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1. PURPOSE

1.1. To establish clear and protective guidelines for CRCA social media activity so that the CRCA's online presence reflects Christian values and safeguards every person, especially children and adults at risk.

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

2.1. Colossians 4:6 calls speech to be gracious and wise. Social media communication connected with CRCA activities should therefore be marked by grace, truthfulness, respect and care.

2.2. James 3:5-10 warns that words can cause harm. This policy applies that wisdom to digital communication by requiring careful, accountable and safeguarding-aware social media practice.

3. SCOPE

3.1. This policy applies to all members, employees, volunteers, leaders, contractors and affiliates of the CRCA when using social media in connection with their association with the church or its activities.

3.2. It applies to official CRCA accounts, local church social media accounts, livestreams and personal accounts where they are used in connection with CRCA activities.

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. **Social media** means websites, applications and digital platforms that allow users to create, post, share, comment on, message, stream or otherwise interact with content or people online.

5.3. **Official CRCA account** means a social media account, page, group, channel or profile authorised for CRCA church, ministry, governance or safeguarding communication.

5.4. **Personal or private account** means a social media account controlled by an individual rather than by an authorised CRCA church, ministry or governance body.

5.5. **Image consent** means permission to capture, use, publish or share an image, video, recording or digitally created or altered likeness of a person, subject to any policy, safeguarding, privacy or legal limits.

5.6. **Direct messaging** means private or semi-private communication through a social media platform, application or online service.

5.7. **Online boundary** means a relational, pastoral, privacy or communication limit that protects children, adults at risk and others from unsafe or inappropriate online contact.

5.8. **Digitally created or altered image** means an image, video or likeness that has been created, manipulated or modified digitally so that it may affect consent, dignity, identity, privacy or safeguarding risk.

5.9. **Moderation** means authorised review, approval, removal, restriction or response to social media content, comments, posts, messages or interactions.

6. POLICY

6.1. **Responsible sharing:** information, images and comments are shared responsibly and in a way that does not cause harm, misuse private information or place people at risk.

6.2. **Upholding Christian values:** all digital interactions connected with the CRCA must reflect Christian character, respect, grace, truthfulness and care for others.

6.3. **Privacy and confidentiality:** private information, photographs, video, pastoral information and safeguarding information must not be posted or shared without proper authority and consent.

6.4. Positive engagement: digital harassment, cyberbullying, intimidation, sexualised communication, image-based abuse and other inappropriate online behaviour are prohibited.

6.5. Online safety framework: CRCA social media practice is informed by the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth), the eSafety Commissioner Basic Online Safety Expectations and guidance for organisations, including the cyberbullying takedown scheme for under-18s and the image-based abuse framework.

6.6. **Image publication consent:** a separate, informed consent is required before images of children or young people are published on CRCA websites, newsletters, livestreams, social media accounts or other public channels. Images created, altered or enhanced using artificial intelligence or other digital tools are treated as images for this clause where they identify or depict a child, young person or other person. The Session / Church Council is responsible for ensuring that local image-publication consent requirements are implemented for local church activities. Consent records are managed in accordance with the Privacy Policy and Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy. The Safe Church Administrator may maintain approved consent templates, central guidance and central records where required by the CRCA safeguarding framework.

6.7. Image-based abuse: non-consensual sharing or threatened sharing of intimate images is contrary to this policy and the Code of Conduct and is responded to under the Complaints Handling Policy and Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy, with reporting to the eSafety Commissioner and Police as required.

7. PROCEDURES

7.1. **Account management:** official CRCA social media accounts are clearly distinguished from personal accounts. Privacy settings, account access and administrator permissions are managed to protect people and church information.

7.2. **Content review:** official CRCA social media content and engagement are periodically reviewed for alignment with CRCA values, safeguarding obligations and privacy requirements.

7.3. **Comment and post moderation:** comments and posts on official CRCA channels are moderated according to clear criteria. Local church social media channels are moderated under the oversight of the Session / Church Council or an authorised local account administrator. Content that breaches the Code of Conduct, applicable law, safeguarding obligations or privacy requirements is removed or escalated through the appropriate safeguarding, complaints, privacy, eSafety or disciplinary pathway.

7.4. **Direct messaging with children and young people:** adult personnel and volunteers do not engage in one-to-one direct messaging with a child or young person under 18 from a personal account on any

messaging or social media platform. Where adult-to-young-person communication is necessary for a CRCA activity, it is conducted from an official CRCA account, with at least one other adult included where practicable, and with the knowledge and consent of the young person's parent or guardian. Any approved exception is documented in advance by the Session / Church Council, retained in accordance with the Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy, and reviewed if a safeguarding concern, complaint or risk matter arises.

7.5. Reporting and response: social media concerns may be raised with local church leadership, the Safe Church Representative, or the Safe Church Unit where safeguarding response support, triage assistance or escalation is required. Concerns involving harm, misconduct, bullying, harassment, sexualised conduct, privacy breach, image-based abuse, eSafety reporting, Police matters or statutory pathways are referred through the relevant safeguarding, complaints, breach-response, privacy, statutory or legal pathway.

7.6. **Support:** people affected by social media misconduct are supported through the Complaints Handling Policy, Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy, Privacy Policy and other relevant safeguarding pathways.

7.7. **Training:** social media safety, online conduct, image consent, privacy and adult-to-child communication expectations are included in safeguarding training under the Learning and Development Policy.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

8.2. **Session / Church Council:** supports local implementation of this policy; authorises local church social media accounts; oversees local account administration, moderation arrangements and image-publication practices; ensures local personnel understand social media expectations; and responds to local concerns through the appropriate safeguarding, complaints or governance pathways.

8.3. **Safe Church Representative:** assists local people to understand how social media-related safeguarding concerns can be raised and referred through the CRCA safeguarding pathways. The Safe Church Representative may support local awareness and referral where authorised by the Session / Church Council.

8.4. **Safe Church Administrator:** supports administrative, training-record, template, consent-form, resource and document-control functions relevant to social media practice. This includes maintaining approved image-consent templates, guidance material, training resources and central records where required by the CRCA safeguarding framework.

8.5. **Safe Church Unit:** provides safeguarding response advice, triage assistance and escalation support where social media concerns involve harm, risk, complaints, disclosures, statutory reporting, Police matters, eSafety reporting, privacy / information-sharing matters or other safeguarding pathways. The Safe Church Unit supports, but does not replace, local church governance responsibility for local social media practice or account administration.

8.6. **Safe Church Advisory Committee:** oversees policy effectiveness, social media safeguarding trends and system improvement through the Continuous Quality Improvement Policy.

8.7. **Personnel and members:** use social media respectfully, protect privacy, avoid inappropriate contact, uphold this policy and report social media concerns or breaches.

9. BREACHES

9.1. Breaches of this policy are dealt with under the Disciplinary and Breach Response Policy. A first breach may require counselling, education or retraining; repeated breaches may lead to restrictions or suspension from official CRCA social media activity; serious breaches may involve legal, Police, eSafety, privacy, disciplinary or Church Order pathways.

10. RELATED POLICIES

10.1. National Safeguarding Policy. Code of Conduct. Internet Usage Policy. Safe Environment and Risk Management Policy. Privacy Policy. Information Sharing and Record Keeping Policy. Complaints Handling Policy. Disciplinary and Breach Response 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.

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.