Christian Reformed Church
of Toowoomba

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People

Denominational Policy

SECTION 1 - CHILD AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE PROTECTION POLICY

SECTION 2 - CODE OF CONDUCT

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Long Form

CHRISTIAN REFORMED
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

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SECTION 1 - CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy Statement: A Commitment to Child Protection

The purpose of this Policy is to guide the Christian Reformed Church of Toowoomba (known as 'CRCT') in developing a child-protective culture. CRCT is committed to welcoming children and their parents or carers and providing a 'child-safe'[1] environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who attend the services and other programs. We see such a commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to biblical, Christian principles for living and for recognising the unique value and potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability, or disability.

Our priority is to:

- provide safe physical, emotional and online environments.
- develop and implement clear expectations to guide the behaviour of adults towards children, expressed in a Child-safe Code of Conduct that provides advice for managing relationships between adult and children.
- develop and implement strategies for identifying, mitigating, or eliminating risks to children's wellbeing and safety.
- provide clear and accessible pathways for acting on observations, allegations, and disclosures, including reporting abuse.

We recognise the particular need for sensitivity for those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including those with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. We take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities and seek to include them and make them feel safe and welcome. All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and discrimination. Our pastoral care and protection of all children expresses our love and commitment to their **wellbeing**, even if their statements and choices do not align with the beliefs and doctrines of this church community.

This Policy recognises both Federal and State legislation, as well as regulations and guidelines, and commits workers to responsibly and reasonably cooperating with Government departments, law enforcement and child protection agencies in any care proceedings. The operational principles of our Code of Conduct support and facilitate the protection of children and young people. **If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.**

1.2 Scope:

The provisions and duties of care expressed in this Child Protection Policy apply to:

- A Minister (A minister is defined as a person defined or appointed as a recognised leader in an organised religious institution; or the appointed leader of a local religious congregation in an organised religious institution who has general authority)
- The Session (including minister/pastor, elders & deacons)
- All employees (including volunteers) members and regular attenders.
- All activities and programs organised by or with the approval of CRCT, on the premises or off-site, including camps and day trips.
- Where the church hires out its venue or facilities, the provision of this policy applies to all guests or hirers of the venue and its facilities. Such temporary users of the church facilities will be provided with copies of this Policy Code of Conduct and relevant procedures. The Hiring Agreement will include a signed commitment to complying with the expectations of these documents.
- Contractors, subcontractors, delivery persons or others engaged to provide services on the premises, particularly if they have any contact with children whilst on site. Where possible, such temporary visitors to the church premises will be provided with an Induction Pack and required to sign their willingness to comply with the expectations outlined.

[1]It is recognized that no organisation can guarantee the safety of children and other vulnerable people who are on site at a venue. The term 'child-safe' means that child safety is paramount to this organisation, that it has compliant policies and procedural documents, and that risk identification and mitigation practices are embedded in the culture.

1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

a. **The Chair of the Session**. The Chair, through the Session, has oversight of the policies, programs, and activities of CRCT. If an allegation is made against the Chair then the Senior Minister becomes the 'head of entity' for the purposes of reporting and investigating.

b. **Senior Minister**. The Senior Minister becomes the 'head of entity' for the purposes of reporting and investigating if an allegation is made against the Chair of the Session. The Session appoints the ChildSafe Coordinator.

c. **The ChildSafe Coordinator (CC).** The person appointed to this role undertakes to manage the church's child protection procedures, especially the process for making, receiving, secure storing and managing the initial responses to complaints or allegations of abuse or misconduct against or in the presence of a child. The CC will ensure that all those working with children have a Working With Children Clearance card that is active, and that regular training is undertaken by all those who have interaction with children in the church community.

1.4 Authority

This Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy and Code of Conduct was revised and updated to reflect the most recent changes to State and Federal law and guidelines towards being a child-safe organisation. **It was approved by the Session and adopted for use by the Christian Reformed Church of Toowoomba on 5 September 2023**.

1.5 Policy Review

The Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct will be reviewed at least every two years, or as required with the declaration of relevant legislation to remain compliant with the new legislation.

Any proposed changes or updates will be submitted to the Session of CRCT for approval at a properly convened meeting for approval before being adopted and implemented. The date of approval and implementation will be noted in the minutes of the Session meeting and on the document that was approved.

1.6 Operating Principles

Duty of Care: Means any legal responsibility that CRCT has to endeavour to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those who participate in programs or activities of the church and to provide an adequate level of protection against harm.

Vicarious Liability: Means any legal liability that CRCT may be determined to have for the conduct of those who act on its behalf (e.g. its staff and approved voluntary leaders).

Reasonable Standard of Care: Refers to the level of care that a user may reasonably expect that CRCT will take in providing any program, activity, service, or facility.

Reasonable Foresight: Refers to a responsibility that CRCT has, when planning activities for children and young people, to identify any reasonably foreseen danger/risk and take reasonable steps to prevent or avert such risk by completing a risk assessment process prior to the activity commencing.

Child Protection Reporting Obligations: This principle covers mandatory reporting, for those professions and persons that are defined by law, and the moral and legal responsibility that all adults have to report all types of known or possible child abuse, where there is a reasonable belief that a physical or sexual offence has occurred or may be committed against a child.

Reasonable belief: A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds, through disclosure by the child or a third party or personal observation of indicators that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person's health, safety or wellbeing is at risk.

2. THE QUEENSLAND CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Please note - as of Nov 2022, the Queensland Government has not yet formally legislated the 10 National Principals for Child Safe Organisations endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments; however, according to the department's annual report, they are under review. CRCT has adopted these principals as standards for Child Safety in our organisation.

Standard 1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in leadership, governance, and culture
Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in CRCT's culture at every level, from the Session, via the Chairman. The Child Safe Code of Conduct is read and signed annually by all team members working with children annually. Our statement of commitment to child safety and our policies are on the church website. Our risk management strategies and procedures are comprehensive and well-known.

Standard 2. Child and Student Empowerment
Children and young people will be informed and empowered about their human rights: to be heard, consulted, and included in decision-making processes that affect them and the strategies and procedures in place to keep them safe.

Standard 3. Family Engagement
The church community will be informed and involved in developing and implementing the practices and procedures that will protect our children and their wellbeing.

Standard 4. Diversity and Equity
Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in policy and practice. CRCT recognises some children are vulnerable because of their diversity or abilities and will ensure they are not discriminated against or disadvantaged by the structures, policies, and practices of the Church.

Standard 5. Suitable staff and volunteers
People employed or approved to work with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. This will be evidenced by Working With Children clearance, and will be the focus of recruitment, screening, and interviewing processes and by our regular training and induction for new children's workers.

Standard 6. Complaints Management Processes
Processes for making, managing, and responding to complaints, including investigating complaints and child abuse concerns are visible, accessible and child focussed. The Church has a Complaints Management process that is outlined in several Policy documents and is illustrated with simple graphic flow charts. Complaint Report Forms are available from the ChildSafe Coordinator or the Session.

