure or breach response, including complainants, respondents, witnesses, family members and pastoral support persons, are offered information about appropriate support and referral options. The Safe Church Administrator maintains current referral resources. The Safe Church Unit may assist with referral options where a matter requires safeguarding response, triage, escalation or statutory-pathway support.

7.10. **Persons of Concern:** Where a disciplinary outcome results in a finding that a person presents an ongoing safeguarding risk, conditions, restrictions, safety agreements and communications are recorded and managed through the appropriate safeguarding pathway on a need-to-know basis.

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 implements this policy locally, receives recommendations where authorised, and applies sanctions or precautionary measures within its authority. The Session / Church Council remains responsible for local governance decisions, subject to the CRCA Church Order, applicable law, denominational safeguarding pathways and any required escalation.

8.3. **Safe Church Representative:** The Safe Church Representative supports local intake, assists people to understand reporting pathways, and refers matters through the relevant CRCA safeguarding pathway. The Safe Church Representative does not replace the Session / Church Council's local governance responsibility or the Safe Church Unit's response-support function.

8.4. **Safe Church Administrator:** The Safe Church Administrator supports the records, referral lists, restricted registers, templates, safety-agreement records and administrative resources required for breach-response processes. This includes maintaining central records or registers where required by the CRCA safeguarding framework.

8.5. **Safe Church Unit:** The Safe Church Unit provides safeguarding response advice, triage assistance, documentation support, response-coordination support and liaison support with statutory or regulatory pathways where required. The Safe Church Unit supports local churches and the Safe Church Advisory Committee but does not replace local church governance responsibility or determine disciplinary outcomes.

8.6. **Safe Church Advisory Committee:** considers high-risk or complex matters, receives safeguarding recommendations where authorised, monitors systemic breach-response issues and supports continuous improvement. The Safe Church Advisory Committee may make safeguarding recommendations to the relevant decision-maker, but does not amend, overturn or substitute Church Order, employment, statutory, regulator, court, tribunal or other reserved decisions.

8.7. **All members and personnel:** All members and personnel report potential breaches, cooperate with investigations and must not retaliate against a person who reports or participates in a process under this policy.

9. BREACHES

9.1. A breach of this policy is dealt with under this policy, the Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy and, where applicable, the CRCA Church Order, including Articles 80, 81, 82 and 83.

10. RELATED POLICIES

10.1. National Safeguarding Policy; Safeguarding Governance and Leadership Policy; Code of Conduct; Whistleblower Policy; Safe Environment and Risk Management Policy; Complaints Handling Policy; HR / Recruitment Policy; Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy; Privacy 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			
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.