SAFER CHURCHES
MANUAL

PRODUCED AND OWNED BY

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FOR THE USE OF

ACC AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

SAFER CHURCHES MANUAL

CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This Manual has been produced for the use of ACC People in ACC Constituent Churches. This Manual is an adaptation of the *Safe Ministry Manual* (Safe Ministry Resources Pty Ltd). The *ACC Child Protection Policy* is the property of the Australian Christian Churches (ACC).

The *ACC Safer Churches Guidelines*, and *Safer Churches* implementation resources have been developed in partnership with Safe Ministry Resources Pty Ltd.

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Legal disclaimer: This publication is not legal advice. The ideas and procedures herein are based on nationally recognised good practice advice for Safe Ministry and have been written with due regard to Australian State legislation.

Legal advice should be sought when responding to individual cases and incidents in ACC churches.

TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

This Manual contains the following terminology and definitions:

Child Protection Policy (Policy) is the document that defines the principles that are implemented to ensure that Children or Young People who access a program, service or facility are protected from harm by Ministers, staff, volunteers and other members of a congregation. This *Policy* reflects the moral and ethical standards of the ACC Movement, pursuant to Article 16.1 of the United Constitution of the ACC. The *Policy* was adopted by the National Conference April 2015 and is binding on all ACC People, with an implementation date of 1 December 2015. (p.49).

Constituent Church (local church) includes a Registered Church, Provisional Church and a Satellite or Extension Service as defined in the United Constitution of the ACC. In this Manual, constituent churches will be called 'local churches'.

ACC People includes officers or employees of ACC or its State or National ministries, ACC Credential holders, officers of a Constituent Church, employees, volunteers and other members of a congregation of a local church who may or will have a Direct Role with children or young people, contractors (external agents) engaged by the ACC or a local church who may or will have a Direct Role.

ACC Safer Churches Guidelines (Guidelines) form part of the Child Protection Practice Guidelines noted in section 7 of the *Policy*, and have been developed by the ACC National Executive as part of the implementation of the *Policy*. The *Guidelines* are drawn from this SMR *Manual* (Manual), used in ACC *Safer Churches* Awareness Workshops (Workshops). The *Guidelines* assist church leaders in abiding by Work Health & Safety (WHS) legislation, applicable in all states and territories of Australia apart from Western Australia and Victoria. This legislation requires safe emotional and physical workplaces for all workers including volunteers. As such, the content of the Guidelines, Manual and Workshops are useful to all workers, both volunteer and paid i.e. not only ACC People as defined in the *Policy*. The *Guidelines* are found throughout this manual in clearly marked, shaded boxes, or in the *Safer Churches* section of Pastor's Login at www.acc.org.au.

1

Child/Children or Young Person/People: The ACC considers a Child or Young Person to be a person under the age of 18 years.

Codes of Conduct: The ACC has two codes of conduct outlining behavioural expectations for those representing local churches and/or the movement. The *ACC Volunteer Church Worker's Code of Conduct* is recommended for all local church volunteers, and the Ministerial Code of Conduct is policy for all credentialed persons in the ACC movement and recommended for all team leaders and paid pastors (non-credentialed) at local churches.

Direct Role: A role that includes, or is likely to include, providing services that are directed towards a Child or Young Person (whether in whole or in part), or conducting activities that may involve a Child or Young Person (whether in whole or in part), and includes the supervision of persons in Direct Roles (for example, a board member of a church is in a Direct Role, irrespective of whether they actually work with Children or Young People, because of their overarching supervisory duties).

Helpline: The ACC *Safer Churches* National Helpline **1800 070 511** (Monday – Friday 9am-5pm AEST) is established for local churches who have *Safer Churches* concerns and implementation enquiries. The Helpline is operated by Safe Ministry Resources.

Local Safer Churches Person/Team: This person or team is the local church contact point for reporting of *Safer Churches* type concerns. This person or team is to be appointed by the local church board or governing body. For a position description of this role, see the ACC *Safer Churches Implementation Kit.*

State Safer Churches Officer: The officer holders appointed by the ACC State Executive to assist with the implementation of the ACC *Safer Churches* strategy both at the state level and local churches.

For additional terminology and definitions refer to the *Policy* (p. 49) and also to the SMR Safe Ministry Handbook available from www.smr.org.au

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SMR Safe Ministry Manual is currently being utilised by:

- Australian Christian Churches
- Anglican Dioceses of Bunbury, Perth, The Murray, Bendigo, Gippsland, Bathurst, Newcastle, Grafton, and Rockhampton
- Baptist Churches in NSW & ACT, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia
- Churches of Christ NSW & ACT (FreshHope)
- International Network of Churches (Christian Outreach Centre Australia)
- Riverview Church Perth
- The Four Square Church in Australia
- The Salvation Army - Australia Eastern Territory (NSW & QLD)
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church Australia
- Uniting Church in Australia Synods: NSW & ACT, Victoria & Tasmania, SA and WA

2

Manual updated 15/12/2015

INTRODUCTION
ACC SAFER CHURCHES

This **Manual** is to assist in the outworking of the **ACC Child Protection Policy**.

The ACC Child Protection Policy has been adopted nationally by the ACC through its supreme governing body, the National Conference, and is binding on Credential Holders and Constituent Churches.

It consists of a set of principles and procedural benchmarks that underpin the other policies and procedures in relation to the protection of Children or Young People that the ACC and its Constituent Churches have in place for their Ministers, staff, volunteers and other members of a congregation.

*The role of developing and implementing corresponding **Child Protection Practice Guidelines** in accordance with the relevant State/Territory legal obligations rests with the ACC National Executive (or its delegate).*

The ACC State Executive and Constituent Churches are required to adopt the approved Child Protection Practice Guidelines (or for Constituent Churches, an alternative guideline that is at least consistent with the Child Protection Practice Guidelines).

It is a requirement of the ACC National and State Executives and Constituent Churches to adopt the ACC Child Protection Policy or use it as a minimum standard. (ACC Child Protection Policy 2015).

The Policy, good practice Guidelines, associated training, implementation resources and personnel combine as the ACC *Safer Churches* strategy.

To assist ACC local churches with implementation of the *Safer Churches* strategy, the movement has a range of resources available, including:

- *Safer Churches* National Helpline **1800 070 511** (Monday – Friday 9am-5pm AEST)
- State *Safer Churches* Officers
- The ACC *Safer Churches* Manual for Workshops
- The *Safer Churches* Program Implementation Kit
- The dedicated *Safer Churches* section of the Pastor's Login

This Manual contains:

- the **ACC Child Protection Policy** (*Policy*) (p. 49)
- the **ACC Child Protection Practice Guidelines** (all herein - *Safer Churches* Guidelines, throughout this Manual, are numbered and marked in shaded boxes)
- *Safer Churches* Awareness information for leaders.

Expectations for ACC People in relation to protecting children and/or young people can be found in section 9 of the *Policy* (p. 56).

Although the ACC *Safer Churches* strategy is primarily aimed at the protection of children, the creation and maintenance of safe emotional and physical workplaces is essential for compliance with Work Health & Safety (WHS) legislation; as such it is strongly recommended that the ACC *Safer Churches* strategy is implemented across all ministry areas. The aim is to have ministries which are: God-honouring, person-valuing, respectful, abuse and harm free for children and all vulnerable people.

3

SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINES

The Safer Churches Guidelines (*Guidelines*) have been developed by the ACC National Executive as part of the implementation of the ACC Child Protection Policy (*Policy*).

These Guidelines are the Child Protection Practice Guidelines noted in section 7 of the Policy.

The Guidelines, Manual and Workshops assist church leaders in abiding by WHS legislation, applicable in all states and territories of Australia apart from Western Australia and Victoria. This legislation requires safe emotional and physical workplaces for all workers including volunteers. As such, the content of the Guidelines, Manual and Workshops are useful to all workers, both volunteer and paid i.e. not just ACC People as defined in the Policy.

These Guidelines are divided into two categories:

- those considered to be legal, biblical and/or moral imperatives, denoted by the word "**shall**" must be implemented, and

- those considered as good practice, denoted by the word "**recommended**", are nevertheless strongly recommended.

The Guidelines are the recommendations of the ACC National Executive. In any legal proceedings, Constituent Churches may be asked if any such recommendations existed and if so, whether or not they were followed.

ACC SAFER CHURCHES WORKSHOPS

The **ACC Child Protection Policy** states:

On a regular basis, we will ensure that all ACC People are provided with training to understand and recommit to this Policy and the approved Child Protection Practice Guideline (or an alternative guideline as described at 7). Such training will also form part of any induction we provide to ACC People.

***Safer Churches* Workshops** are aimed at leaders (paid and volunteer) to develop a greater awareness of the *Policy*, *Guidelines*, Codes of Conduct, and to increase understanding of the rationale for the ACC *Safer Churches* strategy.

1	ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 1 AWARENESS WORKSHOPS
	It is **recommended** that all ACC People as defined in the *Policy*, attend a Workshop every three years at a minimum. ACC Credential and Certificate holders **shall** attend a Workshop (or equivalent) every three years at a minimum in order for Credentials or Certificates to be renewed.

4

CHAPTER 1
SAFER CHURCHES
– AN OVERVIEW

This chapter aims to develop awareness of:
- the biblical basis for ACC *Safer Churches*
- the foundational concepts of ACC *Safer Churches*

The *Policy* along with *Safer Churches Guidelines (Guidelines)* and associated implementation resources form the ACC Safer Chuches Strategy. For duty of care purposes and also for compliance with WHS legislation we recommend that theACC *Safer Churches Strategy* is implemented across all ministry areas in ACC churches.

The *ACC Child Protection Policy* states:

- *We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all Children or Young People who access any of our activities, programs, services or facilities.*
- *We are committed to providing Children or Young People with positive and nurturing experiences.*
- *We will support families and communities to promote Children or Young People's healthy development and wellbeing.*
- *We will take action to ensure that Children or Young People are protected from harm by identifying and addressing risk factors as soon as practicable.*
- *We will take action to ensure that Children or Young People are not harmed during the time that they are involved with any of our activities, programs, services or facilities.*
- *We will ensure that Children or Young People have access to adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.*

The ACC acknowledges that *Safer Churches* is everybody's business, not just leaders, but also the wider congregation, as well as our denominational leadership. We all have a vital role to play in providing nurturing, harm and abuse free environments at church.

The aim of this chapter is to provide the biblical basis and foundational ideas and concepts of the *ACC Safer Chuches Strategy*.

It is hoped that a sound understanding of the foundations will help all leaders in local chruches embrace the policy and guidelines as opportunities for loving others, rather than as a hindrance to 'real' ministry.

> **REFLECTION: Safety at church -** *Consider what makes a church emotionally, spiritually and physically safe for all people.*

FOUNDATIONS

Foundations are the blocks upon which a house is built. Like the wise man who built his house on the rock in the parable of the wise and foolish men (Matthew 7:24-27), we commit to church ministry events and programs built on solid *Safer Churches* foundations. i.e. God's heart for all people, God's gift of boundaries, team ministry and duty of care.

1. GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE

God is love! (1 John 4:16) This is the starting place for *Safer Churches* for all people.

God's love is expressed in God's nature as the community God, i.e. the triune Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is into this love God invites us. He created us in His image, i.e. relational beings. We are created in love, for love.

5

God's love is expressed in His revelation to us throughout His word, and through His incarnation. It is because "God so loved the world", John 3:16 states, that God came into the world to save us. John 3:17 continues that Jesus came not to condemn the world, but rather, to save the world.

Jesus is the hands-on demonstration of God's love for all people, not only the religious, important or wise, but also for children, women, the lowly, the poor, the sick, sinners and tax collectors - the outcast. In Jesus, everyone is loved! The Greek word for love in many New Testament passages is 'agape'– a love that is self-giving in its nature.

This type of love is explained in Philippians 2:1-11. In this passage we are called, in response to God's love for us, to put others first, consider others' interests, to imitate the example of Christ who emptied Himself of the glory of heaven for the sake of the world (vv.5-8).

Our primary motive, the reason why we safeguard children and all vulnerable people, is God's love for us.

> **REFLECTION: God's love revealed -** *Consider the ways you see God's love revealed in your ministries.*

2	**ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 2** **MOTIVE FOR MINISTRY**

Our primary motive for establishing and maintaining *Safer Churches* environments for Children or Young People and all vulnerable people, is God's love for us. ACC People are committed to providing Children or Young People with positive and nurturing experiences and as such **shall** minister out of the love God has for everyone. We commit to church ministry events and programs built on solid Safer Churches foundations.

2. THE GIFT OF BOUNDARIES

"Boundaries are a gift. ... they give shape to our relationships, all of our relationships" (M. Fortune, *Boundaries* 201, 2012, p.5).

Boundaries define that I am distinct from you, that we are equal but separate beings.

God's word also provides us with God-given boundaries. In creation, God established such boundaries as day from night, sea from land, each animal in its kind. In the garden, God gave humans a relational boundary, i.e. to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3). When this boundary was violated by the first humans, this brought about broken relationships. Relationship boundaries in the Bible provide the pattern for loving relationships: from the 10 commandments, and the covenant between Israel and God, through to Ephesians 5:15-21 which is about how we are to relate to each other i.e. submitting to one another out of reverence for God.

One way of defining boundaries is as socially-determined markers between individuals or parties in *spiritual, financial, physical, emotional, language, sexual and other areas*.

BOUNDARIES IN MINISTRY

Ministry is about serving people, therefore ministry life is filled with dual relationships, i.e. where those who are entrusted with the power and authority to serve will also be engaged in friendships with those they serve.

In a ministry setting, "boundaries protect space that must exist between the professional and the client by controlling the power differential in the relationship" (Peterson, At Personal Risk, 1992, p.46).

6

However, we live in a "culture which celebrates the absence of boundaries as individual freedom, [therefore] it is sometimes difficult to recall the values of boundaries in our lives and in particular, in our ministry or teaching. But without boundaries, we cannot really be in relationships. With boundaries, we develop trust in relationships and minimize the potential to cause harm" (M. Fortune, *Boundaries 201*, 2012, p.5).

It is an expectation of the Child Protection Policy that all ACC People will understand children or young people's rights. This includes ensuring that we only cross the boundaries of children and other vulnerable people in appropriate, life-giving and empowering ways.

We need to recognise that not all boundaries are the same, "boundaries are NOT ... clear rules about where and when we can be friendly, ... [nor are they] blocks to authenticity and friendliness. [We need to be] aware of our needs and find healthful ways of having them met other than by the people we are supposed to be serving" (FaithTrust Institute, *Boundaries 101*, 2012, p.7)

Some boundaries are flexible: How we interact within the boundaries may be different depending on the time, place, circumstance and the people we are serving.

Some boundaries are inflexible (strong): They are designed to show us clearly where we must not go. These boundaries are not to be crossed at any time.

Due to the power imbalance inherent in a leader-follower relationship and any dual relationships which may be present as a result of roles, strong boundaries should not be crossed.

> REFLECTION: **Boundaries** - *Consider examples of flexible and inflexible boundaries in your church.*

3	ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 3 MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES

ACC People **shall** abide by the relevant **ACC Code of Conduct** applicable to their role, as part of being respectful of the boundaries of everyone. See the Ministerial Code of Conduct and Volunteer Church Workers Code of Conduct at Pastor's Login.

3. TEAM MINISTRY

Ministry is safe when we view it as 'body' or 'our' ministry, rather than 'solo' or 'my' ministry - that is protect each other and those to whom we minister when we minister in 'teams'.

Teams share in ministry together. Healthy, loving, respectful teams nurture each other, entering into relationships with each other and receiving ministry from one another.

We see this type of ministry discussed in Paul's epistles which are filled with words about ministry being the work of the Holy Spirit, who gifts the members of the body of Christ so that they can minister to each other (Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12).