Standard 7. Child Safety knowledge, skills, and awareness
Regular staff training will equip all staff members with the knowledge, skills and awareness required to keep children safe. Members of the children and youth teams will complete training and provide certification of completion. All members will read and sign off on key policies, manuals, and the Child-safe Code of Conduct annually.

Standard 8. Child safety in physical and on-line environments
Physical and on-line environments promote safety and wellbeing, minimising the opportunity for children or young people to be harmed. Strategies for risk management and mitigation of physical and on-line risk are contained in relevant policies.

Standard 9. Review of Child Safety practices
The Church is committed to regular review and improvement of child safety and its implementation with the Church community.

Standard 10. Implementing Child Safe practices
This policy and the related documents show how the Church works to exercise its duty of care to all students, and to provide evidence that these child-safe practices and procedures are well-known and complied with.

Details on how these Standards are incorporated into the Policy and Procedures are outlined below.

3. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Child Safety and Wellbeing are embedded in Church governance, leadership, and culture [CSS 2]

CRC Toowoomba will:

- Ensure the Church website has a clear statement that child abuse of any kind or harmful discrimination on the basis of identified attributes will not be tolerated. This statement is also a part of recruitment documentation and other Church publications.
- Through the Session, assign the responsibility for child safety education and practices to the ChildSafe Coordinator. This responsibility will be practically shared by members of the Session and the ChildSafe Coordinator. They will ensure that all staff and volunteers complete mandatory reading and training in Child Protection, Reporting, Risk Management and Duty of Care, as well as other policies which support these principles.
- Undertake annual Risk Assessment audits and review of procedures, at Session level.
- Ensure all members of staff, including casually employed staff and volunteers, read, and sign the Child-safe Code of Conduct.
- Build Risk Management strategies into the planning of all activities of the church that involve children, including excursions, camps, and special events. Each event will have a nominated Person-in-Charge who will complete risk assessment documentation and present it to ChildSafe Coordinator for approval.
- Regularly (at least annually) provide all those involved with children with training and other forms of communication to ensure their understanding of obligations under the law regarding record keeping and information sharing.

Education and empowerment of children and young people [CSS 3 and CSS 7]

This element of the Child Protection Policy identifies the need for children to be educated and aware:

- of what is and what is not child abuse
- ways and opportunity to provide feedback to Team Leaders about concerns or uncertainty relating to their safety in programs and activities.
- of how to make a complaint or allegation about abuse to themselves or another child.

To this end, CRC Toowoomba will:

1. Make this Policy and related documents **available to all members of the Church community**, as PDF documents on the website or by email.
2. **Inform and educate participants** about the importance of self-protection, personal safety, strategies for finding support and help if concerned. Information posters are displayed in classrooms and other spaces.
3. **Encourage children** to complete Feedback Forms at the end of units of study or activities where personal safety could be an issue (see Appendix 6).
4. Ensure **Codes of Conduct** and other helpful materials are displayed in meeting rooms and other open spaces.
5. Ensure important information about **making a complaint** about alleged abuse to the ChildSafe Coordinator or other team members will be available for participants.

We will listen to and act on any concerns children or their parents/carers raise with us. *We are committed to protecting children from abuse.* 'Abuse', as used in this policy, includes all the following types of abuse or neglect of children and young people: physical; sexual; emotional/psychological; racial/cultural or spiritual/religious, or neglect.

Family Engagement [CSS 4]

A central principle of Family Engagement is that it is a partnership between the parents and the Church – and, ideally, the church family. This involves all aspects of pastoral care of every participant. This Policy affirms the right of parents to:

- have opportunity to comment on arrangements, policies, and procedures in place for the safety and well-being of their children
- be fully informed of activities and the risk assessment and mitigation that has been undertaken
- have access to all the policies that guide governance and leadership decisions around child safety. These documents will be available on both the website and the church.

Upholding Equity and Respecting Diversity [CSS 5]
CRC Toowoomba is blessed to have families from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and language backgrounds. We value and uphold this diversity and are enriched by it. Our beliefs - relating to the value of every child, regardless of age, gender, race, or ethnicity, ability, or disability – underpin our policies and practices in ministry, behaviour management and pastoral care.

We pay particular attention to the needs of children with physical or intellectual, or learning disabilities and for those with English as a second language or other cultural differences.

Employment of Staff and Volunteers [CSS 6]
Recruitment, screening, and selection practices
CRC Toowoomba will be vigilant in the recruitment, selection and screening of all staff, contractors, activity leaders and volunteers to ensure they are safe and suitable to work with children and young people. It is important that every person who works with children under the auspices of this Church upholds and exemplifies our Christian beliefs and values, as expressed in this Policy, especially in their interaction with children and other vulnerable people.

- Our statements of commitment to child safety and our behavioural expectations of employees and volunteers are included in all advertisements and Position Descriptions.
- We will conduct screening to determine whether a prospective staff member, contractor, volunteer, or leader may pose a risk to children. This will include making reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about a person whom it proposes to engage to perform child-connected work:
  - → Child-related Employment Screening Clearance, that is, the Working With Children Check, the National Criminal Record Check;
  - → proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
  - → the person's history of work involving children; and
  - → two references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.
- The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to the Church will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, the Church will not offer any applicant a position of responsibility until they provide the required evidence to the church. (This will be the ChildSafe Coordinator)

Any person with a record of child abuse, either sexual or physical, will not be offered a role that involves working with children or being in contact with children in the conduct of their duties.

- Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by a church representative (Team Leader or Session) prior to appointment being made official. Interviews will include specific questions relating to allegations or complaints made against the applicant involving misconduct against a child. The applicant will sign the questionnaire verifying the truthfulness and accuracy of the statements.

Induction, Training and Annual Certification
The Church provides a system of induction, support, and supervision so people feel valued, respected, and fairly treated. This system will train and guide our staff and volunteers in their interactions with children and clear procedures for managing programs and activities.

- All staff are provided with a copy of this **Child Protection Policy and Procedures** and the **Code of Conduct** that defines unacceptable conduct, boundaries, and expectations for behaviour. Staff and volunteers will sign a declaration stating they have read, understand, and will comply with guidelines and follow procedures faithfully.
- Any person new to the children's or youth work team will complete a Child-safe Induction process as part of their orientation to the specific ministry. (Normally this would be done by the ChildSafe Coordinator or the Team Leader)
- Every three years ***'Refresh, Renew, Update'*** sessions should be run for all staff and volunteers, to ensure staff awareness of the risks to child safety and familiarity with the church's child-protective practices and reporting expectations, and where there have been changes to legislation or practice.

Support and Supervision for Staff, Contractors, and Volunteers

CRC Toowoomba provides support and supervision so that people feel valued, respected, and fairly treated in the following ways:

- The church ChildSafe Coordinator checks BlueCard's for all employed or volunteer staff annually. The BlueCard authority regularly checks the suitability of staff for child connected work throughout period that the registration / check is held.
- Staff are accountable to read and familiarise themselves with Church policies annually, as available on **the website** and as directed by the Session.
- Those who work with children are aware that they are accountable to their peers, supervisors and ultimately, God for the safety and wellbeing of children in their care. Awareness, vigilance and conferring with colleagues and supervisors are important strategies that are encouraged in protecting our children.

