



# DUTY OF CARE & CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

*‘Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”’ Matthew 19:13-14*

## INTRODUCTION

Child safety continues to be a significant issue in our society, and all individuals and organisations including churches, have a responsibility to protect children.

In order to create a safer future for children, findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse resulted in the development of 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations that were endorsed by all Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

The National Principles collectively demonstrate that “a child safe organisation consciously and systematically:

- Creates an environment where children’s safety and wellbeing are at the centre of thought, values and actions.
- Places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people.
- Creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people.
- Creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm.
- Responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.”

[www.childsafe.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.childsafe.humanrights.gov.au)

We affirm that we have a legal and moral obligation to protect and care for our children, and as a family of CRC churches we expect each local church to be responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in their care.

If a local CRC church does not establish and implement sufficient policies and strategies to endeavour to ensure compliance with their relevant state/territory child safe legislation and requirements, no responsibility will be held by CRC Churches International or the CRC Australia National Executive for failure to do so.

## STATEMENT

As a child safe organisation, CRC Churches International Australia will create a child safe and child friendly culture and environment where all children and young people are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. We will adopt strategies and act to promote child wellbeing and prevent harm to children and young people who access our church and programs. A child is a person under 18 years of age.

We will comply with legislative requirements (including mandatory reporting, along with the reportable conduct scheme where applicable) and relevant state and territory Child Safe Principles/Standards. A planned and intentional approach to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people will be adopted and maintained.

Whilst upholding child safety and Australian law, implementation strategies may vary to accommodate and appreciate the different practices and customs of other cultures. Children from other cultures (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children) will be encouraged and supported to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.

## **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE CONFERENCES, EVENTS & PROGRAMS**

Child safety will be upheld at all conferences, events and programs organised by the National Executive. The National Executive will comply with the relevant state or territory child safe Principles/Standards and the host church Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct for all conferences, events or programs.

Where the event is held at a venue other than a CRC church (e.g., conference centre) the church organising the event is responsible to implement their Child Safety Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct and monitor compliance.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL AUSTRALIAN CRC CHURCHES**

All Australian CRC Churches must abide by federal and relevant state/territory child safe legislation and requirements. Churches involved in ministering to children must have:

- A Child Safe Policy that is regularly reviewed
- A Child Safe Code of Conduct that is regularly reviewed
- Current state/territory approved working with children/vulnerable people/persons check, registration or clearance
- Current state/territory approved ongoing/continual child safe training (with level of training relevant to the role)
- Volunteer Application Forms and Referee Checks (required by ACS insurance for all persons working or volunteering with children)
- Documented child abuse/child harm and risk of harm mandated reporting procedures
- A clear process to manage abuse/harm and risk of harm allegations along with a critical incident response plan
- A clear process regarding Persons of Concern/Known Offenders
- Ongoing communication and consultation with people in the church who work or volunteer with children
- Or your state/territory variation of the requirements.

It is highly recommended that each church conducts an annual state/territory specific child safe self-audit to identify and evaluate level of compliance and risks to children.

A Child Safe Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct, Volunteer Application Form/Referee Check and Child Safe Self-Audit template is available for each state/territory. The CRC Known Offenders Guideline is also available. Please contact the national office.

## **CRC CREDENTIALLED MINISTERS**

To provide the best care for those most vulnerable in our communities, all credentialed CRC Ministers are required to hold a current valid form of working with children check and current child safe training certificate. Retired Ministers require a current valid form of working with children check. Updated documents must be forwarded to the national office before the existing check/certificate expires.

## CHILDREN'S CHARTER

### Nurture of the Child

*"Children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a gift"* (Psalm 127:4). The church is called to:

- To receive, nurture and treasure each child as a gift from God
- To acknowledge and support the role of parents as primary nurturers of children
- To proclaim the Gospel to children in ways that empower them to receive and respond to Christ's love
- To give high priority to the quality of planning and preparation for all children's ministry and to the support of parents/carers and those who minister with them
- To include children as full participants in the worshipping community and in the Church's common life of prayer, witness and service.

### Ministry to the Child

*"Then Jesus took the children in his arms, placed his hands on each of them and blessed them"* (Mark 10:16). The church is called to:

- Love, shelter, protect and defend children within its own community and in the world, especially those who are abused/harmed, neglected or in danger
- Nurture and support families in caring for their children, acting in their children's best interest, and recognising and fostering their children's spirituality and unique gifts
- Embrace children who seek Christian nurture independently of their parents/carer's participation in the church, while maintaining communication with parents and seeking consent for their child's involvement where required
- Advocate for the integrity of childhood and the dignity of all children at every level of our religious, social, political, educational and economic structures.

### Ministry of the Child

*"A little child shall lead them"* (Isaiah 11:61). The church is called to:

- Receive children's unique gifts
- Value the influence of a child's faith within his/her own family
- Value children's ministry within their own family network
- Foster community beyond the family unit, in which children, youth and adults know each other by name, minister to each other, and are partners together in serving Christ in the world
- Appreciate children's abilities and readiness to represent Christ and his Church, to witness to him wherever they may be, and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world, and to take their place in the life, worship and decision-making of the church.

### RESOURCES (in addition to resources in the policies and codes of conduct for each state/territory)

- Australian Government Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-child-abuse-and-neglect>
- Australian Government Institute of Health & Welfare <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-children/contents/justice-and-safety/child-abuse-and-neglect>
- Health Direct <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/child-abuse>
- Child Safe <https://www.childsafe.org.au/>