Given the spiritual nature of 'body' or 'team' ministry, a person's motive for wanting to be in leadership is crucial. Impure motives, or the lack of good motivation for a role, can lead to all kinds of problems for both the program and the team running the program.

When minstry is born out of God's love for all people, carried out as we, the body of Christ, work together as teams in respectful ways, navigating flexible and inflexible boundaries, then it is important that we regularly examine our motives for serving in church.

> REFLECTION: **Motive for ministry** - *What is your motivation for sharing in ministry?*

7

<table>
<tr><td>4</td><td>**ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 4**
TEAM MINISTRY</td></tr>
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We establish and maintain Safer Churches environments for each other and those to whom we minister when we work as the 'body', or minister in 'team' context. All ACC People **shall** minister in transparent and accountable teams e.g. avoid unsupervised 1:1 contact with Children or Young People.

4. DUTY OF CARE

Duty of care is a term we are more used to hearing in relation to workplace safety, and is less thought of in the church context. However, duty of care finds its origins in Jesus' directive to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31) and is therefore foundational for our provision of safe church ministry events and programs.

A general description of duty of care is to **do everything reasonably practicable to protect others from harm.**

This applies equally to buildings, kitchens, parking lots and the way we treat people. Our duty of care does not end when "our program" is over. Rather, it applies to all people who enter church property at all times of the day, whether we are running a program or not.

This also relates to acts of negligence, lack of care or attention, or acts of inattention or omission. The church leadership needs to be able to demonstrate that it has done all it could reasonably have done to protect others from harm.

In other words, simply having policy and procedures is not enough.

The question that needs to be answered is: "In that particular situation did the church follow its policy and procedures? i.e. Did it do all it could to ensure that harm and/or distress did not occur?"

The WH&S Act 2011 Section 19, which is applicable to ACC churches in several States and Territories, makes it a legal requirement for:

A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of:
- workers engaged, or caused to be engaged by the person; and
- workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the person;
- while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking.

A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other persons is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.

The *ACC Child Protection Policy* expects ACC People to commit to ensuring child-safe organisations, including working to ensure that *"ACC People do not harm Children or Young People who are involved with our programs, services or facilities."*

The community and congregation have expectations that those in leadership will be diligent in their duty of care. These may include ensuring that:
- workers (volunteers & paid) have been recruited, screened, appointed, inducted, and are supervised.
- a safe spiritual, emotional and physical environment is provided for all people.
- complaints or allegations of abuse and misconduct are addressed according to good practice.

To ensure that we act with a duty of care and in so doing meet ACC policy requirements, community expectations and legal requirements, we need to ensure that all church-authorised programs are well-planned, having had all foreseeable risks identified, reduced or negated.

8

This means that we think through what is safe, then put plans in place to ensure that we act safely, including implementing policies and procedures in order to protect people in our care from potential abuse or injury, and leaders from potential allegations of abuse or injury.

The *Guidelines* for appointment of volunteers are found in Chapter 3. The *Guidelines* for creating safe environments are found in Chapter 4.

> **REFLECTION: Duty of care in our ministries** - *Consider the practicable steps you take to ensure that your team is does all that is reasonable to protect people from harm.*

5. EXERCISE TRANSPARENCY

Transparency in ministry relates to the practice of being willing and able to show others how you are caring for people. Being transparent means not only doing the right thing, but also being seen to do the right thing. For example, historically, the Church in Australia has been seen by many as the moral police. However, when some church leaders failed morally, these failings were rarely spoken about and sometimes swept under the carpet. As places which offer ministry to vulnerable people, it is essential that churches are transparent in their motives and actions. We need transparency both in our relationships and in our policy and procedures.

6. ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability within a Christian framework implies a willingness to be called to account. Accountability occurs best in the context of teams. Good practice suggests that for accountability purposes, leaders are given clear expectations in relation to their role, and a Code of Conduct. They should be appropriately screened for, and inducted into, the role.

The *ACC Child Protection Policy* expresses our commitment to parents and carers in terms of accountability and transparency including:

- *communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their Children or Young People if it is consistent with the paramount concern to protect the Child or Young Person from harm and promote the Child or Young Person's development.*

- *being transparent in our decision-making with parents and carers as long as doing so does not compromise the safety of Children or Young people.*

- *seeking to involve parents whenever possible and practicable in the decision-making process that impacts on them and the Children or Young People.*

- *We will provide opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling families of Children or Young People who have experienced abuse and any other family in the community who may indirectly be affected by an incident.*

7. MEETING LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Legislation surrounding Work Health & Safety, child and elder abuse, concealment, and Working With Children Checks, as well as the legal concepts of due diligence and duty of care make it important that we have quality policy and procedures for ministry.

Legally, organisations and church congregations need to ensure that they:
- discharge their duty of care;
- practise due diligence in relation to their workers (both paid and volunteer);
- are free from violence and exploitation;
- foster people's health as well as developmental and spiritual needs (e.g. self-respect and dignity); and
- have a process for responding to grievances and allegations of abuse and misconduct (including child protection and sexual harassment).

Other legal considerations include but are not limited to: building codes; safety legislation such as adhering to Australian and NZ Standards; ACNC governance standards (does NOT apply to basic religious charities) compliance with copyright and music playing licences such as APRA, CCLI, CAL licences; and compliance with local government food preparation and storage guidelines.

8. CONSIDER INSURANCE IMPLICATIONS

As the Church, we are first and foremost a community of faith, a group of gathered believers, not a club or agency. However, as faith communities who meet in, and often own, buildings, and employ workers (paid and volunteer), we are also organisations (legal entities).

ACC churches, for the protection of both people and property, hold a range of insurances, from building to public liability and office holders' insurance. It is the responsibility of the local church to ensure that they have acted in ways that have been diligent and comply with all relevant national, state and local legislation.

ACS Financial as a wholly owned subsidiary of ACC is able to provide a tailored package for the insurance and protection needs of ACC Churches. The program is specifically designed for churches and ministries and provides comprehensive cover for the activities of the church, including working with and ministering to children. Understanding the complexity of insurance policies can be challenging for churches and ACS Insurance Services has been appointed as the manager of the insurance and protection program for the ACC. They are also able to provide risk management advice and training in many areas of church life and in particular the risk management of children's programs. Please contact ACS Insurance Services on 1800 646 777 for information on this very important matter.

Contact your insurer/broker if you have specific questions related to your insurance policy/ policies.

10

CHAPTER 2
PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

This chapter aims to develop awareness of and guidelines for:

- understanding abuse
- responding to concerns of abuse (legal and denominational)
- helping people protect themselves

The *Policy* expects ACC People to act on any concerns raised by children or young people and/or their parents/carers and to understand the definitions, indicators and impact of harm on children or young people.

> *"Experiences of harm are significant sources of trauma for Children or Young People and intensify the risk of Children or Young People developing a range of emotional, psychological, social and behavioural problems. Child physical abuse and sexual abuse is a crime. Intervention which identifies and prevents abuse from occurring is instrumental in supporting Children or Young People and families. When abuse has occurred, it is imperative that action is taken to protect Children or Young People from further experiences of abuse. Where there is a risk of harm, it is also imperative that action is taken to protect the Child or Young Person from that risk eventuating. We expect ACC People to know how to define harm, be aware of its indicators and understand its consequences. The more informed we are, the more effective we will be in our efforts to protect Children or Young People from all forms of harm." (ACC Child Protection Policy)*

Further to being able to recognise and respond to concerns in relation to children or young people who may be at risk of being harmed, it is important that all leaders are aware how to respond to duty of care and/or WHS concerns that they have for any person.

In particular, it is important to recognise that those who are vulnerable, including children, those with special needs and any other permanent or temporary need of special care, can be more susceptible to being harmed (abused) by others.

This chapter is designed to be a 'tool box' for understanding and responding to concerns about abuse and misconduct in churches. It provides definitional information and language which is helpful for understanding abuse and wellbeing issues, and contains recommended procedures for responding to concerns in ACC churches.

A. VULNERABLE PEOPLE

A vulnerable person is someone who is in need of *special care* because of temporary or permanent losses or other causes of vulnerability, such as age.

When someone is vulnerable they are more susceptible to being harmed (abused) by others. We also need to recognise that there will be times when we are more vulnerable, and may be in need of more care from others.

In the Old Testament, God commanded Israel to take special care for classes of vulnerable people, i.e. the widow, the poor, the orphan and the alien (foreigners living in Israel) (e.g. Deut 10:18-19). In Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says to His friends: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). Not the poor in *spirit*, as in Matthew, but the *poor*. God is for those who 'do not have' in earthly terms . He says His kingdom is theirs. James 1:27 reinforces this by reminding us that the "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

> **REFLECTION: Causes of vulnerability** - *Consider what leads to people being in need of special care (vulnerable), i.e. causes of vulnerability.*

11

B. SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-PROTECTION

The *Policy* states that we **will**:

- support families and communities to promote Children or Young People's healthy development and wellbeing.

- ensure that Children or Young People have access to adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.

- listen to Children or Young People and appropriately address any concerns that they raise with us in the least intrusive way possible that is consistent with the paramount concern to protect the Child or Young Person from harm and promote the Child or Young Person's development.

Helping people grow in self-awareness and self-protection is a proactive barrier in stopping abusive situations. Helping people protect themselves is about being proactive, and helping prevent harm before it occurs. The ability to be confident with one's own body and the ability to make healthy decisions about interactions with others will help "abuse proof" people. Developing self-awareness and self-protection helps protect everyone.

AS LEADERS WE CAN:

• ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO TRUST THEIR FEELINGS

We can learn to have a keen natural sense of when something is amiss. We can learn to recognise our feelings: good, bad or confused. However, past abuse can damage a person's ability to recognise and indeed trust their own feelings. Providing guidance in our language as to what is 'normal' in terms of feelings can be helpful, especially for children and with adults who may have experienced past abuse.

• EMPOWER PEOPLE TO SAY 'NO'

Religion may be used to make people feel as though they need to comply with a leader's directive, e.g. "God loves it when you serve the church in this way." Children are taught to be polite and obey adults. People, including children, must have permission to say no to an adult if they need to protect themselves and/or when that person makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

• TRANSPARENCY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Church needs to be a place where people can be trusted with confidential information. However it should never be a place where vulnerable adults are pressured to keep secrets to protect a leader's reputation. Such situations need to be confronted. A transparent abuse-reporting process which is clearly communicated to the whole congregation can achieve this. With children, we need to avoid creating a culture of secret-keeping.

• ESTABLISH AND ACCESS SUPPORT NETWORKS

A support network's role is to provide open and honest support and emotional respite from abusive behaviours. The role may also include upholding each other in prayer and having the permission to call each other to account in terms of one another's ongoing spiritual well-being.

• EQUIP PEOPLE TO RECOGNISE TIMES OF VULNERABILITY

It is important that people recognise times when they may be most vulnerable or at risk of harm. When a potential abuse situation emerges, it is important to consider the strategies that will be employed to stop the behaviour before it escalates to a point where the perpetrator has taken control. As leaders you can create a safer culture through encouraging people to speak up when they feel something is happening to them or others. Consider the internal and external people and supports that may be drawn upon to prevent or address potentially harmful situations.

12

• GIVE PEOPLE A 'SAY' - FOSTER THEIR VOICE

People are more susceptible to harm when they feel as though they have no say in decisions made about them. This may be called having no "voice". All people need to be free to express their opinions and ideas in an environment where these will be valued and, where appropriate, implemented. This is giving people a say in decisions that impact upon them.

• PROVIDE SAFE TOUCH

Some leaders have developed such anxiety about being wrongfully accused of inappropriately touching of a child or a member of the congregation, that they won't ever touch a distressed person. A useful principle for leaders to embrace is to work at getting the right balance between "no touch" and "prolonged touch".

> **Quick guide to adult-initiated touch:**
>
> **- Non-intimate touch (safe zones):** Only touch neutral or 'safe' zones, e.g. from the shoulder to the elbow on the outside of the arm. It is important not to touch below the top third of the back.
>
> **- An open position:** Standing or sitting side-on, rather than in front of, the person (outside of their personal space). This enables the leader to remain close enough to provide physical comfort, but not so close that the person can "drape" themselves on them. It also enables the leader to "control" the situation more effectively.
>
> **- Out in the open:** Avoid initiating touch when not in the full view of others.
>
> **- Not everyone wants a hug:** Ask permission, e.g. a crying child might not want a hug from you. Ask them, "Would a hug help?" If a person is distressed a hug around the shoulders for 5-30 seconds, may be adequate, and is more appropriate than a frontal hug, until they stop crying. What about 'huggers' e.g. small kids climbing onto a leader's lap? Rather than remove the child immediately, it may be wiser for the leader to allow the child to satisfy their urge for contact for a brief time (5 seconds), and then remove them, leaving them close by, so as not to imply rejection of them.

• SETTING BOUNDARIES

Respectful relationships are fostered through being mindful of personal behaviours and their impact on others. These can be helped by setting clearly defined appropriate boundaries for each ministry.

Take the time to set clear behavioural boundaries for each ministry program.

> **Adult-based programs:** Agreed-upon guidelines (boundaries) should be used for decision-making e.g. be willing to listen to the opinions of others; respect personal boundaries of others (physical, emotional and spiritual). Clearly communicate these boundaries.
>
> **Child-based programs:** Agreed-upon guidelines for what is deemed to be appropriate behaviour. This is an area in which children can be given a voice, in helping decide on the 'rules'. Where boundaries are not embraced in a children's program, it is helpful for the leader to: draw attention to the 'rules' for the child; document and communicate to the child's parent the violation of the 'rules' and use immediate measures, i.e. 'time out'. We must not use inappropriate discipline on those in our care; i.e. no physical discipline. Start with verbal correction of boundary or rule violation (focus on the behaviour not the child). Then move to "time out" (5 minutes out of an activity the child enjoys). If behaviour persists, report to parents. Clearly communicate the process to all parties involved.

5	ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 5 SELF PROTECTION

It is **recommended** that ACC People actively assist Children or Young People to
- Trust their feelings,
- Say 'no' when they feel unsafe,
- Understand when to be confidential and when to talk to others about concerns,
- Find safe people to talk to,
- Know when they feel vulnerable,
- Have a say in the activities and programs in which they participate as far as is practical.

C. UNDERSTANDING ABUSE

Abuse is a serious and complex problem. It often occurs in environments which are isolated and stressful, and affects those who are most vulnerable (Reporting Child Abuse, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Canberra). Abuse often occurs in situations where trust is involved, and is often perpetrated by a person who is known to the person suffering the abuse.

1. FACTORS INFLUENCING OUR UNDERSTANDING

When it comes to understanding what abuse is and what it is not, it is helpful to first acknowledge that our understanding is influenced by a number of factors.

Factors such as the amount of information we have about abuse (in general and a specific scenario), social discourse on the topic in our society, our proximity to the issue, moral disengagement, and myths about abuse, can all influence whether or not we see a particular situation as abusive or not. We are also impacted by our perception of that situation, including: our upbringing, parents' behaviour, experiences we have had at the hands of influential people around us, our values, our attitudes concerning what constitutes abuse, our views on people's rights, and our perceived responsibilities toward vulnerable people.

Whilst there are some areas that clearly constitute abuse to most people, there are some grey areas that will vary depending upon the factors that inform our view. We need to recognise that we are all coloured in our view, and need to be guided by information and seek help from those with more experience in the field to help inform our concerns about a situation. We need to report our concerns to our senior leaders and, where appropriate, to the authorities.

2. ABUSE AND POWER

In all relationships there is a balance of power between the parties. Relationships are either equal in power, i.e. relationships in which two or more parties have the same amount of power, or alternatively, they are unequal, or there is a power imbalance, as is the case between adults and children. In some relationships it is appropriate that the more powerful person takes steps to redress the balance of power. In other relationships the more powerful person needs to consider how their actions will empower the less powerful person, whilst retaining the power imbalance. The balance of power can be impacted by a number of factors such as; size, experience, knowledge and position (role).