Risk Management [CSS 9]

The Session are responsible to identify and manage risks in all environments, including physical and online. Risk assessment and management practices are embedded in our procedures for all services, programs or activities organised or authorised by the Church. Risk identification and mitigation is part of the planning process for all activities, especially community events that involve travel. Please refer to Appendix 7 and 8 for forms that are used for medical information and permission to attend special events, to ensure children's safety at all times.

Risk Management also applies to Work Health and Safety generally and is covered in more detail in WHS Policy. The Session and/or Board of Management will identify and manage risks within the meeting place and its environment. If an incident occurs at church or at an external church approved event where emergency services are called, there is an injury that requires hospitalization or there is an illegal act, please refer to Appendix 4 in relation to reporting requirements.

This policy applies specifically to the minimising of risks of abuse of any kind to children and vulnerable people who are in our care and to ensuring their physical safety in the buildings or activities of the church. CRC Toowoomba has zero tolerance of child abuse of any kind.

In situations where a person seeks to attend or join CRCT with a record of offending in child abuse of any kind, the Session will put in place appropriate boundaries restricting access, to ensure the safety of children. This is not to say that such a person, with a proven reformed attitude, cannot be received into fellowship and benefit from the pastoral care of the church. Please refer to the Dealing with a Person of Concern process document by clicking this **LINK** (https://safechurchcrca.org.au/safe-church-documents/2-policy-documents)

The Session and Board of Management[2] of CRC Toowoomba are committed to identifying and managing risks within the church and its environment. If Session or BoM identifies risks of child abuse occurring in the church or its environment the committee will make a record of those risks and specify the action(s) the church will take to reduce or remove the risks (i.e. risk controls).

As part of its risk management strategy and practices, the Session and Board of Management will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls.

All programs and activities must have a risk assessment completed before the program or activity is approved by the ChildSafe Coordinator. CRCT uses the Child Safe – Safety Management Online (SMO) platform to manage risk assessment procedures.

Record Keeping [CCS 7, CCS 8 and CCS 11]

Record keeping is an essential element of our Child Protection strategies.

- Team Members of children and other volunteers should keep personal notes of concerns, observations, and disclosures regarding child abuse during the process of forming a reasonable belief.
- Notes should be saved as a personal record, but in form that can be accessible to church leadership and external authorities, if required. (Use Safety Management Online – SMO).

[2] This is a standard agenda item of the Board of Management who report to the Session.

- When a 'reasonable belief' has been established, these notes can be recorded as a Child Abuse Complaint Report Form, available from the ChildSafe Coordinator. The Child Safe Coordinator can assist and support filling this out, if required. If it is clear that the belief requires a mandatory report, the notes and the Report Form can be supplied to the Police and the Child Protection Unit of the Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services (DCSSDS).
- If a report is made, then all notes and the Report Form will be saved to a **case file**, which will be kept by the Child Safe Coordinator, with all subsequent correspondence and materials relating to investigations, determinations, and further actions.

Notes and forms will record places, times, dates, names of people, observable behaviours, or evidence of harm. Reports must be securely stored by the CC (using Safety Management Online – SMO). They provide valuable legal documents for any investigations and demonstrate the Church's due diligence.

Privacy and Confidentiality [CSS 11]
CRCT will collect, use, disclose and hold personal information of all people who fulfil a role within the church, in accordance with relevant privacy legislation. Such data will be securely stored and protected. Greater detail is provided in the CRCT Privacy Policy.

As much as is reasonably possible, an individual's confidentiality is to be protected where allegations of child abuse are made. Both those who are making reports and those about whom accusations are being made are entitled to confidentiality.

Where there is suspected abuse or misconduct, staff members, leaders, volunteers, and contractors must not disclose or make use of the information in a manner that breaches confidentiality, other than to report and act in a way consistent with the Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure, and relevant statutory requirements.

Review [CSS 10]
All policies, procedures, and practices for keeping children safe will be reviewed:
- → every two years or,
- → after every reportable incident
- → following changes to the law.

The policy review will assess whether the church's Child Protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under its care. CRC Toowoomba undertakes to seek views, comments and suggestions from children, parents, carers, staff, and volunteers.

4. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse, especially sexual abuse of a child, must be reported, where a reasonable belief is held that the child concerned has been abused, is being or is likely to be abused. A responsible adult can come to a reasonable belief through:

- → Disclosure by a child about abuse to his or herself,
- → Disclosure by another child or an adult about abuse to a child, or
- → Direct observation of the abuse or evidence of it by the reporting adult.

The identity of the abuser and the circumstances of the event determine the procedure that should be followed by the leadership, employees, or volunteers of CRCT.

4.1 Abuse of a Child Outside of the Church

If a child attending a CRCT program discloses abuse against them or to another child by a person **outside of the CRCT community**, then the procedures outlined in **Reporting Procedure 2** (Appendix 1A) must be followed. All such disclosures should be written up on a **Complaints Reporting Form** (Appendix 2) and the ChildSafe Coordinator informed.

However, it is the duty of the person to whom the disclosure was made to report the matter to either the Police or Child Protection Unit of the DCSSDS following the Reporting Procedure 1. The church leadership may also decide to make a report.

In this case, ***no further investigation by the church is required***. However, all reasonable steps to protect the child from harm should be taken.

4.2 Abuse of a child by a Christian Reformed Church of Toowoomba employee, volunteer, or member

In the case of an allegation being made against a staff member, volunteer, leader, or contractor at CRCT, the ChildSafe Coordinator will follow the **Reporting Procedure 1** (Appendix 1 & 1B) to notify both the Session and either the Police (if the matter is deemed severe or criminal) or the Child Protection Unit of the Department.

CRCT will take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child is paramount.

Step 1. Ensure that the details of the allegation are recorded on a church **Complaint and Abuse Form**, and the Session is informed. Report the matter to the Police or the DCSSDS.

Step 2. Guidance needs to be sought from the Police or the DCSSDS about suspending an alleged abuser, balancing the need to prevent evidence removal with the safety of the child. When so advised, the accused person should be withdrawn from active duty, which could entail standing down (with pay, where applicable), re-assignment to other duties that do not have direct contact with children, or to work under increased supervision while the matter is being investigated.

Step 3. When a report is made, the Session will contact the insurer via GJ Insurance Consulting Pty Ltd. Ph 1300 384 799 or insure@gjic.com.au

4.3 Sexual Abuse of a child

In the case where it is believed on reasonable grounds that the abuse involves a sexual offence committed against a child under 16 or a child with an impairment of the mind, this must be reported to police pursuant to section 229BC of the *Criminal Code (Qld)*. Failure to do so is a criminal offence.

