



**CHRISTIAN REFORMED  
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA**

## **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable People**

### **A CHILD AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE PROTECTION POLICY & CODE OF CONDUCT (Short form)**



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ *WanDijk* \_\_\_\_\_ 25 August 2022

# 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 Redlands Christian Reformed Church (RCRC) in developing a child-protective culture. RCRC is committed to welcoming children and their parents or carers and providing a ‘child-safe’<sup>1</sup> environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who attend the services and other programs. Vulnerable people include children, young people, people with disabilities, anyone with mental health conditions and elderly people. 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.

All children who come to RCRC have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of children in our care will be our first priority. The authorised leaders accept the responsibility of providing a safe and friendly environment where children are listened to, feel safe, have fun, accept challenges, learn and grow. This duty of care applies at all times, although when children attend church and remain with their parents, then the parents have the primary duty of care.

We recognise the particular need for sensitivity for those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities and seek to include them and make them feel safe and welcome.

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.

### 1.2 Scope:

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

- People identified as Team Members (volunteers) supporting various ministries.
- Contractors engaged by RCRC who need to be on-site to perform services.

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<sup>1</sup>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.

- Please note this document is the short form – a detailed Child Protection Policy and Procedure document must be used by the Church Leadership, staff employed by RCRC and Team Leaders supporting various ministries.

### **1.3 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 church council/session and adopted for use by RCRC on 24 May 2022.

## **Section 2. CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **1.1 Purpose:**

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.

### **1.2 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 RCRC 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 detail the standards of conduct expected by staff (paid and voluntary) in the performance of their duties and to provide guidance in areas where there is a need to make personal and ethical decisions.

## 2. 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 and any and all allegations will be reported and investigated.

### 2.1 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 RCRC'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 themselves in a manner consistent with their position as an employee, volunteer, leader or contractor of RCRC and as a positive role model to children and young people;
- work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of RCRC;
- 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, fairness, compassion and encouragement and value their input and opinions regardless of race, colour, sex, language, culture or other differences;
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people;
- 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.

## **2.2 DO NOT:**

All people involved in the care of children on behalf of RCRC 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; and
  - 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 RCRC'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 without parental knowledge; Refer in this regard to Appendix 11
- 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 RCRC);
- 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 RCRC'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\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / 20\_\_

<Employer or Senior officer of the Church>

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Complaint and Abuse Reporting Form**

Please use the Form to report a Formal Complaint or Abuse of any kind towards yourself or another person, including a child.

#### **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 using this link: [Link to Forms.](https://safechurchcrca.org.au/safe-church-documents/4-forms)  
(<https://safechurchcrca.org.au/safe-church-documents/4-forms>)

The **Incident Form** can be downloaded using this link: [Link to Forms](https://safechurchcrca.org.au/safe-church-documents/4-forms)  
(<https://safechurchcrca.org.au/safe-church-documents/4-forms>)

**Additional Information** is available on the Safe Church Website - using this link:  
<https://safechurchcrca.org.au/>