In relationships where a person's position gives them power over another in order that the less powerful person might be protected or educated (e.g. teachers and pupils), it is inappropriate to change the balance of power. Within hierarchical organisational structures, or where someone is charged, for example, with upholding the law of the land, or where a person's health is being attended to, there exists an appropriate power imbalance.

In a church context, church workers / those in positions of leadership also hold varying levels of power to influence others for God. In the eyes of those under their authority,

14

leaders may be seen as representing God's authority and, in some cases, God's will for their lives. Therefore, those in positions of power must have a sound understanding of, and must uphold, appropriate relationship boundaries so as to protect the less powerful person. Unfortunately, some abuses of positional power have been treated as 'sin issues' and/or moral failures. In many of these cases, the leader is suspended for a short period and then given another position of leadership without addressing the abuse of power that occurred.

3. ABUSE DEFINED

Abuse occurs when one person misuses the power they have in a relationship.

In this sense abuse can be defined as *the 'robbing' of personhood*, a violation of a person's boundaries (that which defines 'them' as separate from the offender), often resulting in a sense of 'powerlessness' or 'voicelessness' , eroding a person's self-worth, self-esteem and self-respect, and hindering the person's ability to act in healthy, life-giving ways, both towards their own self and others.

4. BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS

In Chapter 1, we explored the gift of boundaries and the importance of appropriate boundary crossings. Some boundaries are flexible, and can be crossed appropriately - determined by place, relationships, roles, and circumstances - whilst others should never be crossed - inflexible boundaries.

When boundaries are not crossed appropriately it may negatively impact the person on the receiving end of the action or inaction. These are known as boundary violations and can cause harm to others. All boundary violations are examples of people putting their own needs above others. Boundary violations can occur across a variety of boundaries be they *spiritual, financial, physical, emotional, language, and/or sexual.*

It is important to acknowledge that not all boundary violations are carried out with malicious intent, which is to say, boundary violations can be thought of as a being on a continuum from unintentional 'wandering' across boundaries, to intentional actions of harm and /or carefully-planned, predatory-style boundary violations.

The following descriptions are not an attempt to define types of offenders, but rather to provide a description of the continuum from respecting boundaries, through to intentionally-violating, and/or predatory-type violations. Using this language can be helpful when addressing concerns with those who may be exhibiting boundary violations.

- NON-OFFENDER (BOUNDARY RESPECTER): Discovers that a boundary is approaching, or that they have overstepped a boundary, and makes a deliberate correction to cross the boundary appropriately.

- WANDERER: Approaches a boundary and engages in inappropriate behaviour without boundary-awareness. Wandering behaviour is not intended to harm, but because it is not considering how the other person is experiencing the interaction, it has the potential to do great harm.

- INTENTIONAL VIOLATIONS: The offender understands that the boundary should not be crossed, but does so intentionally in order to do harm to the other person.

- PREDATOR: The predator heads directly for the boundary, and aims to break down a person's boundaries.

Clearly-defined ministry boundaries are helpful to the wanderer as they clearly define behavioural expectations. They are also helpful because they say to the intentional violator and/or predator, "You will not be able to act that way as a leader of our program."

Another important question to ask when considering crossing a boundary is: "Would I be comfortable if all my acquaintances knew I was doing this?" (FaithTrust Institute, *Boundaries*

15

101, 2012, p.7). It is our responsibility as church workers/leaders to "establish a system of accountability. That is, we should arrange to meet regularly with a spiritual director, teacher, or colleague with whom we can speak honestly [or meet regularly with and be accountable to our team]" (ibid, p.7).

Churches need to ensure that all church workers know how to appropriately navigate boundaries.

How can we keep from violating boundaries?

Four important questions we can ask ourselves before crossing a boundary are:

- Is this the right time to cross this boundary?
- Is this the right place (physically) to cross this boundary?
- Is this the right circumstance for this boundary crossing?
- Is this boundary crossing right for this person?

In this way we will ensure that we place the interests of those we serve above our own.

The ACC has two national codes of conduct to clearly define cautionary and prohibited behaviours: the *Ministerial Code of Conduct* and the *Volunteer Church Worker's Code of Conduct*.

D. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

ACC People working regularly with vulnerable people may come face-to-face with what may be cases of abuse, or situations where they form reasonable concerns about a person or group of people, that they may be at risk of being harmed.

However, when our limited knowledge of a situation is combined with the factors that influence our perception, it can be difficult to be objective in our judgment.

To assist our decision-making, we need to look at the guidelines that have been provided by State government legislation and our denomination for responding appropriately when we have concerns that someone is being, has been, or might be at risk of being, harmed.

When responding to concerns about children, young people or adults, please refer to the important definitional information in the *Policy* (pp. 49-60).

It is your *concerns* about the risk of harm about which you are asked to respond. You don't have to be the expert, you simply need to tell the appropriate person about your concerns, by following our Guideline for reporting concerns of risk of harm on page 26.

1. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE

Child abuse is in direct opposition to Jesus' words about welcoming children (Matt 19:14) and loving one another (John 13:34). It is little wonder that addressing child abuse issues can be confronting and disturbing.

It is almost impossible to determine the amount of abuse that does occur since only that which is reported to government authorities can become part of official statistics.

> Child Protection Australia 2013–14 reported:
> "There were 304,097 notifications involving 198,966 children, a rate of 37.8 per 1,000 children in Australia. Of the notifications, 45% (137,585) were investigated, with 54,438 substantiations (after investigation) relating to 40,844 children—a rate of 7.8 per 1,000 children" (*Child Protection Australia 2013-2014 AIHW* Canberra: 2015, p.17).

> This is an increase in reporting over the past 4 years from 237,273 notifications in 2010-2011, "first full year of reporting under legislative changes to the New South Wales Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This includes raising the reporting threshold from 'risk of harm' to the new 'risk of significant harm'" (ibid, 17).

> "Across Australia in 2013–14, children in younger age groups were more likely to be the

16

subjects of substantiations than those in older age groups. Infants (children aged under 1) were most likely (14.7 per 1,000 children) to be the subjects of substantiations and those aged 15–17 were least likely (3.5 per 1,000 children). This pattern was consistent across all jurisdictions" (ibid p.22).

It is important to acknowledge that, "National child protection data is based on those cases reported to departments responsible for child protection and, therefore, likely to understate the true prevalence of child abuse and neglect across Australia"(ibid).

DEFINITIONS, TYPES AND INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

The definitions and interpretations of child abuse have broadened over the past 40 years to include neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse, exposure to domestic violence and more recently sexual grooming.

The emphasis has also shifted from investigations of abuse after the fact, to the prevention of abuse through the assessment of whether a child or young person has or is likely to suffer *harm*. Definitions of child abuse have also begun to acknowledge the resulting in harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity, and that the harm is caused often in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

ACC Child Protection Policy definition:

> *Harm, to a Child or Young Person, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the Child or Young Person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or sexual abuse or exploitation; a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.*

The *Policy* provides definitions of the types of child abuse and sexual grooming (pp. 52-53 of this *Manual*).

Complimentary to the definitions of the types of abuse in the *Policy*, the following pages contain the behavioural and physical indicators of child abuse to aid *ACC People* in their identification of when a child as at risk of harm.

These are not intended to be exhaustive but rather are a tool for identifying children at risk of abuse. It is important to remember that one or two indicators in isolation do not mean that a child is being abused. They must also be considered in the context of other indicators and the child's or young person's circumstances.

6	**ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 6** **BEING AWARE OF CHILD ABUSE INDICATORS**

All ACC People **shall** learn the indicators of Child or Young Person abuse and neglect and report to their Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team when they have concerns about a Child and/or Young Person who is involved in the church.

a. NEGLECT

Continued failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child with the basic things needed for his or her proper growth and development, such as food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and adequate supervision (Source: NSW DoCS)

Examples: failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, attention to hygiene or supervision, inability to respond emotionally to a child or young person, depriving of or withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods, absence of social support from adults.

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• poor standards of hygiene leading to social isolation or poor health. • inappropriately dressed for weather conditions • extended stays at school, public places, others' homes • extreme longing for adult affection • self-comforting behaviour, eg. rocking, sucking • delays in developmental milestones • low weight for age and/or failure to thrive and develop • untreated physical problems e.g. serious nappy rash • extreme anxiety about being abandoned • child not adequately supervised for their age • scavenging or stealing food and focus on basic survival	• unable or unwilling to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical attention, safe home conditions • leaving the child without appropriate supervision • abandonment of child • withholding physical contact or stimulation for prolonged periods • unable or unwilling to provide psychological nurturing

b. PHYSICAL ABUSE

Non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child caused by a parent, caregiver or any other person (Source: NSW DoCS *'Spot it to help stop it'* brochure).
Examples: beating, shaking, lacerations, burns, fractures, poisoning, attempted suffocation, physical mutilation.

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• unexplained bruising to face, head or neck • bruising showing the shape of the object that caused it e.g. belt buckle, lacerations and welts • explanation of injury is not consistent with the injury • abdominal pain caused by ruptured internal organs • fractures of bones • burns and scalds (including cigarette burns) • drowsiness, vomiting, fits or retinal haemorrhages • aggression or withdrawal • inappropriate clothes for weather conditions • discomfort with physical contact, and emotional	• explanation of injury is not consistent with the injury • a parent or caregiver says that they fear injuring their child • family history of violence or their own maltreatment as a child • frequent visits with child/ren to health or other services with unexplained or suspicious injuries

c. EMOTIONAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Behaviour by a parent or caregiver that destroys a child's confidence resulting in significant emotional disturbance or trauma (Source: NSW DoCS *'Spot it to help stop it'* brochure).

Psychological abuse damages a child's intellectual faculties and processes, including intelligence, memory, recognition, perception and moral development. The harm experienced is assessed to be detrimental in effect and significant in nature on the child's wellbeing.

18

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• passive and aggressive behavioural extremes • habit disorders • feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves • inability to value others • lack of trust in people and expectations • lack of interpersonal skills necessary for adequate functioning • extreme attention-seeking behaviour • bullying • disruptiveness • persistent running away from home	• constant criticism • belittling, teasing • ignoring or withholding praise and attention • excessive or unreasonable demands • persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse • rejection and scapegoating • belief that a particular child is bad or evil • using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment

d. SEXUAL ABUSE

Definition: Sexual abuse is when an adult or someone who is stronger, bigger or older (includes other children) involves a child in a sexual activity by using their power over a child or taking advantage of a child's trust. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity. Bribes or threats are often used to make them participate in the activity (Source: NSW DoCS 'Spot it to help stop it' brochure).

Examples: sexual touching, sexual intercourse, sexual suggestions to children, including exposure to pornographic material, use of children in the production of pornographic videos or films, exhibitionism, child prostitution.

INDICATORS/SIGNS IN CHILDREN	INDICATORS/SIGNS IN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
• child or child's friend telling you about it, even indirectly • describing sexual acts • excessive seductiveness • going to bed fully clothed • sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for age • regressive behaviour e.g. sudden return to bed-wetting • bruising or bleeding in the genital area • sexually transmitted diseases • bruising to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs • self-destructive behaviour • suicide attempts/self-mutilation • child being in contact with a known sex offender • anorexia or over-eating • adolescent pregnancy • unexplained accumulation of money and gifts • persistent running away from home • unusual aversion to physical contact • inappropriate expressions of friendship with an adult	• exposing a child to prostitution or pornography or using a child for pornographic purposes • intentional exposure of a child to sexual behaviour of others • previous conviction or suspicion of child sexual abuse • coercing a child to engage in sexual behaviour with other children • verbal threats of sexual abuse • denial of an adolescent's pregnancy by family • keeping tight control over a child's movements, e.g., not allowing child to develop relationships where they might disclose

e. WITNESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

"A child being present (hearing or seeing): a parent or sibling subject to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment and/or the damage caused to person or property by a family member's violent behaviour" (adapted from *Australian Institute of Family Studies* www.aif.gov.au).

19

Domestic violence is any abusive behaviour used by one partner or family member in a relationship to gain and maintain control over another's life. It can occur in any type of domestic relationship, including spousal relationships, intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships. It is possible that there may be multiple perpetrators and victims within the household.

Indicators that a child is observing or experiencing domestic violence may include:
- displays of aggressive behaviour
- development of phobias and insomnia
- displays of anxiety
- symptoms of depression
- diminished self-esteem
- poor academic performance and problem-solving skills
- reduced social competence skills, including low levels of empathy

OTHER TYPES OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

There are other types of abusive behaviour which may cause harm to children, that may or may not be reportable to government child protection agencies such as medical, bullying, grooming on the internet, systems abuse and spiritual abuse. These forms of abusive behaviour all need to be responded to appropriately, using the *Guideline for reporting concerns of risk of harm* (p. 26).

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

In most cases it is not reportable to a government child protection agency, although in extreme cases can be classed as emotional abuse. This may include any or all of the pre-stated abuse types. It involves the perpetrator inappropriately using their position of authority in the church to satisfy their own needs, or using children for their own benefit. Pressuring people through use of guilt language may result in feelings of guilt, shame, a strong "works" based framework for faith. For example, "If I do this, then God will love me" or "God will be happy with you if you do this for me".

BULLYING

In a church context bullying must not be tolerated. Instead of being laughed at, it should be reported to the ministry coordinator and senior church leader. In a children's ministry context, parents of children involved need to be informed, consulted with and included in decisions relating to their child/ren. Targets of bullying need to be loved, valued, respected and restored as appropriate to the situation. Those who demonstrate bullying behaviours must be called to account in a loving way. For further information in relation to bullying, see page 28 of this Manual.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION
• *CYBER-BULLYING, SOCIAL NETWORKING AND GROOMING ON THE INTERNET*

The explosion of electronic communication has seen a sharp increase in the number of internet-based and telecommunications-based allegations of abuse and bullying. This involves the perpetrator using any form of telecommunication or electronic communication to: sexually groom, bully, suggest an inappropriate relationship be formed, or engage a child in sexual language or behaviours.

It is recommended that those working with children, young people and other vulnerable persons follow a set of protocols, as well as a statement in the *Volunteer Church Workers Code of Conduct* as to how leaders will communicate electronically with program participants, to ensure the safe use of electronic and telecommunication devices.

20

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<tr><td>7</td><td>ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 7
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION</td></tr>
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The use of electronic media for communication is part of everyday life. ACC People **shall** be mindful of the position of trust they hold by:

- being transparent and accountable in the use of electronic communications with Children or Young People as far as is practical, that is as a team, not as individuals, e.g. group emails.

    It is **recommended** that in the case of electronic communications with Children under 16 this will be done with the full knowledge of the parents or carers of the Child or Young Person.

- not transmitting, downloading or storing any communication that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the Code of Conduct relevant to their position. In the case where ACC People receive such communication, they will report this to their Local Church Safer Churches Person/ Team.

- not sending any electronic communication that attempts to hide their identity or represent the sender as someone else.

• SEXUAL GROOMING

Sexual grooming is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child, as a precursor to sexual abuse. In some cases where positional power exists this can be a reportable matter. In most cases it is non-sexual and a precursor to the abuse.

Includes: persuading the child that a 'special' relationship exists; spending inappropriate special time with the child; inappropriately giving gifts; showing special favours to child, but not to other children; allowing the child to overstep the rules; testing boundaries – undressing in front of the child; allowing the child to sit on lap; talking about sex; 'accidental' touching of genitals, etc. In isolation, such behaviours may not indicate risk of abuse occurring, but if there is a pattern of behaviour occurring, it may indicate grooming.

ACC Child Protection Policy definition:

> Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a Child or Young Person, or the family unit of the Child or Young Person, with a view to abusing the Child or Young Person at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of Children or Young People. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The Child or Young Person may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a Child or Young Person in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom Children or Young People but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by SMS.