4.4 Investigations

CRCT will appropriately investigate all allegations relating to an incident of abuse in accordance with its obligations and to the extent reasonably practicable.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for the church to conduct an investigation ***in addition to*** any investigation conducted by authorities (e.g. the police). CRCT may conduct an independent investigation into the allegation to the extent that it will not interfere with investigations by the DCSSDS or the police and will co-operate with the authorities as required. All people covered by this Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedure must co-operate fully with any investigation by the DCSSDS, the Police or CRCT. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for CRCT to engage a person (or persons) from outside CRCT to conduct an independent investigation in relation to allegations.[3]

CRCT will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential. However, from time to time, other employees, leaders, volunteers, and contractors may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation (e.g. to provide witness statements).

4.5 Case Management

In the event of a child or vulnerable person disclosing an incident of abuse to someone they trust, it is essential that it is dealt with swiftly, sensitively, and professionally.

An investigation conducted by CRCT will be conducted in accordance with procedural fairness to protect the integrity of the investigation and the interests of all the participants involved in the investigation. CRCT will also handle the allegations in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible. The outcome will depend on the findings of the investigation, but may be (but not limited to):

- withdrawal from current role

[3] It is important to have an arrangement in place. The investigator must be a person of experience and qualification, maybe with a role in the wider church association or sourced through GJIC Insurance.

- re-assignment to duties with no contact with children
- increased supervision
- disciplinary action, dismissal, or criminal prosecution
- deposition from office

SECTION 2 - CODE OF CONDUCT

1. PURPOSE

The Christian Reformed Church of Toowoomba is a group of followers of Jesus Christ, seeking to reflect the teachings of the Old and New Testaments with integrity and humility. Beyond personal faith in the redeeming work of Christ in His death and resurrection, we accept that our faith is worked out and expressed in the quality of relationships we develop as a church community and all those with whom we interact in our daily lives. Jesus summarised God's expectation for the conduct of His people into one famous and succinct sentence: *'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbours as yourself.'* He reinforced this 'law of love' by adding, *'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples; you love one another!'* Jesus also taught and demonstrated the importance of truth and honesty, of justice and mercy as essential to healthy relationships.

This **Code of Conduct** seeks to apply to the ministerial, or pastoral relationship those ethical standards that God expects of all people. People in various forms of recognised ministry are therefore expected to be examples and models of Christian faith and practice. It is the duty of any person in a ministry position not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, whether that gain is financial or in terms of power, sexual gratification, or otherwise. This includes any action, verbal, written or electronic, physical, or emotional that could be interpreted as emotional, sexual, or other abuse, and applies especially when working with children. We recognize the power differential between children and adults in ministry roles, and these guidelines seek to ensure that such a power is not used to harm children or any vulnerable person.

The adoption of this **Code of Conduct** and the related **Procedural Documents** for investigating breaches of the Code, reflects a deep desire for an open, accountable process that seeks to express justice, love, and compassion to all parties, rather than to protect the organization.

2. OUR COMMITMENT

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to the view that all people should be able to live, work and learn in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind. Our commitment is to cultivate an environment and culture where a diversity of people, regardless of age, gender, race, and culture can thrive and grow holistically. That is, we are committed to CRCT being a safe place for all people, with a special focus on the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people.

This **Code of Conduct** aims to <u>detail the standards of conduct</u> expected by staff (paid and voluntary) in the performance of their duties and to provide <u>guidance</u> in areas where there is a need to make personal and ethical decisions.

At the time of this revision, the **Code of Conduct** recognises and is aligned with all statutory and compliance requirements enshrined in State and Federal law. CRCT is committed to operating in accordance with the law in all its operations.

3. SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

All those who minister or work under the auspices of the church with children should be fully aware of the **Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy** and **Code of Conduct.** Abusive behaviour towards children will not be tolerated. Any and all allegations will be investigated and reported if found to be substantially true.

3.1 DO:

- ✓ contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone '000')
- ✓ adhere to the Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy and Procedure and uphold the CRCT's commitment to child safety at all times
- ✓ take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse, recognising your duty of care
- ✓ maintain a duty of care towards others involved in these programs and activities
- ✓ conduct yourself in a manner consistent with your position as an employee, volunteer, leader, or contractor of CRCT and as a positive role model to children and young people
- ✓ only provide transport for organised events where the relevant permissions have been granted or when permission has been granted by the Team Leader (see Appendix 10)
- ✓ work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of CRCT
- ✓ be responsible for relevant administration of programs and activities in their area

- ✓ establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work
- ✓ be fair, considerate, and honest with others
- ✓ treat all children and young people with respect. Value their ideas, opinions and consider their age, background, and abilities.
- ✓ listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they are, or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- ✓ ensure (as far as practicable) that adults are not alone with a child, or, at least, observable by another adult
- ✓ raise concerns about suspected abuse with the Child Protection Officer or a leader as soon as possible
- ✓ comply with all reporting obligations as they relate to reporting under legislation
- ✓ record and act upon all allegations or suspicions of abuse, discrimination, or harassment
- ✓ if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure, as quickly as possible, the immediate and ongoing safety of the child or children
- ✓ be professional, consistent, and responsible in all your actions
- ✓ maintain strict impartiality
- ✓ respect confidentiality when sharing information about children in accordance with the Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy and Procedures and your reporting obligations

3.2 DO NOT:

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of CRCT **must not**:

- ✗ ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child (or any other) abuse
- ✗ put a child at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors for an improper reason)
- ✗ speak to a child in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Some examples are:
  - swearing or using inappropriate language in the presence of a child
  - yelling at a child, except in an emergency situation where the child's safety may be in danger
  - dealing with a child in anger
  - using hurtful sarcasm
- ✗ discuss sexual activities with a child, unless it is a specific job requirement, and the person is trained or qualified to discuss these matters (and it is part of an approved program or activity)
- ✗ have private contact with a child outside of church activities without the knowledge and/or consent of CRCT's leadership or the child's parent or guardian
- ✗ have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary and approved by the church and the child's parents/guardians, using an approved church email or social media account)
- ✗ use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account or social media to communicate with a child <u>without parental knowledge</u> (refer in this regard to Appendix 9)
- ✗ exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child (unless necessary and approved by the church and the child's parents/guardians as the agreed form of communication)
- ✗ use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol while in the presence of or while supervising a child (unless your contact with the child is accidental/incidental and you are not performing your duties as directed by CRCT)
- ✗ use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs while in the presence of or while supervising a child
- ✗ provide or allow a child to consume alcohol
- ✗ provide or allow a child to consume illegal drugs
- ✗ initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
- ✗ engage in rough physical games, hold, massage, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way
- ✗ engage in any sexual contact with a child for any purpose
- ✗ take a child to your home or encourage meetings outside program activities (unless necessary and approved by the church and the child's parents/guardians)
- ✗ be naked in the presence of a child
- ✗ possess sexually explicit printed materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) in the presence of children
- ✗ sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag, room, or tent with a single child

- treat any child or young person disrespectfully, unfairly, harshly, or discouragingly based on their age, gender, race, culture, disability, or any other differences
- engage in any activity with a child that is likely to emotionally harm them (e.g. watch a movie that is age or content inappropriate for a child)
- be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than a very short time, unless you are observable by another adult, or it is unavoidable
- develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child for your own needs
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians
- do anything in contravention of CRCT's policies, procedures, or this Code

DECLARATION

I, _____, have read the Code of Conduct and the Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy and Procedures that express the intent of the church to protect and nurture children and other vulnerable people.

I agree to comply with these rules and expectations. I understand that if I breach the Code of Conduct or commit an act of serious misconduct or break the law, this may lead to my:

- suspension from duties during investigation of allegations against me
- termination of employment without notice or payment in lieu (summary or instant dismissal)
- being reported to the police and charged with a criminal offence

Signed: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / 20___
<Team member>

Signed: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / 20___
<Child Safe Co-ordinator>

SECTION 3 - CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES & FORMS

1. COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

Any person who believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse should telephone 000.

Under Queensland Law **any person** who believes on reasonable grounds that sexual abuse has been committed against a child **must** report this belief to the police. In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations, **any person** who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse, should disclose that information to the Police or the Child Protection Service.

2. WHEN IS A CHILD OR VULNERABLE PERSON IN NEED OF PROTECTION?

A child or vulnerable person is in need of protection if any of the following grounds exist—

a) the child has been abandoned by his or her parents
b) the child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child
c) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type
d) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type
e) the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged and the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type
f) the child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be, significantly harmed and the child's parents have not provided, arranged, or allowed the provision of, or are unlikely to provide, arrange or allow the provision of, basic care or effective medical, surgical, or other remedial care
g) the child or vulnerable person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, bullying, image based abuse or similar harm of such a kind that the vulnerable person's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged
h) the vulnerable person has suffered, or is likely to suffer financial abuse or similar harm of such a kind that the vulnerable person's financial position is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged
i) the child or vulnerable person has suffered or is likely to suffer spiritual abuse or similar harm of such a kind that the vulnerable person's emotional or intellectual development is, or is likely to be, significantly damaged.

3. MAKING AND MANAGING AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE

Step 1. Where possible, any person (including a child or parent) making an allegation of child abuse should be encouraged to fill out a **Complaints Form** (Appendix 2) and give this to the ChildSafe Coordinator (CC). If they are not willing or able to fill out the Form, the CC (or other leader) may take notes and fill out the form at a later time. The CC **will** share the allegation with the Session of CRCT. A copy of this Form **must** be kept by the CC. The complainant may keep the original. This is an essential record of the event.

If a child is concerned about their own safety or the safety of another person, the child may speak to the **ChildSafe Coordinator**. The CC will meet with the complainant, and hear the story, taking notes and seeking clarification, ensuring that the complainant feels listened to, understood, and protected. (Some complaints may be able to be dealt with at this time, where there is misunderstanding, a lack of evidence of any abuse or no reportable act has been committed.) The gathering of minimal information to make a reasonable decision is required. Any conversation with a child or young person needs to be recorded word for word if called upon for evidence. No question is to be 'leading' or introducing material the child or young person has not self-disclosed.

Step 2. Any responsible adult should, if they have come to a reasonable belief that abuse of a child has happened, is or is likely to happen, follow the steps outlined in **Reporting Procedure 1** (Appendix 1A) below. This includes senior leadership, or any concerned member of the church.

Step 3. If the allegation is made against an employee, volunteer or worker in a church program or activity, then the Session must ALSO follow the steps outline in **Reporting Procedure 2.** (Appendix 1B)

APPENDIX 1 Reporting Procedure 1

1. Clarifying, Recording Evidence and Specific Information about the Child

A report is required if you believe, based on reasonable grounds, that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering sexual abuse, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm as a result of physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect.

The following information will be required when making a formal report to either the Police or Child Protection Services.

- The child's name, age (date of birth is preferable) and address
- The name, age, and address of any known siblings
- Your reasons (observations or disclosures) for believing that the child is at risk of abuse, or actually being abused or neglected
- Your assessment of the immediate danger to the child
- Current whereabouts of the child or vulnerable person (if not in the home)
- Your description of injuries or 'sign' behaviours you have observed
- Any other information you may have of relevance to the investigation

2. Fill out a Complaints Report Form (Appendix 2)

N.B. You do not have to be given permission by church authorities to make such a report. Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.

3. Reporting

Making a report is to lay a serious allegation of a criminal offence against another person, so clarify your perceptions carefully before reporting.

You can make your report to:

- **ChildSafe Coordinator**, using a Complaint Form. Attach your notes to the form, keeping a copy. Please note, the CC will inform the Session of your report, and they will act in accordance with law.
- You must still make an independent report to:
  - → **The Police.** (Ring 13 14 44) The police are the most appropriate first responders if the report is regarding abuse that is immediate, criminal, or endangering the child on church premises in another location. **If the child is in immediate danger call 000**.
  - → **Child Protection Services – Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services South West – Darling Downs** Ring 1300 683 390 or 1800 177 135 if after hours.
    This is a statutory service provided by the DCSSDS to protect children and young people at risk of harm and to work with families to ensure these risks are mitigated.

APPENDIX 1A Reporting Procedure 1

Reporting Child Abuse – EXTERNAL to your organisation			
The chart below outlines the process that a person working with children in a specific setting should follow to protect a vulnerable child from actual or possible abuse, from someone **with no relationship or connection with the organisation**			
Disclosure	By a child who is being abused	By another child or adult	By personal observation
'Reasonable Belief'	Through observation, listening and checking with other adults, you come to the ***reasonable belief*** that a child has been abused, is being or is in danger of being abused (see definition of abuse in Section 1, point 2)		
Recording / Documenting	Make notes of observations and information gathered. Record data on the name, age, gender, current location, or address of the child; describe any visible injuries or relevant behaviours; any information of the abuser (if known).		
	DO NOT interrogate the child or ask leading questions.		
	Fill out a Complaint Report Form (Appendix 2), if possible, even if you wish to make a verbal complaint also. If you have access to SMO (Safety Management Online), please enter the complaint as soon as possible.		
Severity	**Criminal** – sexual or physical abuse, grooming	**Misconduct** – physical, emotional abuse, bullying, or severe neglect	
Report to	**The Police** If there is risk of immediate harm or risk to life: call 000	**Child Protection Services South West (Darling Downs)** 1300 683 390 (1800 177 135 a/hrs) Click here for more contact details	
Lodge Complaint Report Form with the **ChildSafe Coordinator** or **Session** These entities may also report to the appropriate agencies			
*There is nothing else you need to do as a **responsible adult**.* *Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.*			