Note that in some states and territories some types of 'sexual grooming' are also considered either criminal activity or sexual misconduct reportable for the protections of children. for example:

NSW: In NSW the outcomes of investigations into allegations of sexual grooming against children's and youth leaders are subject to reporting to the Office of the Children's Guardian (visit www.kids.nsw.gov.au).

VIC: In December 2013, the Victorian Government introduced a new criminal offence which targets 'grooming'. The offense is aimed at offenders who seek to cultivate a

21

child or their family in order to facilitate sexual abuse of the child. The offence prohibits any grooming of either a child or their parents or carers, with a penalty of up to 10 years in jail. Attorney General said the grooming laws apply to any communication with a child, parent or carer intended to facilitate involving the child in a sexual offence. It will apply to both grooming through personal contact and grooming using the internet or any other mean. (http://www.premier.vic.gov.au).

QLD: The Queensland Criminal Code, Section 218B relates to the crime of Sexual Grooming children under 16. It states: (1) Any adult who engages in any conduct in relation to a person under the age of 16 years, or a person the adult believes is under the age of 16 years, with intent to; (a) facilitate the procurement of the person to engage in a sexual act, either in Queensland or elsewhere; or (b) expose, without legitimate reason, the person to any indecent matter, either in Queensland or elsewhere; commits a crime.

POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Reporting our concerns is an important step in child protection. However, knowing how, what and when to report has proven to be problematic.

"What can I do about this?"

"The government will only make the situation worse?"

"Society can't even fix this problem!"

These are all examples of what is known as **discounting**.

West's Discount Hierarchy relates to four levels of resistance a person has to overcome to actually respond to a possible abuse situation.

i. EXISTENCE - acknowledgement of the problem actually existing.

ii. SIGNIFICANCE - Accept that there is a problem, but don't accept it's significant.

iii. SOLVABILITY - Acceptance of the existence and significance of the problem, but believe that it cannot be solved.

iv. SELF - Acceptance of the existence and significance of the problem, and that there are solutions, but a belief that they personally cannot initiate solutions.

(Source: Chris Storm: Bethany Community Support Melbourne, FEELING SAFE, BEING STRONG -AIFS Conference 2008)

There are also a number of community attitudes and organisational risk factors that may contribute to creating barriers to protecting children and in some cases may actually contribute to ongoing child abuse.

Community attitudes include:

- cultural acceptance of extreme physical punishment of children and the use of violence
- acceptance of parents' ownership of children and their right to treat children as they see fit
- the notion that the child deserved the treatment received as a result of behaviour
- lack of desire to 'get involved' in other people's business
- fears of retaliation should a notifier's name be made known to an abuser
- concerns about the break-up of a family unit should the abuse be exposed
- not being prepared to expose a person of high standing in the community
- concern by an abused person that by exposing an abuser, they will be publicly shamed

Organisational risk factors include: staff alone with children; abuse of positional power – people in authority taking advantage of the position of power; culture of bullying; lack of leader and staff accountability; inadequate resources; lack of experience; lack of awareness; inadequate training; internal investigations as opposed to external investigations; isolated venues (Beyer et.al, 2005).

22

REPORTING CONCERNS OF CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF HARM

The following section includes the ACC Child Protection Practice Guideline to be followed in reporting your concerns that a child and/or young person is at risk of being harmed.

The guideline includes mandatory reporting requirements, i.e. that in some states and territories ministers of religion are mandated to report by law, whilst in other states and territories there are no legislative requirements for ministers to report. For a summary of legislated mandatory reporting see page 26 of this manual.

Beyond legal mandatory reporting, a biblical calling to care for the vulnerable, means that we need to act appropriately to our concerns about a child or group of children who may be at risk of being harmed (abused).

REASONABLE GROUNDS

The most common type of report received by government child protection agencies is when another person identifies the indicators of abuse, without the child having directly disclosed actual abuse.

State government child protection agencies have different requirements for reporting your concerns, as already mentioned. See pages 26–27 of this manual for Mandatory Reporting Obligations.

It is good practice to report all your concerns to your concerns person regardless of whether you are legally mandated to report or not, as we are all voluntary reporters.

A fundamental question in considering whether we have a reasonable concern is "How is the child experiencing this?" This is a *child focussed approach*, rather than an approach that asks first "What will happen to me?" or "What will happen to ... the alleged perpetrator, the care-giver, the leader?" The *child focussed approach* is based on the best interests of the child. This approach is essential if we are to truly protect the vulnerable.

However, even with the child's best interests in mind, we may still be given to subjective decision making based upon our own judgment. It is useful to apply the indicators of abuse to the equation before we make a judgment (see pages 18–20). We might call these indicators 'red flags', alerting us to potential problems. The indicators are objective and can help us make a decision based upon what is best for the child, rather than being based upon our own opinion.

DISCLOSURES

Whenever a child or young person tells you that someone is harming them, this is known as a disclosure. The fact that a child or young person tells you that they have been abused means that they have a high respect for you and that they trust you greatly, because disclosures are rare. Therefore, it is important that you respond appropriately.

DO'S AND DON'T'S WHEN RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE
DO...

1. *Listen* ... do not add anything to what the child says (you will need to write this down, exactly)

2. *Reassure* ... the child that they have done the right thing in speaking to you

3. *Inform* ... the child that you need to tell people who can help

4. *Ensure* ... that the child is not in immediate danger (if so contact police or government statutory body).

NOTE: Keep it brief - this is not the only time the child will have to share their story and you may actually hinder an investigation. This is not to be a long pastoral conversation.

DON'T...
1. Start an investigation into the information
2. Promise the child that the abuse will stop
3. Tell anyone who does not need to know

SUPPORTING A CHILD AFTER DISCLOSURE

In a ministry situation it is highly likely that you will continue to have contact with the child after a disclosure.

It is important to recognise that the child has disclosed to you because they trust you and feel safe with you.

As you continue to nurture and minister to the child it may be useful to be mindful of the following: create a calm environment, engage in appropriate relationships, continue to include the child, provide an ordered program, foster appropriate behaviours, focus attention on the safe space.

SELF-CARE FOR LEADERS RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE

It is a requirement of the Policy to provide opportunities for ACC People to receive debriefing as is required.

Each person has a unique response to receiving a disclosure or witnessing abuse. There may be some common reactions such as: shock, anger, sympathy for the victim and frustration. As a leader it can be very distressing to find yourself in this situation. It is important to debrief by verbally and emotionally "unloading" your feelings about receiving a disclosure or witnessing abuse with your pastor or a *Safer Churches Person* at your church.

If you do not debrief in these situations, it is possible that your effectiveness in your ministry could be negatively impacted. You do not need to tell them the details of the abuse, simply how you feel about it, and how you feel about your role in supporting the child.

Some people may have severe reactions to disclosure which may in some cases have an invasive impact on their ability to function effectively within their ministry and life roles (e.g. eating and sleeping disturbances). If this occurs it is advisable to seek additional counselling support.

24

8

ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 8
REPORTING CONCERNS OF CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO MAY BE AT RISK OF HARM

It is **recommended** that Constituent Churches appoint a **Safer Churches Person/Team**, whose roles include: receiving reports, assisting in the process of reporting of Child Protection concerns and keeping accurate records permanently and securely in accordance with privacy legislation.

ACC People **shall** report concerns when:

- a Child or Young Person discloses they have been or are at risk of being abused

- someone else (regardless of age) discloses that they know of a Child or Young Person who has been/is at risk of being abused

- there are concerns that the Child or Young Person may have been or is at risk of being abused based on their physical appearance or behaviour.

ACC People are not required, as an initial response, to establish or investigate if abuse has occurred, but rather report reasonable suspicions or concerns of abuse, including the grounds for concerns, to Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team (or equivalent). If a Local Church Safer Churches Person is not available and the abuse is currently occurring, or there are reasons to believe that a Child or Young Person is at risk, a report should be made immediately to the police and appropriate authorities.

Process for Reporting:

a) Report to Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team
   Report concerns to one of the appointed Local Safer Churches People, except when a disclosure occurs at a program or event, or a Child's/Young Person's immediate safety is at risk (sexual and physical abuse). In this case, immediately phone the police and organise appropriate support for the Child/ren. This can be done with the help of the most senior on-site Leader, who will also need to assist with managing the immediate situation.

b) Complete applicable form/s and/or online reporting, e.g. Safer Churches anecdotal record and/or state government online reporting tool. The Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team will keep a Local Church log, upholding privacy principles.

c) Take the appropriate action with your Local Church Safer Churches Person - including:

   - Police/government Child Protection agency reporting (police, government agency). NOTE: In South Australia, individuals must report directly to CARL (Child Abuse Report Line).

   - Contact the **National Safer Churches Helpline** for advice and assistance.

   - Initiate the correct complaints handling processes if the allegations are about ACC Leaders/Certificate Holders.

d) Provide ongoing support, pastoral care and risk management processes
   It is the role of the Local Church Board to implement pastoral care and support for all parties involved, including the Child or Young Person and family, as much as is practical. There may also be Local Church risk management action plans that need to be implemented, e.g. stepping aside a Leader/Certificate Holder who has been accused of harming a Child or Young Person whilst the investigation occurs.

25

MANDATORY REPORTING

The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. All jurisdictions possess mandatory reporting requirements of some description:

Who?	What?	Government Agency
ACT Doctors; dentists; nurses; enrolled nurses; midwives; teachers; a person providing education to a child or young person who is registered for home education; police; counsellors of children; workers at child care centres; coordinators or monitors of home-based family day care; public servants who work with children and young people or families; the public advocate; an official visitor; a person who, in the course of the person's employment, has contact with or provides services to children, and is prescribed by regulation.	A belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person has experienced or is experiencing sexual abuse or non-accidental physical injury; and the belief arises from information obtained by the person during the course of, or because of, the person's work (whether paid or unpaid).	Care and Protection Services Mandatory reporting phone: **1300 556 728** General Public Phone: **1300 556 729** www.dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs
NSW A person who, in the course of his or her professional work or other paid employment delivers health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children; and a person who holds a management position in an organisation, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children. From 24 January 2010, mandatory reporters use the Mandatory Reporter Guide to help with decision making.	Reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant of harm; and those grounds arise during the course of or from the person's work. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, neglect and exposure to family violence	Child Protection Helpline Mandatory Reporters Hotline: If you are a mandatory reporter, you can call Child Protection Helpline on **13 3627** Alternatively you can call the Health Child Wellbeing Unit **1300 480 420** Mandatory Reporter Guide, visit www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au General Public Helpline: **132 11**
NT Any person with reasonable grounds	A belief on reasonable grounds that a child has been or is likely to be a victim of: physical abuse, sexual abuse emotional/psychological abuse neglect, exposure to physical violence (e.g. a child witnessing violence between parents at home).	Children, Youth and Families— Department of Health and Families Phone: 24 hour Centralised Intake Service by using the free-call number **1800 700 250** www.health.nt.gov.au/Children_ Youth_and_Families
QLD An authorised officer, employee of the Department of Child Safety, a person employed in a departmental care service or licensed care service. A doctor or registered nurse	Awareness or reasonable suspicion: - of harm caused to a child placed in the care of an entity conducting a departmental care service or a licensee - during the practice of his or her profession: harm or risk of harm.	Department of Child Safety During normal business hours - contact local child safety service centre or freecall **1800 811 810**. After hours and on weekends - contact Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on **(07) 3235 9999** or freecall **1800 177 135**. www.childsafety.qld.gov.au
VIC Registered medical practitioners, registered nurses, a person registered as a techer under the Education, Training and Reform Act 2006 or teachers granted permission to teach under that Act, principals of government or non-government schools, and members of the police force	Belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection on a ground referred to in Section 162(c) or 162(d), formed in the course of practising his or her office, position or employment: physical abuse or sexual abuse.	Child Protection and Family Services Eastern **1300 360 391** Southern **1300 655 795** Northern & Western **1300 664 977** Barwon South Western **1800 075 599** Gippsland **1800 020 202** Grampians **1800 000 551** Hume **1800 650 227** Loddon Mallee **1800 675 598** After hours - **13 1278** www.cyf.vic.gov.au/
SA Doctors; pharmacists; registered or enrolled nurses; dentists; psychologists; police officers; community corrections officers; social workers; teachers; family day care providers; employees/volunteers in a government department, agency or instrumentality, or a local government or non-government agency that provides health, welfare, education, sporting or recreational, child care or residential services wholly or partly for children; ministers of religion (with the exception of disclosures made in the confessional); employees or volunteers in a religious or spiritual organisations	Reasonable grounds that a child has been or is being abused or neglected; and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work (whether paid or voluntary) or carrying out official duties Physical abuse Sexual abuse Emotional/psychological abuse Neglect	Families SA—Department of Families and Communities To Child Abuse Reporting Line (CARL)**131 478** - 24 hour service. http://www.families.sa.gov.au/ pages/protectingchildren/

Who?	What?	Government Agency
TAS Registered medical practitioners; nurses; dentists, dental therapists or dental hygienists; registered psychologists; police officers; probation officers; principals and teachers in any educational institution; persons who provide child care or a child care service for fee or reward; persons concerned in the management of a child care service licensed under the Child Care Act 2001; any other person who is employed or engaged as an employee for, of, or in, or who is a volunteer in, a government agency that provides health, welfare, education, child care or residential services wholly or partly for children, and an organisation that receives any funding from the Crown for the provision of such services; and any other person of a class determined by the Minister by notice in the Gazette to be prescribed persons.	A belief, suspicion, reasonable grounds or knowledge that: a child has been or is being abused or neglected or is an affected child within the meaning of the Family Violence Act 2004; or there is a reasonable likelihood of a child being killed or abused or neglected by a person with whom the child resides Physical abuse Sexual abuse Emotional/psychological abuse Neglect Exposure to family violence	Child Protection—Department of Health and Human Services CPAARS is a central statewide service for Tasmania that does most of its work via the telephone or email. The telephone number is: **1300 737 639** and fax number: (03) 6230 7821. www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/health and wellbeing/children and families/related topics/child protection
WA Under the Children and Community Services Act 2004 mandatory reporters in Western Australia are: • doctors • nurses and midwives • teachers • police officers.	Reasonable grounds for suspecting that a child has been: abused, or is at risk of being abused; ill treated, or is at risk of being ill treated; or exposed or subjected to behaviour that psychologically harms the child. Allegations of abuse, neglect or assault, including sexual assault, of an enrolled child during a care session. Belief on reasonable grounds that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring	Department for Child Protection Phone: LOCAL area contacts, see website www.community.wa.gov.au/DCP

Additional changes to legislation related to child protection are at this time being introduced frequently, due to parliamentary enquiries and royal commissions. For example, in March 2014, the Victorian Government introduced legislation in response to the report of the Family and Community Development Committee Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations called 'Betrayal of Trust'. This includes: an offence for people who hold a position of responsibility who fail to protect a child from sexual abuse when they know someone associated with their organisation poses a risk of sexually abusing children, and an offence for individuals who fail to inform the police if they know or believe that a child has been sexually abused.

REPORTING CONCERNS OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE - SPECIAL CASES

i. School ministry/chaplaincy

Those engaging in state/church school ministry programs should make sure they are familiar with the policy of the school about reporting. Teachers forming a reasonable belief should inform the Principal, unless the Principal is the alleged abuser. Ensure that your senior pastor is also informed of the situation. The senior pastor will then phone the School principal and ask for proof of action taken, e.g. report number. If the principal advises they are not making a report, or does not provide a reference number, your senior pastor may make his/her own report.

ii. Allegations of misconduct or abuse against employees (paid or voluntary)

When an allegation of harm is made against an employee or volunteer or where a leader exhibits behaviours that might be deemed abusive or as 'ministry misconduct', the first step is to inform your Local Church *Safer Churches Person/Team*. They will assist you in following the reporting process and offer further support.