APPENDIX 1B Reporting Procedure 2

Reporting Child Abuse – INTERNAL to your organisation			
The chart below outlines the process that a person working with children in a specific setting should follow to protect a vulnerable child from actual or possible abuse, from someone who is an employee, volunteer or adherent of the church or organization. Even if you know the person as a colleague, your **first duty** is to safeguard the child.			
Disclosure	By a child who is being abused	By another child or adult	By personal observation
'Reasonable Belief'	Through observation, listening and checking with other adults, you come to the ***reasonable belief*** that a child has been abused, is being or is in danger of being abused (see definition of abuse in Section 1, point 2)		
Recording / Documenting	Make notes of observations and information gathered. Record data on the name, age, gender, current location, or address of the child; describe any visible injuries or relevant behaviours; any information of the abuser (if known). **DO NOT** confront this person unless to protect the child from immediate danger.		
	DO NOT interrogate the child or ask leading questions.		
	Fill out a Complaint Report Form (Appendix 2), if possible, even if you wish to make a verbal complaint also. If you have access to SMO (Safety Management Online), please enter the complaint as soon as possible.		
Severity	**Criminal** – sexual or physical abuse, grooming	**Misconduct** – physical, emotional abuse, bullying, or severe neglect	
Report to	**The Police** If there is risk of immediate harm or risk to life: call 000 Ring 13 14 44 if not	**Child Protection Services South West (Darling Downs)** 1300 683 390 (1800 177 135 a/hrs) Click here for more contact details	
Lodge Complaint Report Form with the **ChildSafe Coordinator** or **Session**			
*There is nothing else you need to do as a **responsible adult**.* *Your identity as notifier will remain confidential unless you choose to inform the child or family.*			

APPENDIX 2 Complaint and Abuse Reporting Form

The form to report a Formal Complaint or Abuse of any kind towards yourself or another person, including a child.
Please read the Code of Conduct Document before using this form.

When should this report be completed?
This report must be completed if:

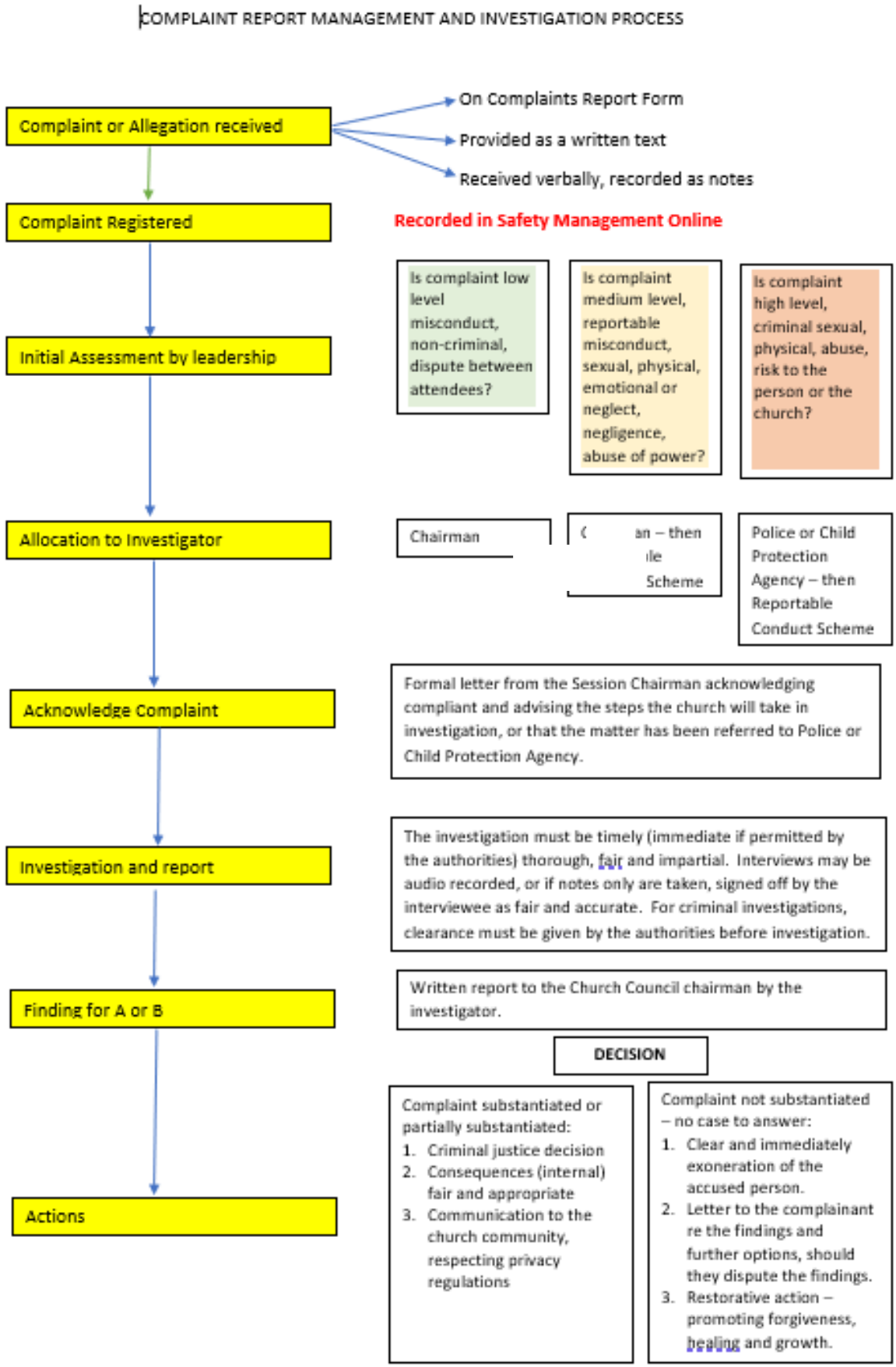
1. There is an alleged illegal act, a participant sent home, serious leader dispute, damage, or loss of property.
2. The situation relates to Child Protection (disclosure of abuse, allegation of abuse, or report based on reasonable grounds).
3. You have a grievance about anything relating to the activities or buildings/physical environment of the church.
4. Other situations will require judgement and consultation with your organisation. In situations where doubt exists about the use of this report, complete a report.

What do I do with this report after I have completed it?

1. Check that all information is correct to the best of your knowledge.
2. Check that the appropriate signatures are given.
3. The Team Leader forwards the form to your Coordinator as soon as possible. More severe complaints require immediate reporting, while other reports should be submitted within seven days.

The **Complaint and Abuse Report Form** can be downloaded – click **HERE**
{https://safechurchcrca.org.au/safe-church-documents/4-forms}

APPENDIX 3 Managing Complaints and Investigations



APPENDIX 4 Incident Reporting Form

The form to report an Incident.
Please read the Code of Conduct Document before using this form.

When should this report be completed?

This report must be completed if:

1. An outside emergency service is contacted (Police, Ambulance, State Emergency Service etc.).
2. An individual is taken to hospital, doctor's surgery, emergency dental surgery, or another medical professional.
3. An injury results in a participant being unable to participate for 24 hours.
4. There is an alleged illegal act, a participant sent home, serious leader dispute, damage, or loss of property.
5. Other situations will require judgement and consultation with your organisation. In situations where doubt exists about the use of this report, complete a report.

How do I complete this report?

→ Sections A, B & D must be completed in all situations.
→ Section C is to be completed where there is an injury to an individual.

What do I do with this report after I have completed it?

1. Check that all information is correct to the best of your knowledge.
2. Check that the appropriate signatures are given.
3. The Team Leader forwards the form to your Coordinator as soon as possible. More severe incidents require immediate reporting, while other reports should be submitted within seven days.

The **Incident Report Form** can be downloaded – click **HERE**

{https:/safechurchcrca.org.au/safe-church-documents/4-forms}

APPENDIX 5 Definitions of Abuse against Children

Child abuse includes:

Any act committed against a child involving

a. a sexual offence; or
b. an offence of grooming; and
c. the infliction, on a child, of -
    i. physical violence; or
    ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
d. serious neglect of a child.

"Child" means a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child. Collective term for "child" is "children".

There are five common types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and racial/cultural.

1. <u>Physical Abuse</u>

Physical abuse is any non-accidental physical injury resulting from practices such as:

- Hitting, punching, kicking, beating (marks from belt buckles, fingers).
- Shaking (particularly babies).
- Burning (irons, cigarettes), biting, pulling out hair.
- Alcohol or other drug administration.
- Fractured bones – especially in young children.
- Strangulation.
- Unexplained or hidden injuries.

2. <u>Sexual Abuse, including 'grooming'</u>

Sexual abuse is any sexual act or threat to perform such upon another person. It occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. It does not necessarily involve genital contact but is any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear consensual, but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

Sexual grooming is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child, as a precursor to sexual abuse. Examples include inappropriate special time with the child, inappropriately giving gifts, 'accidental touching', allowing the child to sit on lap, having secrets. In isolation, such behaviours may not indicate the risk of abuse occurring, but if there is a pattern of behaviour occurring, it may indicate grooming.

Grooming behaviours often mimic the kind of relationship-developing strategies that Christian ministries use for the benefit and wellbeing of children, that is, gaining the trust of the child, demonstrating care and concern, spending time, visiting in the home, finding out about family, friends, and hobbies. However, grooming to involve a child in sexual activities for the personal gratification of an adult is a crime. The grooming process often starts with the person 'grooming' the organization or church by building trust. Then progressively the perpetrator starts to target families before starting to groom the child.

3. <u>Emotional or Psychological Abuse</u>

Emotional abuse is the chronic attitude or behaviour of one person, which is directed at another person, or the creation of an emotional environment which erodes a child's development, self-esteem, and social confidence over time. Behaviours may include devaluing, ignoring, rejecting, corrupting, isolating, terrorising or chronic and extreme domestic violence in the child's presence.

4. <u>Neglect</u>

Neglect is characterised by the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. It includes any serious omission or commission which jeopardises or impairs a person's development. Examples include the failure to provide food, shelter, healthcare, adequate hygiene, or schooling for a child.

5. Bullying and cyber-bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated, unreasonable, unwanted behaviour conducted by an individual or group against another person, which has a negative impact on health and wellbeing. This includes aggression, verbal, emotional/psychological or physical acts or the use of social media or other forms of communication that intimidates, humiliates, or threatens. It often involves an abuse of a power differential between the bully and the victim.

Cyber-bullying occurs when a person uses any form of telecommunication to sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours. The explosion of electronic communications (Facebook and other social media sites, text-messaging, internet chat rooms etc.) has seen a sharp increase in cyber-bullying. Appendix 9 contains CRCT's electronic communication policy.

6. Other abuse

We recognise that abuse can also take many other forms, and we commit to treating all children and young people with respect, fairness, compassion, and encouragement, regardless of any differences.

APPENDIX 6 Feedback Survey of Children (Example)

Name: _____

This survey is your chance to have a say about the children's programs. Think about each statement and mark on the line, somewhere between "Not at all!' and 'Absolutely!'.

1. **I feel welcomed and looked after when I come to this church.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

2. **My parents like and follow the log-in process and arrangements for my care.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

3. **I know which toilets to use and feel safe when using them.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

4. **There are good spaces for activities and learning times.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

5. **The activities are fun, challenging, and well-organised.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

6. **I feel safe and relaxed while I am in the children's programs.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

7. **I feel that the leaders know what they are doing and are looking after me.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

8. **The leaders are friendly and respectful of my friends and me.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

9. **If I am worried or upset, I know who I can go to for help.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

10. **I would recommend this church program as great for kids.**

   |_____|_____|

   Not at all. Mostly Absolutely!

APPENDIX 7 Alternative to ChildSafe CSE3-MF Form

MEDICAL & HEALTH INFORMATION – SPECIAL EVENT (EXAMPLE)

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF TOOWOOMBA

Child's Name:

_____

(Surname) (Christian name) Date of Birth

Is your child taking any regular or currently prescribed medication? _____YES / NO

If so, please name the medication and provide details of dosage and administration.

_____

_____

_____

Your child's leader will administer medication to your child as directed by written instructions from you. Please clearly mark your child's name on all medication along with the dosage and administration procedures.

Is there anything about your child's health which means that they should engage in only limited physical activity?
YES / NO If YES, please give details _____

Does your child require a special diet because of health problems? _____YES / NO

If so, please give details_____

Is there any other information which may help us care for your child? _____YES / NO

If so, please give details_____

Emergency contact 1. Name: _____ Mobile: _____

Emergency contact 2. Name: _____ Mobile: _____

Preferred Medical Centre/ Doctor: _____ Phone: _____

Do you have private medical insurance? Provider: _____

AUTHORISATION

'In the event of an accident or sudden illness, I authorise the person in charge to call an ambulance or to seek medical attention at my expense, should I not be contactable.'

Signed: _____ Date: ___/____/20___

Parent/guardian/caregiver [Print name if not one of the above] _____

Witness Name: _____ Signature: _____

APPENDIX 8 Alternative to ChildSafe CSE3-RR

PERMISSION TO ATTEND EVENT/CAMP FORM (EXAMPLE)

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF TOOWOOMBA

As a parent/caregiver of:

I, _____ give my consent for him/her to take

part in the <special activity or camp> to be held at the _____ (event site)

from _____ to _____ (or on_____)
(date) *(date)* *(date)*

I have seen the attached copy of the programme for the _____ (event) and acknowledge that risk of injuries is inherent in physical activities. While I am aware that staff will take all due care, I recognize that accidents may occur.

The staff and supervisors have my authority to take whatever action they think necessary to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and successful conduct of the participants as a group or individually in the above-mentioned activity.

If my child becomes ill or is accidentally injured, I authorise the person-in-charge to obtain on my behalf whatever medical treatment my child requires. I will agree to pay all such medical expenses.

I have attached information as asked concerning my child's health including any relevant details of his/her limitations for the planned activity. My child's own local doctor or medical specialist may be contacted in an emergency.

I also acknowledge that the **CRCT** and all its representative leaders or other helpers at <name of event> can accept no liability for any personal injury or property loss suffered by my child during the period of the <name of event>.