The appropriate ACC approved responding to complaints process should be activiated.

In some states and territories it may be necessary to make formal reports on findings workplace investigations. For example, as part of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* churches as reporting bodies have a legal obligation to report findings of sexual misconduct and serious physical assault involving children by a child-related worker.

27

2. RESPONDING TO ABUSE AND OTHER WELL-BEING ISSUES IN ADULTS

It has become evident to society that children are not the only vulnerable group of people in need of protection. This can be seen in the use of such language as "elder abuse" in relation to mistreatment of the aged, or, in the ACT, the Working With Vulnerable Persons Check.

One definition of vulnerable adults states: "people in addition to children may be considered to be susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (mental or physical), age, grief, social isolation or financial hardship." (Source: Seventh Day Adventist Australian Union Conference, *Creating a Safe Place Policy*, 2011)

In the church context, there are those in congregations who will be in need of special care, either at times of particular vulnerability, or permanently, given their level and/or state of vulnerability. Both those who lead/minister and those who are program participants/ attendees may be vulnerable given a particular set of circumstances. This can include a person's inability to protect themselves, or their risk of self harm.

The need to protect congregation members has come to light through the increased number of reports to denominational professional standards units of pastoral misconduct against congregation members. These abuses of 'positional power' have harmed people under their leadership. These might also be called personal boundary violations, and can cause lasting emotional and spiritual damage. It is important also to note that leaders and pastors and their families have also experienced boundary violations against them from their congregations.

The following areas are of particular concern, and when arise should be responded to appropriately.

a. BULLYING BEHAVIOURS

Bullying behaviours can include: minimisation of concerns expressed by the target of the behaviours, lying, denial of bullying behaviours alleged, covert or overt intimidation of a target through words or actions, guilt-tripping, playing the victim role, playing the servant role, shouting and/or swearing at target, threats to target's position or family comfort if compliance is not achieved, speaking over target when they endeavour to express a viewpoint, ignoring the target – including face-to-face encounters and electronic interactions, consistent fault-finding and withholding favour and refusal to acknowledge presence of the target of the bullying behaviours.

Perception & reality: Perception is the way we receive and interpret behaviour or information. We form our opinions from our perception. We make assumptions, develop attitudes and make judgments all based on our perception. The outcome of our perception becomes our reality with which we respond to a person or situation. As perception is unique and is a reflection of a person's reality, it is unlikely that someone will change their perception about a given person or situation simply because they are told to. Perception also impacts what someone labels as bullying behaviour.

Suggestions for responding in situations where bullying is perceived - a personal approach:

If you perceive that you are experiencing bullying behaviours, you might consider the following prior to lodging a formal complaint:

- Talk to a confidant outside of the situation. Do not triangulate them into the situation but rather ask them to help you formulate a plan for addressing what you are experiencing.

- Begin by considering whether the perceived behaviour is in fact bullying or whether something else is occurring, e.g. poor social or communication skills in the other person.

- Timing is important. Select an appropriate time and place to address the behaviours.

28

At times it may be wiser to wait before addressing concerning behaviours. If a target of bullying behaviours attempts to address bullying behaviours when they are in a weakened physical, emotional and spiritual space, it is likely to be damaging to them. You need to feel strong enough to address the bullying behaviours of the other person on your own.

- If, after such discussion with your confidant, you for any reason are still unable to address the person, seek assistance from a senior leader in your church or denominational *Safer Churches Person*.

- In the one-on-one meeting with the person who you perceive is exhibiting bullying behaviours toward you, have reconciliation as an aim, by trying to understand the other's perspective on why they have behaved in such a way.

- Be aware that for whatever reason the perpetrator of bullying behaviours may not perceive that they have anything to answer for.

- Speak confidentially to another leader at your church, your elders, or, if you need help beyond your congregation, to other trusted wise counsel.

- Support needs during a bullying incident will vary significantly. Whilst one person may feel equipped to face a perpetrator of bullying behaviours, another person may not. This can also vary for one person, given how strong they are feeling at any given time.

Workcover Australia provides guides for employers and employees in relation to responding to bullying in the workplace.

b. SEXUAL VIOLENCE - HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

Sex is a gift from God. Sexual expression is an action of intimacy, i.e. two becoming one flesh (Gen 1:24).

Therefore all sexual interactions should be actions of loving intimacy where each party is able to freely consent to the interaction.

There has been much learning in the understanding of what constitutes meaningful consent in recent years in relation to areas such as: the age of consent, states of consent e.g. sober and intellectual capacity, and also the area of coercion, e.g. no meaningful consent is possible where a person submits due to the other person's positional power over them.

It is recommended that your code of conduct for church workers (volunteer and paid) includes statements about sexual purity and faithfulness. It is also recommended to include a strong boundary statement about consensual sexual relationships, e.g. consent not being possible in instances where the power differential is significant.

Disciplinary procedures for church workers should address allegations or complaints of sexual harassment and assault between adults, not only complaints relating to adults against children.

When considering whether or not a person has been sexually harassed or assaulted, it is important to remember that sexual violence can be perpetrated both in word and in action (non-contact and contact). The sexual violence continuum begins with non-contact sexual violence such as sexual comments, sexual jokes aimed at a person, verbal sexual harassment, obscene phone calls, peeping and exposure, through to contact sexual violence such as unwanted sexual touching, acts of indecency, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, rape and rape-murder.

It is important to understand your state or territory's definitions of such acts because many words and actions on the sexual violence continuum constitute crimes.

Nationally the Sexual Discrimination Act 1984 (Australia) describes sexual harassment as an

unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or other unwelcome sexual conduct in circumstances where the person doing the harassing knows that the conduct would offend, intimidate or humiliate another person.

The following are some examples of state definitions:

• **NSW:** In NSW consent occurs when a person freely and voluntarily agrees to sexual intercourse. Sexual assault occurs when someone is unable to and/or does not give consent e.g. asleep or unconscious, significantly intoxicated or affected by drugs, unable to understand what they are consenting to due to their age or intellectual capacity, intimidated, coerced or threatened, unlawfully detained or held against their will or they submit due to the person being in a position of trust. (Abridged: http://www.sexualassault. nsw.gov.au - accessed April 2013)

• **SA:** In South Australia, 'Indecent Assault' is touching (or threat of touching) without a person's genuine consent.
What is and what is not indecent is a matter for the jury to determine. Unlawful Sexual Intercourse is the legal name for sexual intercourse with a person under the age of seventeen years, regardless of whether the person consented. Indecent Behaviour is behaving in an indecent manner in a public place, or while visible from a public place or in a police station. What is indecent will depend on the circumstances, e.g. indecently exposing oneself (http:// www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/az/other/yarrowplace/files/student_laws.htm - accessed 13/05/15).

• **TAS:** In Tasmania, children do not have the ability to consent to any sexual act, as they do not understand the implications of a sexual relationship and therefore cannot give 'informed consent'. Any person who has unlawful sexual intercourse (or activity) with another person who is under the age of 17 years is guilty of a crime unless:

> (a) that person was of or above the age of 15 years and the accused person was not more than 5 years older than that person; or
> (b) that person was of or above the age of 12 years and the accused person was not more than 3 years older than that person (Sexual Assault Support service http://www. sass.org.au - accessed 04/06/2013).

• **VIC:** In Victoria, Sexual activity involving a child under 12 years is a crime. Sexual activity involving a person aged 12-15 years is a crime where there is no consent or where there is more than 2 years age difference between the two people involved. Sexual activity involving a person aged 16-17 years is a crime where there is no consent or where one person is in a position that provides care or supervision for the other (e.g. teacher, youth worker, doctor, foster carer (Victorian Legal Aid http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au).

In addition to the law, insurance companies who provide sexual molestation cover will have a definition of sexual abuse. For example, ACSF definition states, "'Sexual Abuse' includes any assault or abuse of a sexual nature, any type of molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation, whether such act is the subject of criminal investigation or not. 'Injury' includes any physical, mental or psychological injury."

c. ELDER ABUSE

Elder abuse "occurs when there is any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person. Abuse can include physical, sexual, financial, psychological and social abuse and/or neglect"(endorsed at the *Healthy Ageing Taskforce, 2000*).

Suspicions that abuse has occurred may be aroused by physical signs and symptoms or by the behaviour of the older person. It is important for leaders to be aware of any sudden or unusual changes in the behaviour patterns of their participants or congregation members. If someone shows one or more of the possible signs of abuse, it does not automatically mean she or he is being abused. Consider the context.

30

Concerns that require reporting may arise from a single event or a pattern or series of events. The indicators of child abuse on pages 18–19 may be used as a guide for concerns about the elderly.

OTHER WELLBEING ISSUES IN ADULTS

Abuse and misconduct issues are not the only concerns we may have about adults. It is also important that we talk to the appropriate person i.e. Pastor or *Safer Churches Person/Team* when we have significant concerns about adults in our church experiences homelessness, are at risk of suicide, self harm, or people who express physical violence towards others. Further it is important to seek assistance when ministering to those with disabilities, and/or mental illness; do not attempt to minister beyond your skills, training or abilities.

GUIDE FOR RESPONDING TO YOUR CONCERNS:

Reporting concerns of abuse and other health issues in vulnerable adults is a complex issue. Sometimes it will be very clear what to do as in allegations of criminal activity toward an adult e.g. sexual harassment or rape. Other times this means utilising the local health services and working with the person and their family to provide comfort, support and access to resources and services. Additionally adults are self-determining, i.e. have the right to make decisions about their own lives, so long as the actions are not endangering themselves or others. This means we will need to work with the adult at risk rather than the principle of 'acting in the best interest of the child' when considering a response in the area of child protection.

- **Concerns about the behaviour of leaders.**

   All allegations of ministry misconduct or abuse by ACC leaders against vulnerable adults need to be reported to your Local *Church Safer Churches Person/Team*. These concerns may also require reporting to the State Executive, dependant upon the person who is alleged to have acted inappropriately.

   We recommend that the local church will implement one of the following response processes: Procedure for Responding to Complaints against Certificate Holders, Responding to allegations against leaders or Resolving misunderstanding and conflicts in churches.

- **Report concerns of risk of harm of adults to your Local Church *Safer Churches Person/ Team*.**

   The Guideline for reporting concerns about risk of harm recommends the use of local church appointed *Safer Churches Person/Team* who can oversee the reporting process and pastoral care and risk management.

- **Report to police when the matter is criminal.**

   Where the conduct also appears to be criminal, report to the police or to Crimestoppers. Reporting to the police extends to concerns of abuse and/or serious criminal offences by other church members (e.g. sexual or physical assault).

- **Self harming and adults with special needs.**
   In a suicide attempt/threat, or other situations where a person's mental health may be placing self or others at risk of harm, contact the police, ambulance or mental health crisis service.

   For concerns about the conduct of people with special needs, (e.g. intellectual or physical disability or mental health concern) speak to a pastor who may seek advice from relevant health services. The *Safer Churches Person/Team* at your church is also someone you can to talk to about your concerns.

- **Advice from the *Safer Churches Officer* at the State office and the *Safer Churches National Helpline***

   ACC People and Local Church *Safer Churches Person*/Teams may also wish to seek advice from either the ACC State office or the *Safer Churches National Helpline* on **1800 070 511.**

31

CHAPTER 3
SAFE LEADERS

This chapter aims to develop awareness guidelines for:
- safe recruiting practices
- supervision of leaders
- ACC processes for responding to concerns about leaders.

The *Policy* defines **ACC People** as:

> officers or employees of ACC or its State or National ministries, ACC Credential holders, officers of a Constituent Church, employees, volunteers and other members of a congregation of a Constituent Church who may or will have a Direct Role, contractors (external agents) engaged by the ACC or a Constituent Church who may or will have a Direct Role.

A **Direct Role** is defined as:

> a role that includes, or is likely to include, providing services that are directed towards a Child or Young Person (whether in whole or in part), or conducting activities that may involve a Child or Young Person (whether in whole or in part), and includes the supervision of persons in Direct Roles (for example, a board member of a church is in a Direct Role, irrespective of whether they actually work with Children or Young People, because of their overarching supervisory duties).

In the *Policy* we commit to ensuring a Child Safe organisation including:

- using best practice standards in the recruitment, screening and employment of ACC People.
- working to ensure that ACC People do not harm Children or Young People who are involved with our programs, services or facilities.

This chapter contains the *Guidelines* for appointment and supervision of volunteer workers and information about processes for responding to grievances and allegations of misconduct/abuse.

A. LEADERS

Pastors, board members, team leaders, volunteers, helpers - who are our leaders? This is a good question. Are all volunteers and helpers considered *leaders*?

What if you only do a small job at the church, such as serve on a morning tea or car park roster?

Experience has taught the church that the answer to this question is more about the way that others perceive the role, not how the volunteer perceives their role. Consider the 'other person' as a new person coming to the church for the first time, or as a vulnerable person, such as a small child or person with an intellectual disability. If that person sees you 'doing' a task at church, how will they see you? It would be reasonable that they would think that you must be someone who works here, an important person, a person with some degree of influence, and possibly a leader. So does that make all volunteers leaders? Maybe, maybe not. It does mean, at minimum, that all volunteers are representatives of the church, that all volunteers could be perceived by the most vulnerable as a trusted person, a representative of the church.

In this light, when a church appoints a volunteer or paid leader (helpers included) to a position of service, they are saying, "We trust this person to represent God for us."
"We trust this person to not make the good news into bad news by harming others."

In this Manual the term *'leader'* is a generic one which means anyone who is given a position of trust or authority in the local congregation to work in roles of service in the church, both paid and unpaid.

32

When volunteers understand their position properly they will no longer see themselves as "just a helper" but rather as a minister of reconciliation, empowered by God to spiritually lead others. Rather than a job to be done, ministry will be a privilege, a responsibility, a position of delegated authority to influence others for God. When a person offers to volunteer for service, even if it is a very small role, the senior leaders in the church have a duty of care for that person's safety, and also a responsibility to others, to ensure they are a safe person to represent the church.

Safe leaders respect other people's boundaries, have other people's best interests at heart, are led by God, and are in accountable and transparent teams.

> **Reflection:** *What qualities do you look for in people you are looking to serve as volunteers?*

B. DUE DILIGENCE

Due diligence is a legal term referring to the care that must be taken when:

Appointing leaders: This includes properly screening, interviewing, checking a potential leader's/employee's background and contacting a potential leader's/employee's referees.

Supervising leaders: A church may exercise sufficient care in the hiring of an individual, but still be legally accountable for acts of abuse on the basis of negligent supervision. Negligent supervision is a failure to exercise sufficient care in the ongoing supervision of a worker.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHURCH WORKERS

Thorough screening and selection of all volunteers paid and volunteer including ACC People is important in ensuring safe environment, for WHS compliance and in terms of ACC People for fulfilling the commitment in the ACC Child Protection Policy.

The guideline herein related to volunteer church workers and paid workers, the local church should have a written process that ensures due diligence.

Considerations for appointment:

- **Determine who has the authority to 'hire' and 'fire'**
  - Who is responsible for appointment and dissmissal from a role?
  - Are lines of responsibility clearly communicated?
  - Who can appoint? Who can ask a leader to step down from a ministry or step aside for a period of time, where allegations of serious misconduct arise.

- **Provide role descriptions**
  All appointments should be to clearly defined roles, having clear expectations and defined start and end dates for the position. The church will provide you with a role description.

- **Communicate expectations for the role**
  For example, leaders are expected to:
  - commit to the aims of the ministry
  - support other ministry team leaders
  - fulfil ministry roles as described by ministry co-ordinators
  - undergo any training required for the ministry position
  - attend ministry team meetings as required
  - embrace the ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct

  Leaders can expect that the senior church leadership will:
  - provide mechanisms to support and supervise all leaders and ministry coordinators in their roles

33

- ensure resources (people, financial, administrative access and equipment) are available for approved ministry programs
- provide opportunities to access approved ministry training

- **Recruitment teams**
  It is good practice for appointment to be the responsibility of more than one individual, i.e. a team. Where possible, a team should include representatives of both genders. In most cases the team needs no more than 2 to 3 people, including the team leader/ministry coordinator.

- **Minimum attendance prior to volunteering**
  It is good practice to have a minimum qualifying period for previously unknown prospective volunteers, whereby they be a regular worshipper of the local ACC Constituent Church for a set length of time as determined by the Local Church Board.

9

ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 9
APPOINTMENT OF VOLUNTEER WORKERS (INCLUDING ACC PEOPLE)

The following Guideline is a **recommended** minimum standard for the appointment of all Volunteer Workers and team leaders, including ACC People. (For paid workers and leaders, additional steps may be required as part of the Local Church's written employment process.)

a) Prior to Serving

The Volunteer Church Workers Declaration should be completed. This declaration refers to the working with children checks and the Volunteer Church Workers Code of Conduct.

b) Induction

WHS legislation requires that all workers are provided with appropriate information/ induction training to enable them to safely fulfil their role/s, i.e. share in the ministry. This induction process should include prayer for the leader and clear communication with those who need to know that this person is an endorsed leader of the church.

c) Ministry Review

It is recommended there be a process of annual review of roles for Volunteer Workers. This process should be made clear to applicants at the time of appointment, as part of the induction process. This provides an opportunity for leaders to say they will or will not be available next year/time, which is important for the health of committed teams.

34

OVERVIEW OF GOVERNMENT SCREENING CHECKS

A summary document is also available at http://www.aifs.gov.au

	ABOUT	Who needs a check?	What is checked?	Cost	Validity
ACT	Working with Vulnerable Persons Check Administered by the Office of Regulatory Services To apply visit: www.ors.act.gov.au	• Applies to those who work in child-related or vulnerable adult services. • Applies to all ministers and lay church workers in child-related positions on behalf of the church. • The check is applied for and owned by individuals.	• Risk assessment of criminal history, non-conviction history, registration history and other information case by case.	• Paid Employees: $71 applies (tax deductible for individuals) • Volunteers: Free	Up to 3 years
NSW	Working with Children Check Administered by the Office of the Childrens' Guardian To apply visit: www.kids.nsw.gov.au	• The Working With Children Check is a prerequisite for paid and unpaid child-related work. Under Part 2, section 6 of the Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012, child-related work is defined as work in a specific, child-related role or face-to-face contact with children in a child-related sector.	• Relevant national criminal history check and review of findings of workplace misconduct. • Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring.	• Paid Employees: $80 • Volunteers: Free	5 years
QLD	Blue Card System Administered by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian To apply visit: http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au	• Paid employees who work with children and young people must hold a Blue Card or an Exemption Card. • Volunteers and trainee students who work with children and young people must hold a Blue Card, regardless of how often they will come into contact with children and young people, unless an exemption applies.	• Persons disqualified from a Blue Card if they have been convicted of a disqualifying offence. See http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/bluecard/disqualifying-offences.html to see a full list. • Cards are monitored yearly.	• Paid Employees $72 • Volunteers: Free	3 years
VIC	Working with Children Check Administered by the Department of Justice To apply visit: http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au Go to Australia Post	• If doing child-related work if: - your work is paid or voluntary, - is connected to one or more of the occupational fields listed in the Act, - involves regular direct contact with children, not directly supervised by another person. Some exemptions apply.	• Consideration of: National criminal history records, disciplinary findings of Victorian professional bodies and the out of home care Suitability Panel relevant determinations by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).	• Paid Employees $80 • Volunteers: Free	5 years
WA	Working with Children Check Administered by the Department of Child Protection To apply visit: http://www.checkwwc.wa.gov.au/checkwwc Go to Australia Post	• To assess your suitability to work with children, the Check examines your national criminal history and, where appropriate, professional disciplinary findings for relevant offences. During this time, your criminal and professional records will continue to be monitored.	• National criminal record information: convictions for all offences, 'spent' convictions, pending charges, and all 'non-conviction' charges. • Information about a person's criminal record may also be obtained from authorised bodies in Western Australia and similar authorities in other States and Territories such as: the Police, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Department of Corrective Services, Courts.	• Self employed: $54 • $100.20 if you are applying for an employee • Volunteers: $10.50	5 years
NT	Working with Children Check Ochre Card (also known as Clearance Notice) Email: safent.police@pfes.nt.gov.au	• It is mandatory for people who have contact or potential contact with children in certain specified areas of employment to hold a Working with Children Clearance Notice.	• National criminal history records, employment history check - disciplinary and other material e.g. assessing whether an indiviudal has attempted to change past criminal behaviour.	• Employed: $52 • Volunteers: $5	2 years

35

	ABOUT	Who needs a check?	What is checked?	Cost	Validity
TAS	Working with Children Registration - Working With Vulnerable People Act www.justice.tas.gov.au	• On 1 April 2015 registration is required for all paid and volunteer worker over the age of 16 in Child Related Religious Activity.	• An application, proof of identity, a national criminal history assessment and ongoing monitoring and a risk assessment	$103.60 for employed people $17.76 for volunteers	3 years
SA	The responsibility of due diligence checks is with the employers. Employers are required to demonstrate how they meet Child Safety guidelines - includes National Police checks on workers.				

2. SUPERVISION

Although thorough recruitment is essential, it is equally important that leaders are supported through ministry supervision. For example: A potential leader may have great motivation for ministry and all the right gifts for leading in a ministry, at age 22. Their interview to ascertain their suitability for the role may be the best you have ever conducted and their application for ministry and referees may be glowing - a safe leader!

However, will that same leader be appropriate for the same role in three years time? What life pressures such as children, death of loved ones, marriage, work, and housing arrangements are impacting upon the leader? How will these impact his/her ability to lead others?

CONSIDERATIONS:

The components of healthy ministry supervision are: clear role expectations, adequate support for leaders, a commitment to leadership development, a clear set of boundaries (Code of Conduct), and well communicated processes for handling conflict and complaints against leaders. See the *Safer Churches* section of the Pastor's Login at www.acc.org.au for these documents.

> • *Clear expectations* - Volunteers workers should be given a clear set of expectations for serving at church (see appointment process on page 33 for examples).
>
> Expectations include a role description provided as part of appointment.
>
> Relevant ACC codes of conduct also provide a guide as to expectations, as do the *Child Protection Policy* (Section 9) and these *Child Protection Guidelines*.
>
> • *Provide support* - It is recommended that the Local Church Board make adequate provision for formal and informal support for all volunter and paid workers.
>
> • *Develop Worker's skills* - It is recommended that the Local Church Board make adequate provision for developing all workers skills (paid and volunteer). This may include things like regular team meetings, praying together, eating together and planning together. It is also advisable to invest in leadership development, both through in-house in-services and external training events. This may include a budget item for in-services and the like.
>
> • *Code of Conduct* - A Code of Conduct is helpful for ensuring that leaders are clear on boundaries, given that they have been given delegated authority and a position of power to spiritually influence others. It simply outlines appropriate ministry leadership boundaries, rather than assuming that people know the boundaries.
>
> Codes of conduct are not laws to be added to grace, rather, they are expressions of our respect and commitment to each other's safety. Consider the code as a way of

36

saying to your team, "I will love you by looking after your best interests. I will help you avoid high risk situations."

In this way team members hold each other accountable. It is about peer mentoring and accountability, not wielding a big stick!

10	ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 10
	SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEER WORKERS (INCLUDING ACC PEOPLE)

The following Guideline is a **recommended** minimum standard for the supervision of all Volunteer Workers and team leaders including ACC People. (For paid workers additional supervision may be required as part of the Constituent Church's written employment procedures.)

a. Provide adequate support

It is recommended that the Local Church Board make adequate provision for formal and informal support for all ACC People.

b. Develop skills

It is recommended that the Local Church Board make adequate provision for developing Volunteer Workers. This may include things like regular team meetings, praying together, eating together and planning together. It is also advisable to invest in leadership development, both through in-house in-services and external training events.

c. Apply the relevant Code of Conduct

See the Ministerial Code of Conduct and Volunteer Church Workers Code of Conduct at Pastor's Login. The applicable ACC code of conduct provides clear behavioural boundaries for representing the church.

C. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF MINISTRY MISCONDUCT AND/OR ABUSE AND MANAGING CONFLICTS

The *Policy* expects ACC People to:

- take action to ensure that Children or Young People are protected from harm by identifying and addressing risk factors as soon as practicable.
- work to ensure that ACC People have access to a senior person to assist in making decisions in relation to any action required to protect Children or Young People from harm.

To apply the *Policy*, local church boards need to be prepared to manage conflicts, grievances and allegations of ministry misconduct and/or abuse between leaders, or between program participants and ACC leaders.

Our pastoral, ethical, legal, denominational, risk management and insurance responsibilities must all be considered as part of the implementation of these processes.

The WHS ACT 2011, applicable in many states and territories, requires accountable and transparent response to complaints, bullying, harassment and abuse processes available to all workers, including volunteers.

The following information applies to the implementation of ACC policy, guidelines and processes.

37

1. NATURAL JUSTICE

Natural justice, needs to be extended to all parties. This includes ensuring:

- the person who is the subject of the allegation(s) is informed of the substance, with as much detail as possible, of the allegation(s) made against them.
- the person who is the subject of the allegation(s) is provided with a reasonable opportunity to put forward their case, either in writing or otherwise.
- reasonable inquiries or assessment of disputed facts are undertaken before decisions are made/conclusions reached.
- all relevant available evidence, both supporting and refuting the allegation(s), is considered.
- the investigation is conducted without undue delay.
- those deciding on a case have no conflict of interest in the matter, so that they act fairly and without bias.

(adapted from NSW Child Protection Ombudsman - *Child Protection in the Workplace*)

2. LOCAL LEVEL RESPONSES

Where conflict and minor breaches of the *ACC Volunteer Workers Code of Conduct* occur, in most instances these can be handled at a local level. The use of the *ACC Volunteer Workers Code of Conduct* in tandem with a clear conflict resolution/grievance procedure is essential. SMR can provide a process for Resolving misunderstanding and conflicts in churches.

Any alleged breach of the provisions within the *ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct* will be worked through with reference to the *ACC Grievance Procedure* for dealing with complaints against Certificate Holders.

In the case of allegations of abuse, you may also contact the *Safer Churches National Helpline:* **1800 070 511**.

3. CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

If you are contacted by the media in relation to a critical incident or serious misconduct matter, refer them to your *Safer Churches Person/Team*. They in turn should consult the church board and, where necessary, the State Executive. It is best to make a statement to the media, after legal advice has been sought.

4. LEGAL AND INSURANCE IMPLICATIONS

• SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Australia) describes sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advance/s; request for sexual favours; unwelcome sexual conduct in circumstances where the person doing the harassing knows that the conduct would offend, intimidate or humiliate.

Reasonable steps include:

- specific instructions not to sexually harass other employees;
- training of employees on what behaviour amounts to sexual harassment;
- a policy outlining employees' responsibility not to sexually harass.

The National WHS Legislation makes it essential to provide a fair and just process for all workers who make sexual harassment allegations. (Note Victoria and WA currently work on State based H&S legislation.)

ACC churches will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment. Allegations are to be referred immediately to the State or National Executive and the appropriate process implemented.

• CONCEALMENT LEGISLATION

There are occasions where people wish to and/or are given the opportunity to 'confess'

38

past sin in order to experience forgiveness and freedom from the sin that binds them. When sin involves illegal activity, it puts the person hearing the confession a situation where they may be required to report the admission. In some States, the law makes it illegal for person/s hearing the confession to not report this crime. For example, Section 316 of the NSW Crimes Act. In such situations please speak to your *Safer Churches Person/Team*.

• *REPORTING RELEVANT MISCONDUCT FINDINGS (NSW)*

Churches, as employers of volunteer and paid child related workers are classed as reporting bodies by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian (NSW Office of the Children's Guardian *The New Working With Children Check: Information for reporting bodies: Reporting certain misconduct involving children* - July 2013 fact sheet). In NSW, contact the State *Safer Churches Officer* if there is an allegation of sexual misconduct or physical assault by a children's or young person's worker or call the National Helpline.

• *KNOWN SEXUAL OFFENDER IN THE CONGREGATION*

The restorative nature of the gospel means that no one is outside the reaches of God's love. God's restoration and grace extends to all people, including those who may have committed past sexual offences, even against children. However, such offences do have some life long consequences. One consequence is that in many ACC churches, there is an insurance implication (exclusion) related to known past sexual offenders attending your church. If you have a concern in relation to a possible known sexual offender, speak to your local church *Safer Churches Person/Team*.

• *REPORTING TO YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY*

Depending upon the seriousness of the allegation of misconduct, it is advisable to contact your insurance broker or denominational insurance representative to disclose the incident. This is particularly important where there is the possibility of future claims to be made by victims of abuse and/or serious misconduct. Insurance cover may be impacted if the disclosure being made by the insured is not made in the same year the possible liability is known about by the insured.

11

**ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 11
RESPONDING TO CONFLICTS, AND/OR ALLEGATIONS**

ACC People **shall** make an appropriate report to the relevant government department and to the relevant ACC State or National Executive, in respect to a Child or Young Person at risk of harm.

ACC People **shall** use the ACC Grievance Procedure when responding to allegations of misconduct and/or abuse by ACC Credential or Certificate holders.

When responding to allegations of misconduct and/or abuse by those who are not ACC Credential or Certificate holders, ACC People **shall** work through an appropriate process which affords natural justice to all parties; your ACC State Safer Churches Officers can provide assistance working through such a process.

In all instances, the Local Church **shall** consider the pastoral, legal and insurance implications of the conflict or allegation and respond with transparency and accountability.

CHAPTER 4
SAFE PROGRAMS

This chapter aims to develop awareness guidelines for:
- a process for gaining approval for ministry
- management of risks in ministry programs
- safe ministry environments
- responding to incidents

The *ACC Child Protection Policy* contains two purposes directly related to the provision of safe environments:

- *To provide for and promote the care, protection and wellbeing of Children or Young People in a way that recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and the right to be protected from Harm, and to maximise opportunities for Children or Young People to realise their full potential;*

- *To provide for and promote the provision of services that foster the health, developmental needs, spirituality, self-respect and dignity of Children or Young People including by ensuring that persons responsible for Children or Young People within the Movement are appropriately performing their responsibilities;*

These purposes are outworked through our commitment to ensuring child safe organisations, as part of the *Policy*:

- *We will work to create an environment in which Children or Young People are safe and feel safe.*
- *We will work to ensure that ACC People do not harm Children or Young People who are involved with our programs, services or facilities.*

This chapter contains information aimed at helping *ACC People* implement a safe spiritual, emotional and physical environment; these are achieved though implementation of the *Safer Churches Guidelines*.

A. SAFETY IN PROGRAMS

A safe program ensures safe spiritual, physical and emotional environments. Consideration is given to the participants' ages and cultural backgrounds. Safe programs are prepared for the fact that some activities or situations present more inherent risks than others. Safe programs are transparent and accountable in relation to procedures and relationships.

1. WORK, HEALTH & SAFETY (WHS)

"The introduction of harmonised work health and safety legislation across Australia has been a commitment of the Council of Australian Governments since July 2008" (http://www.pswr.sa.gov.au - accessed 20/08/2013). However, to date, there is no binding obligation on states and territories to adopt the legislation (http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au - accessed 20/08/13). While most states and territories have now passed the Work Health and Safety Act, few have done so without amendment, others have continued to pass additional Health and Safety regulations in addition to the harmonised legislation. The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 has been passed in some form by the Commonwealth Government, the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Victoria and Western Australia operate on state based legislation.