Signed: _____ _____
Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Date

APPENDIX 9 Electronic Communications – online and mobile phone usage guidelines

AIM

This Policy seeks to outline guidelines and good practice for youth leaders in using electronic communication tools in a safe and encouraging way for those under the church's care.

FOR PEOPLE IN MINISTRY ROLES

The following guidelines are to assist all people who work with young people and all people who are in positions of authority within the CRCA. Where the phrase "young person" or "young people" is used it is always defined as a person or people under 18 years of age. This advice provides useful general guidance in regard to online and smart phone communication (i.e. all electronic communication). In cases where ministry outcomes are in part effected through the use of social media then it is recommended that particular practice guidelines pertaining to that ministry are developed and clearly communicated to the leaders. The SCU is available for assistance in establishing such particular guidelines.

SAFE CHURCH

The Safe Church Code of Conduct states that: "This **Code of Conduct** seeks to apply to the ministerial, or pastoral relationship those ethical standards that God expects of all people. People in various forms of recognised ministry are therefore expected to be examples and models of Christian faith and practice. It is the duty of any person in a ministry position not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, whether that gain is financial or in terms of power, sexual gratification, or otherwise. This includes any action, verbal, written or electronic, physical, or emotional that could be interpreted as emotional, sexual, or spiritual abuse, and applies especially when working with children. We recognize the power differential between children and adults in ministry roles, and these guidelines seek to ensure that such a power is not used to harm children or any vulnerable person." This point has application to your use of all electronic communications as a person of authority or person working with young people in the CRCA.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

There are three basic principles when having any type of conversation with a young person:

1. Remember God is listening:
   - The 'God test' – is this conversation honouring God?
   - The 'parent test' – if this young person's parents were listening/reading this, would they feel comfortable with this conversation?
2. Seek transparency in conversations with young people and do not converse where you can't be observed by others.
3. Don't get in deeper than you can handle – if issues arise that are greater than your ability or in an area of your weakness refer the young person to others who are better equipped to deal with it. When in doubt, ask for help

Online and smart phone communications can create an intense, relational situation because of the ease of access, the comfort of distance and its unobserved nature. A relationship can be developed far more quickly than was possible before online communication was common. Therefore, the church considers talking with young people online and via smart phone to be exactly the same as talking to them face to face. The same code of conduct for leaders interacting with young people face to face applies to all types of online and smart phone communication.

SPECIFIC CONDUCT GUIDELINES

<u>FACEBOOK/TWITTER/INSTAGRAM/BLOGS/WEBSITES</u>

If your church ministry or organisation establishes any of the above social media platforms as a method of communication within the group this is the best place for leaders to converse with members of the group as all conversations may be held in public. Ensure there is no option for private conversations to take place on this facility. Best practice is for leaders not to be individual friends on social media with young people within the church or organisation. This is due to the risks inherent in private relationships which may develop over social media. These risks affect both young people and leaders.

However it is recognised that leaders may be individual friends on social media with young people where the relationship is pre-existing or established via other connections, for example they may be related or may have formed the friendship via knowing each other external to the leader/group member relationship. In circumstances where leaders are individual friends with young people on social media leaders are at all times to adhere to the basic principles above.

SMS TEXT MESSAGING/EMAILS

Best practice is to only use the above methods of communication as a "one-way" avenue for communicating within the group. Make it clear to all members of the group that while SMS texts/emails will be used for communication leaders will not reply individually to any response from group members, unless a matter of urgency arises and in every case, with a fellow leader copied in on the reply. Give parents the option of always being copied in on any communication from the ministry or organisation leaders and add those parents to the contacts list. When sending group emails always remember to send any email to yourself first and put all contacts into the blind copy (BCC) field to ensure you do not distribute email addresses without permission. Always copy in fellow leaders. Follow the same privacy protocols if using SMS texts to do mass communication within the group.

PHONE/SKYPE/ZOOM/FACETIME/MESSAGING APPS/IN-GAME MESSAGING

In the main seek to avoid where possible individual contact with young people via online and smart phone communication. Aim to have 100% of communication to young people via group communication. Should a need arise to use phone/Skype/FaceTime/Zoom you should be accountable – always get parental permission before you talk with a young person over the phone and tell a co-leader that you are conversing with a young person by phone. If using Skype, Zoom or FaceTime again always get parental permission before you talk with a young person using this facility. Ensure both you and the young person are using this form of communication in an open area where people can see you or there are others present, e.g. not alone in your room. Do not use Messaging Apps or in-game messaging to communicate individually with children or people under your pastoral care in your Church role.

In the case where an inappropriate message or image is sent to a leader by a child or a person under pastoral care/leadership via any online or smart phone communication, whether publicly or privately, the leader should not reply under any circumstances. Do not delete the image or message. The leader must immediately notify the ministry or organisation leader that this has occurred. The ministry or organisation leader may then contact the SCU for advice on how to proceed.

CYBER BULLYING AND IMAGE BASED ABUSE

Sadly, there is an increase in the prevalence of cyber bullying and image based abuse targeting both adults and children in Australia, mostly via social media. Both State and Federal parliaments have begun to address this societal problem through legislation and the provision of assistance to Australians via the Office of e-safety – www.esafety.gov.au If you become aware of cyber bullying or image based abuse within the church context visit www.esafety.gov.au and contact SCU for assistance and reporting.

APPENDIX 10 Transport

Who can transport participants?
To transport participants, you must:

- Have P2 green probationary or an open license. You cannot transport participants if you have a Learners permit or a P1 red probationary license.
- You must have a good driving record.
- Inform and obtain approval from the Team Leader in charge of the relevant activity prior to the trip.
- Completed the form 'CSE3-DD Drivers Declaration'.

Vehicle requirements
All vehicles used to transport people during a program must be roadworthy and have current registration. It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that the vehicle is safe for use. You should use the following POWER checklist:

Petrol – plenty of fuel.
Oil – correct level.
Water – correct level.
Electrics – all lights, indicators and other devices are functional.
Rubber – tyres are in good condition and correctly inflated.

Guidelines when transporting participants:

- Parental/ guardian permission should be obtained before transporting participants under the age of 18.
- There should always be another person in the car, preferably another Team Member.
- It is preferable to transport a participant of the same gender rather than of the opposite gender to yourself.
- Transport should only be provided for organised events where the relevant permissions have been granted or when permission has been granted by the Team Leader.

Family and Friends Transport
It is recommended that you follow our transport policy even for friends and family as these guidelines provide protection for both the Team Member and the Participant. However, we do understand that this situation arises at times amongst close friends and relatives. If you choose to transport family and friends, you are doing so against our transport policy and do so at your own risk, a few things you should consider are:

- Plan your trip not to be alone with a child under 18, try to take a sibling or friend with you.
- For your protection never offer a lift, if asked to transport a child, take someone with you or try to make alternate arrangements.
- If you do transport family or friends always make personal contact with the parent/guardian on arrival.
- For your protection take and keep a personal note of the trip, including the specific times of arrival and departure, and any relevant issues or topics of discussion.

If you are a young person transporting your personal friends, always ensure that their parent is aware that you are transporting them.