For those states where the National WHS Act applies, it is the Person Conducting the Business or Undertaking's (PCBU) responsibility to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure the physical & psychological health and safety of all workers (which includes volunteers). For other states and territories where the WHS Act does not apply to churches, our general duty of care concerns are relevant in terms of safety for everyone in ACC churches.

40

STATE / TERRITORY	LAW/S & CONTACTS	INFORMATION
QLD	Work Health & Safety Act 2011, Safety in Recreational Water Activities Act, Regulations and Codes of Practice. Contact www.deir.qld.gov.au Ph: **1300 369 915**	Workplace Health and Safety Queensland are the peak body. The Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (WHS Regulation) allows the regulator to grant an exemption from compliance with any provision of the WHS Regulation. (Source: http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/law/whslaws/index.htm#.UhKeXRZ0yfQ)
SA	Work Health & Safety Act 2011 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA) Contact www.safework.sa.gov.au Helpline **1300 365 255**	SafeWork SA delivers a full range of workplace safety, public safety and industrial relations services to promote and encourage safe, fair and productive working lives. As the state's occupational health, safety and welfare agency, SafeWork SA achieves success by working with employers, employees, unions and industry representatives to ensure compliance and help people understand and meet their obligations. (Source: http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au, accessed 20/08/13) The Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA) identify the control measures that must be applied to specific work activities and hazards, for example machine guarding and noise exposure. (Source: www.safework.sa.gov.au, accessed 20/08/13)
NT	Work Health & Safety Act 2011 Contact: www.worksafe.nt.gov.au Ph: **1800 019 115**	NT WorkSafe works with Territory businesses and workers by: setting the safety standards to ensure that businesses and workers meet their responsibilities under the law; explaining and interpreting laws and standards and by providing businesses and workers with guidance materials; and helping businesses and workers meet their responsibilities through workplace visits, advice, audits and inspections. (Source: www.worksafe.nt.gov.au, accessed 20/08/13)
NSW	Work Health & Safety Act 2011 Contact: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au Ph: **13 10 50**	The new work health and safety (WHS) laws replaced the occupational health and safety (OHS) laws in NSW on 1 January 2012. These new laws will provide greater consistency, certainty and clarity across Australia making it easier to understand your workplace health and safety duties. Businesses and volunteer organisations that operate over several states will be able to initiate nationwide safety policies and procedures. Free assistance and support services are available to help businesses with the new work health and safety changes. These services include WorkCover safety rebates, live webinars, advisory visits, workshops, programs and events. (Source: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au, accessed 20/08/13)
VIC	Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 also Codes and Policy Contact: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au Ph: **1800 136 089**	In Victoria, workplace health and safety is governed by a system of laws, regulations and compliance codes which set out the responsibilities of employers and workers to ensure that safety is maintained at work. The Act is the cornerstone of legislative and administrative measures to improve occupational health and safety in Victoria. The Regulations are made under the Act. Effective OHS regulation requires that WorkSafe provides clear, accessible advice and guidance about what constitutes compliance with the Act and Regulations. This can be achieved through Compliance Codes, WorkSafe Positions and non-statutory guidance ('the OHS Compliance Framework"). See the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Compliance Framework Handbook. (Source: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au, accessed 20/08/13)
WA	Occupational Safety & Health Act 1984 Occupational Safety & Health Regulations 1996 Contact: www.commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe/ Ph: **1300 307 877**	WorkSafe is a division of the Department of Commerce, the Western Australian State Government agency responsible for the administration of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984. The principal objective of the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 is to promote and secure the safety and health of people in the workplace. (Source: www.commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe, accessed 20/08/13)

41

STATE / TERRITORY	LAW/S & CONTACTS	INFORMATION
ACT	Work Health &Safety Act 2011 also Work Health & Safety Regulation 2011 Contact: www.safework.act.gov.au	In the second half of 2011, in keeping with the ACT's commitment to the national harmonisation of health and safety laws, the Legislative Assembly passed a new Work Health and Safety Act 2011. In the ACT WHS has four components: the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011; Codes of Practice, National and Australian Standards; Guidance Material. (Source: http://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/page/view/2798, accessed 20/08/13)
TAS	Work Health & Safety Act 2012 Work Health & Safety Act Regulations 2012 Contact: www.workcover.tas. gov.au Ph: **1300 776 572**	Workplace Standards (http://workplacestandards.tas.gov.au) in Tasmania works with the Tasmanian community to improve standards of safety and health in workplaces, buildings and energy infrastructure. They administer Work Health and Safety . They conduct accidents and incident investigation, undertaking audits for compliance with the law, deliver awareness and educational programs, provide advice, including a helpline telephone service to the public, assess and processing licences and permits, provide strategic policy analysis and advice. (Source: http://workplacestandards.tas.gov.au, accessed30/08/13).

12   ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 12
COMPLIANCE WITH WHS LEGISLATION

It is **recommended** even in states where there is no legislatedWHS requirement that each ACC Church:

- Elect a **Health & Safety Team** to oversee implementation of WHS compliance.
- Write and implement Health and Safety policies, including privacy policy and evacuations procedures.
- Keep Health and Safety on the agenda at the Local Church Board team meetings.
- Notify incidents such as serious events and dangerous incidents within a prescribed period to the Health & Safety Team.
- Address health and safety concerns within a timely manner of the concern being communicated to the Health & Safety Team.
- Notify incidents such as serious events and critical incidents within a prescribed period to the Health & Safety Team.
- Use incident report documentation to report serious incidents to your insurer and your ACC State Safer Churches Officer.
- Ensure all workers know and follow the church's abuse reporting and grievance procedures.
- Have the Health & Safety Team undertake a safe environment audit of the church centre at least twice a year.

Note: In States & Territories where the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Legislation applies to churches this guideline is written to assist with compliance to the WHS Act.

YEARLY APPROVAL FOR MINISTRY

The local church board is ultimately responsible for any activities that take place in the name of the church. There are a number of considerations to be mindful of when establishing a ministry event or program. These considerations might be recorded for accountability purposes in an approval for ministry process.

13	ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 13 ANNUAL PROGRAM APPROVAL

It is **recommended** that all Children or Young People's programs be approved by the Local Church Board through a formal, annual written approval process.

2. MANAGING EVENT AND PROGRAM RISKS

Risk Management is the process of managing your church's exposure to to the possibility of such things as economic or financial loss or gain, physical damage, injury or delay, as a consequence of pursuing or not pursuing a particular course of action. The concept of risk includes the; perception that something could happen; likelihood of it occurring and consequence if it does occur.

Risk Assessment looks at what might happen, whereas Hazard Identification looks at what is present at the venue at a specific time. Considers five key areas:
- How likely is this risk?
- What is the consequence should it occur?
- What is the overall level of risk?
- What does this level of risk require to be managed appropriately?
- How adequately are we managing this risk?

Some risks will be managed at a whole church level e.g. the *Guidelines*.

DESCRIPTIONS AND RATINGS

• **Likelihood**,*i.e. what are the chances the risk situation will occur during your ministry/ program?*

Very likely	- Occurs routinely and can be expected to occur
Likely	- Occurs often and a good chance to happen
Moderate	- Should occur at some time
Unlikely	- Could possibly occur at some time
Very unlikely	- Could possibly occur but would be in exceptional circumstances

• **Consequence**, *i.e. What harm could result if the situation occurred?*

Insignificant	- No likely injuries to person, no property damage, no financial loss, no effect on reputation, no disruption to the ministry/program, aims/goals still achieved
Minor	- First Aid treatment for person, minor property damage, small financial loss, little impact on reputation, little disruption, most aims/goals achieved
Moderate	- Medical treatment to self or others, significant property damage, intervention by outside agency needed, significant financial loss, some damage to reputation, moderate disruption to ministry/ program, some of the aims/goals achieved
Major	- Extensive injuries or permanent impairment likely, major property damage, significant outside intervention, major financial loss, significant damage to reputation, major disruption to ministry/ program, most of the aims/goals not achieved
Intolerable	- Permanent impairment or death, property damage irretrievable, permanent intervention required (organisational leadership), financial cost leading to closure, irretrievable damage to reputation, program unable to be continued, no aims/goals achieved.

43

RISK MATRIX

Consequence					
INTOLERABLE	Significant	High	High	High	High
MAJOR	Significant	Significant	High	High	High
MODERATE	Medium	Medium	Significant	Significant	High
MINOR	Low	Low	Medium	Significant	Significant
INSIGNIFICANT	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Significant
	VERY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	MODERATE	LIKELY	VERY LIKELY

Likelihood

Responses to the level of Risk Key

LOW RISK - Monitoring risk management strategies used likely to be sufficient to manage the risk.

MEDIUM RISK - Adapt usual risk management strategies, and monitor progress.

SIGNIFICANT RISK - Identify management plan for specific risks, continuous monitoring by leadership.

HIGH RISK - Considerable attention will be needed to manage unique needs of the situation.

14	**ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 14** **MANAGING EVENT AND/OR PROGRAM RISKS**

It is **recommended** that ministry coordinators manage individual program risk according to risk management good practice, including annual risk management as part of the annual program approval process.

B. EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENTS

To ensure that people are safe, the physical environment is only part of what must be considered. In Chapter One, we discussed the gift of boundaries, and how this includes people's emotions and spiritual development. In fact many more people leave the church due to a feeling or perception that their emotional and or spiritual boundaries have been violated (harm intentionally or unintentionally), rather than a physical injury.

Ensuring safe emotional and spiritual environments is fundamentally about putting other people's needs above our own agenda to ensure that a program runs successfully, respecting personhood, i.e. valuing individuals, their backgrounds, their personality, their hopes, dreams and fears. It is about staying true to the good news message Jesus came to bring life, not, as he warned about, "to put heavy burdens onto people". It is fostering a welcoming and caring ministry space, where people feel safe to share their ideas without being ridiculed.

In this Manual we have already considered ways to help people protect and care for themselves (see Chapter 2 Section II Self Protection and Awareness). These are all ways leaders can help establish safe emotional and spiritual environments. Additionally, consider the areas below in your planning and preparation for events and programs.

1. SERVANT LEADERSHIP

A non-abusive spiritual environment is one where no one is manipulated, or coerced. An environment where people are free to experience a full life in Jesus (John 10:10), a place where people can explore the good news (gospel) of God in Jesus and grow in their relationship with God and others. Jesus said to His disciples that they were not to be like the leaders of this world who lord it over others, but rather to serve, *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Matthew 20:25-28). This may be called servant leadership; it is the way in which non-abuse Christian leaders carry out their positions of trust and power. Jesus' ransom for us is good news. In Jesus we find forgiveness, love, healing, and restoration. As leaders we need to be about serving others - being servants, serving like Christ served (Phillipians 2:1-8).

44

2. HANDLING PRIVATE INFORMATION (NATIONAL PRIVACY ACT)

Obtaining information about people is essential if we are to be equipped to care for them, not only physically but also emotionally. We need to respect people's information especially in critical situations or emergencies and guardianship issues. Where appropriate, dependant upon the age and vulnerabilities of program participants, obtain the person's name and a contact phone number. When it is apparent that the person is going to be attending fairly regularly, it may be necessary to formally obtain information. Please consider the principles in the National Privacy Act:

- that private information is only collected if necessary;
- individuals concerned are advised of its intended use;
- personal information collected is stored securely and not divulged to others without the consent of the individual involved;
- any personal information the church is holding which is no longer required, is out of date or incorrect, is either destroyed or amended to be accurate.

3. RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF AN INDIVIDUAL

When sharing in ministry our starting point should be, "How can I serve you?" It is important not to predetermine how much physical contact, or how many words, bible verses, or 'your solutions' you need to provide a person with. Minister to the person – this is not based on the need of the leader to provide comfort. Ask a person what they need from you, e.g. "Would you like me to pray for you?" Touch, counsel, and emotional support is provided for the other person's well-being, not for your own ego or to meet your emotional needs.

4. RESPECT DIVERSITY

People may come to church programs with a variety of cultural norms and expectations. We need to be aware of the expectations and taboos that may exist in the cultural settings in which we minister.

Consider activities that may cause a problem culturally for those involved. If you suspect an activity could be a problem, ask the program participant or their family prior to asking them to take part.

Value the different cultural traditions and heritages of Australian indigenous and other cultural groups in our churches when it comes to matters of child-raising and parenting. For those ministering in such settings, it is essential to take special care in ensuring that the principles found in the Policy and this Manual are followed.

5. THE POWER OF THE ROLE MODEL

The behaviour of leaders is observed at all times by the people who follow. Followers are quick to discern inconsistency between words and actions, and credibility can be lost if they perceive inconsistencies. In terms of children, they will model the behaviours they see modelled by the people who are influential in their lives. If a child admires a leader, then they are likely to imitate the behaviours of that leader. As leaders if we are discouraging, unreasonably punitive, disrespectful or sarcastic, this is what we are modelling. It can become a case of a leader "reaping what they have sowed".

6. THE POWER OF WORDS

Since words as well as actions can be misinterpreted, it is wise for leaders to think about what impact their words have. Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that their conversations are not abusive or offensive within the normal range of these terms. People will from time to time take offence at what we say, but our responsibility is to not be offensive or derogatory in our conversation with others. A general principle to be embraced by all leaders is to consider the impact of their words and actions before they speak or act.

If it is necessary to speak to a program participant privately, it is wise to inform your team leader or another member of your team of the intention to do so. This removes the risk of supposition by others looking on, that anything inappropriate could be happening.

When speaking with a program participant individually, do so *privately in a public setting.*'

45

That is, move a few metres away from the rest of the group, but stay within the view of all of the group. This allows a leader to have a private conversation without others hearing what is being discussed.

7. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-verbal communication refers to all methods or channels of communication which do not use words. It includes body language, physical characteristics and appearance, the distance one person stands from another, the physical environment and the use of time. The use of all of these categories of non-verbal communication sends powerful messages to others.

A general understanding of the impact of distance and personal space is also useful for leaders. Most people need a certain degree of space between them and others. In most cases people can cope with others invading their personal space from the side. However, most do not tolerate invasion either in front or behind. It is useful for leaders to consider the distances they stand or sit from the people they are leading and determine if they may be making the person uncomfortable, because they are operating within an inappropriate space for a task.

15

ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 15
SAFE SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS IN MINISTRY PROGRAMS & EVENTS

The ACC Child Protection Policy contains practical expectations for safe spiritual and emotional environments for Children or Young People:

We expect ACC People to put the rights of a Child or Young Person to the protection from harm ahead of any cultural and religious practices of families who come to our Churches.

No cultural or religious belief will take precedence over the right of Children or Young People to protection from harm.

We expect ACC People to understand and respond to the special needs of Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities.

We acknowledge that Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities have special needs. We expect ACC People to act in ways that communicate effectively with and are supportive of Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities. We also understand that we will need to be proactive in recognising the additional vulnerability to harm that Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities experience.

We expect ACC People to be respectful of Children or Young People.

As part of our commitment to Children or Young People, we will facilitate opportunities for Children or Young People to tell us their views and feedback about the services we provide to them. We will treat Children or Young People as individuals and respect their unique abilities and vulnerabilities. We expect ACC People to express attitudes and engage in behaviour that respects and supports Children or Young People (*ACC Child Protection Policy*).

C. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Providing safe physical environments is important if attendees are to participate freely in activities.

To ensure that both leaders and ministry program participants are kept as safe as reasonably practicable, consider completing a risk assessment and action plan for your ministry program, as suggested in the Approval for Ministry Process. Completing the Approval for Ministry Process will provide transparency and accountability to the congregation and community in terms of a written risk assessment of your program or ministry event annually.

46

16 ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 16
SAFE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

It is **recommended** for the safe running of Children's and Young People's programs and events that the following matters are considered:

FIRST AID including:

• At least one on-site leader should have current first aid training, e.g. St John Ambulance.

• A suitable, up-to-date and accessible first aid kit is to be available at all times.

TRANSPORTATION including:

• Responsible, road-rule abiding transportation is to be provided.

• Never be alone in a car with a Child or Young Person.

• At no time should there be more passengers in a car than the number of seat belts that are in working order and available for use.

• All cars will be registered, in good working order and driven by licensed drivers abiding by any licence restrictions (e.g. Provisional licence passenger conditions)

• If a Child/Young Person is travelling in a vehicle driven by a worker who possesses a provisional licence, prior written consent should, wherever possible, be given by a parent/guardian, except in the case of emergencies.

FOOD SAFETY including:

• Prepare a Food Preparation & Storage Practices Guide

• Display Food Preparation and Storage Practices Guide in the kitchen or food preparation area.

• Checking with local council to ensure compliance with local requirements in relation to food handling.

SUPERVISION NUMBERS including:

ACC People should ensure that adequate numbers of leaders are present to supervise the program.

Precise numbers of leaders are hard to determine and will depend greatly on the size of the group, their age and the level of physical and or emotional risk inherent to the activity.

Programs aimed at younger Children and the disabled require more supervision due to the increased level of risk involved.

No matter what size the group is, ensure enough leaders so as to cope with any accidents and/or critical incidents that may occur.

An example may be requiring a minimum of two adult leaders on site for all programs in addition to the leader to participant ratio of 1:10. This will allow for safe supervision if and when accidents or critical incidents occur. Of course, many more leaders will be needed for high-risk activities such as taking Children or Young People off-site, swimming, bushwalks, games nights or the like, or if the group is large.

It is **recommended** that ACC People running Children's or Young People's programs:

• make the distinction between those adults who are part of the team, and who are junior leaders (under 18 years). Junior leaders are not to be counted in the supervision ratios.

• use adult helpers over the age of 18 who are not leaders of the group, but rather are present on-site for supervision purposes. Such adult helpers, though still Volunteer Workers, would not actually run activities, whereas junior ministry leaders may run many. Adult helpers are important to help ensure the safety of the Children or Young People.

• do not allow leaders or helpers to be alone, one-on-one, with a Child or Young Person. One adult with a small group may be fine as long as there are other adults on site. Where possible, have both male and female leaders to provide support for both boys and girls.

• In relation to camps or overnight settings, it is not advisable that leaders sleep in the same room as Children or Young People. Leaders should be sleeping in a designated leader's space (cabin) nearby.

47

> **MANAGEMENT OF HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES including:**
> - For high risk and off-site activities: e.g. water sports, swimming excursions, white water rafting/caving/bungy jumping, inflatable sumo suit wrestling, gladiator games, horse-riding, high ropes activities, roller blading/skating, skateboarding or activities involving live animals, an employee/leader with appropriate (certified) training for the event should be running the activity.
> - Active supervision is also required at all times. Supervisors must not be involved in any additional activities that will distract from their role as a supervisor.
> - All participants involved in high risk activities should have a signed liability release from each parent/guardian. However, it is important to note that a liability release form does not actually indemnify against an accident. Individual leaders may be protected where all due care has been taken, but a church may still be deemed liable, where duty of care failures are proven.
> - Contact the church's insurance broker/company contact for advice before running high risk activities as some high risk injuries may be excluded from the Church's liability cover.

D. RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

While we all hope that they will never occur, people do have accidents and there are emergencies. At these times the health and safety of the person is of paramount concern and it may be necessary for a leader to administer first aid to a person.

Incidents are more likely to occur when *unsafe conditions* combine with *unsafe actions* and *errors of judgement*. It is important that when incidents occur to manage the incident in accountable and transparent ways as a team.

A critical incident is an event or set of circumstances that has the potential to result in physical or psychological outcomes ranging from mild trauma to a fatality for one or more people. A *Critical Incident Response Plan* should to be accessible from your *Church Safety Team*.

A Critical Incident Response Plan is a systematic approach to planning and implementing an immediate and long-term response to a critical incident. It has three main stages: preparedness, response and recovery.

Every incident will require:
- immediate response, in the moment.
- follow up over the next 12-24 hours (or longer) including pastoral care for those involved.
- review of the reason for the incident and changes made so as to minimise the risk of the same incident occurring the next time the same activity or event is run.

Visit the *Safer Churches* section of the Pastor's Login at the ACC national website www.acc.org.au for incident response information and implementation forms.

17	**ACC SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINE 17** **RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS**

ACC people **shall**
- respond to incidents appropriately and promptly and take adequate follow up action.
- Use of report forms: Injuries or accidents requiring secondary medical attention, e.g. visit to a doctor or medical centre, are to be written up on an incident report.
- Incidents of a serious nature need to be reported to your local church insurer.
- Report all incidents to parents and/or care-givers of Children or Young People, and in instances where the impact has been felt by a wider group, report, with the permission of those involved in the incident, to the wider concerned group.

48

AUSTRALIAN
CHRISTIAN
CHURCHES

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This Child Protection Policy is a Policy of the ACC Movement that reflects the moral and ethical standards of the Movement pursuant to Article 16.1 of the United Constitution.

1   PURPOSE OF OUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Australian Christian Churches (ACC) is a movement of Pentecostal Churches in voluntary cooperation. Each individual church is self-governing, but commits itself to work together with other churches in the movement for the purpose of mutual support and the spread of the gospel in Australia and the world. ACC strives for an inclusive approach that is committed to providing opportunities for all people to have caring relationships. Caring about the welfare of Children or Young People is a serious consideration and ACC is committed to protecting Children or Young People.

It is the responsibility of all at ACC, from the National and State Executives, constituent ministers to staff, pastoral care and volunteers, to understand the important responsibility they have:

- To provide for and promote the care, protection and wellbeing of Children or Young People in a way that recognises their right to grow in a safe and stable environment and the right to be protected from Harm, and to maximise opportunities for Children or Young People to realise their full potential;

- To provide for and promote the provision of services that foster the health, developmental needs, spirituality, self-respect and dignity of Children or Young People including by ensuring that persons responsible for Children or Young People within the movement are appropriately performing their responsibilities;

- To promote caring attitudes and responses towards Children or Young People, so that the need for appropriate nurture, care and protection is understood, risks to a Child's wellbeing are quickly identified, and any necessary support, protection or care is promptly provided;

- To recognise the family as the primary means of providing for the nurture, care and protection of Children or Young People and to accord high priority to supporting and assisting the family to carry out its responsibilities to Children or Young People;

- To promote and recognise the need to strengthen, preserve and promote positive relationships between the Child and the Child's parent, family members, leaders, mentors, spiritual advisors and significant others; and

49

- To provide for and promote a Child safe culture that is understood, endorsed and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer or access an ACC program, service or managed facility.

2   CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

The ACC Child Protection Policy has been adopted nationally by the ACC through its supreme governing body, the National Conference, and is binding on Credential Holders and Constituent Churches. It consists of a set of principles and procedural benchmarks that underpin the other policies and procedures in relation to the protection of Children or Young People that the ACC and its Constituent Churches have in place for their Ministers, staff, volunteers and other members of a congregation.

3   HOW DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO THE ACC CONSTITUENT CHURCHES?

It is a requirement of the ACC National and State Executives and Constituent Churches to adopt the ACC Child Protection Policy or use it as a minimum standard.

4   WHO IS COVERED BY THE ACC CHILD PROTECTION POLICY?

The ACC Child Protection Policy covers all ACC People.

5 DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY

Term	Definition
ACC People	ACC People includes: • officers or employees of ACC or its State or National ministries, • ACC Credential holders, • officers of a Constituent Church, • employees, volunteers and other members of a congregation of a Constituent Church who may or will have a Direct Role, • contractors (external agents) engaged by the ACC or a Constituent Church who may or will have a Direct Role.
Child/Children or Young Person/People	The ACC considers a Child or Young Person to be a person under the age of eighteen years.
Child Protection Policy	The Child Protection Policy is this document that defines the principles that are implemented to ensure that Children or Young People who access a program, service or facility are protected from harm by Ministers, staff, volunteers and other members of a congregation. The ACC Child Protection Policy has been adopted by the National Conference April 2015.
Child Protection Practice Guidelines	The ACC National Executive may develop and promulgate practice and behaviour guidelines to identify, and so prevent, behaviour that may be harmful to the Children or Young People in our church communities. Such guidelines may further identify how to appropriately deal with unacceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with Children or Young People.
Constituent Church	A Constituent Church includes a Registered Church, a Provisional Church and a Satellite or Extension Service as defined in the United Constitution of ACC.
Direct Role	A role that includes, or is likely to include, providing services that are directed towards a Child or Young Person (whether in whole or in part), or conducting activities that may involve a Child or Young Person (whether in whole or in part), and includes the supervision of persons in Direct Roles (for example, a board member of a church is in a Direct Role, irrespective of whether they actually work with Children or Young People, because of their overarching supervisory duties).
Emotional or psychological abuse	Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a Child or Young Person does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a Child or Young Person. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviors continue to an extent that results

	in significant damage to the Child or Young Person's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing or development.
Grooming	Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a Child or Young Person, or the family unit of the Child or Young Person, with a view to abusing the Child or Young Person at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of Children or Young People. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The Child or Young Person may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a Child or Young Person in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom Children or Young People but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by SMS.
Harm	Harm, to a Child or Young Person, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the Child or Young Person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by - physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or - sexual abuse or exploitation; - a single act, omission or circumstance; or - a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Member of a congregation	Member of a congregation is an individual who participates in an ACC or Constituent Church activity, program, service or facility.
Physical abuse	Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a Child or Young Person to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally, or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a Child or Young Person. Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning and kicking. It also includes giving Children or Young People harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a Child or Young Person at risk of being hurt
Risk	A Child or Young Person is at risk of harm if harm has not yet occurred but is likely to occur in the future, given risk factors identified in the present. A Child or Young Person may be assessed as in need of protection if the level of future risk is identified as likely (probable), not just possible (may occur); the probable harm will have a significant detrimental effect on the Child or Young Person if it does occur; and there is not a parent able and willing to protect the Child or Young Person from future significant harm.

Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse occurs when a person with a position of power involves a Child or Young Person in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the Child or Young Person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a Child or Young Person, engaging Children or Young People to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a Child or Young Person's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a Child or Young Person. Encouraging a Child or Young Person to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos is also sexual abuse. Engaging Children or Young People to participate in sexual conversations over the internet is also considered sexual abuse.
Sexual exploitation	Sexual exploitation occurs when Children or Young People are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos whether published on the internet or not. Exploitation can also involve Children or Young People who are forced into prostitution.

6   WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE ACC CHILD PROTECTION POLICY?

The ACC National Conference is responsible for the development and endorsement of the ACC Child Protection Policy. It delegates the implementation of the ACC Child Protection Policy to the ACC National and State Executives and Constituent Churches. The role of each entity in relation to the implementation and enforcement of the ACC Child Protection Policy is detailed in the table below.

Entity	Role/Responsibility
ACC National Executive	• Promote the ACC commitment to the ACC Child Protection Policy; • Support review on an annual cycle as a minimum, of the ACC Child Protection Policy or at a time governed by legislation, regulations or organisational learnings that requires a change to the ACC Child Protection Policy; • Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to Child protection; • Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children or Young People in support of this Policy.
ACC State Executive	• Ensure the ACC Child Protection Policy is implemented and adhered to by the State Executive and Constituent Churches and ACC Credential Holders;

	• Ensure all ACC People understand their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy; • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation; • Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children or Young People in support of this Policy; • Proactively share resources and experience in the development of Child safe initiatives as they are identified; • Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of Child protection.
Constituent Churches and Credential Holders	• Ensure all ACC People within the respective Constituent Church understand, and adhere to, their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy; • Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children or Young People in support of this Policy; • Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of Child protection. • It is acknowledged that not all Credential Holders will have sufficient influence to achieve these objectives with a Constituent Church, but it is expected, as a minimum, that a Senior Minister and/or their appointee/s will have such influence.

7 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF CORRESPONDING CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE GUIDELINES?

The role of developing and implementing corresponding Child Protection Practice Guidelines in accordance with the relevant State/Territory legal obligations rests with the ACC National Executive (or its delegate).

The ACC State Executive and Constituent Churches are required to adopt the approved Child Protection Practice Guidelines (or for Constituent Churches, an alternative guideline that is at least consistent with the Child Protection Practice Guidelines).

As Child or Young Person protection is a matter affecting the national Movement, the administration and enforcement of the Child Protection Policy and the approved Child Protection Practice Guidelines shall be vested in the State Executive and Constituent Churches in consultation with the National Executive.

In accordance with article 9.7 of the ACC United Constitution, in circumstances where the National Executive considers the interests of the Movement within a State are in serious jeopardy it may intervene so as to replace the role of the State Executive in all respects for such period as it determines.

In the statements which follow, references to "we" and "our" are references to the ACC National Executive, the ACC State Executives, Constituent Churches and Credential Holders.

8 WHAT IS OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Australian Christian Churches and Constituent Churches recognise that Children or Young People under the age of 18 years need special care and protection.

ACC makes the following commitments to the Children or Young People and families who access its activities, programs, services and facilities.

Our commitment to Children or Young People
- We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all Children or Young People who access any of our activities, programs, services or facilities.
- We are committed to providing Children or Young People with positive and nurturing experiences.
- We will support families and communities to promote Children or Young People's healthy development and wellbeing.
- We will take action to ensure that Children or Young People are protected from harm by identifying and addressing risk factors as soon as practicable.
- We will take action to ensure that Children or Young People are not harmed during the time that they are involved with any of our activities, programs, services or facilities.
- We will ensure that Children or Young People have access to adequate support to promote safety and intervene early.

We will listen to Children or Young People and appropriately address any concerns that they raise with us in the least intrusive way possible that is consistent with the paramount concern to protect the Child or Young Person from harm and promote the Child or Young Person's development.

Our commitment to parents and carers
- We are committed to supporting parents and carers to protect their Children or Young People.
- We will offer assistance that builds on a family's strengths, is sensitive to their cultural and religious beliefs and empowers them to meet the changing needs of their Children or Young People.
- We are committed to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their Children or Young People if it is consistent with the paramount concern to protect the Child or Young Person from harm and promote the Child or Young Person's development.
- We aim to be transparent in our decision-making with parents and carers as long as doing so does not compromise the safety of Children or Young people.
- We will seek to involve parents whenever possible and practicable in the decision-making process that impacts on them and the Children or Young People.
- We will provide opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling families of Children or Young People who have experienced abuse and any other family in the community who may indirectly be affected by an incident.

Our commitment to ACC People

In order to fulfill our obligations to the protection of Children or Young People, the ACC National Executive, ACC State Executive and Constituent Churches make the following commitments to ACC People.

- We are committed to providing ACC People with the necessary support to enable them to fulfill their roles.
- We will put in place a management structure that supports and develops ACC People in their roles.
- We are committed to providing ACC People with regular supervision and development.
- We will work to ensure that ACC People have access to a senior person to assist in making decisions in relation to any action required to protect Children or Young People from harm.

Our commitment to ensuring a Child safe organisation

- We are committed to using best practice standards in the recruitment, screening and employment of ACC People.
- We will work to create an environment in which Children or Young People are safe and feel safe.
- We will work to ensure that ACC People do not harm Children or Young People who are involved with our programs, services or facilities.

9 WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF ACC PEOPLE IN RELATION TO PROTECTING CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE?

The following are requirements of this Policy which are to be reflected by the approved Child Protection Practice Guidelines, codes of conduct and operational procedures developed and implemented by the ACC National Executive or Constituent Churches.

We expect ACC People to understand Children or Young People's rights.

Children or Young People have a right to be safe, and this Policy is aimed at ensuring the safety of Children or Young People.

We expect ACC People to understand and acknowledge the significance of family relationships for Children or Young People.

Children or Young People's experience of their family is foundational for their development. Families can act as supportive resources for growth and resilience in Children or Young People. Family relationships can also restrain and harm Children or Young People's social, physical, cognitive and emotional development. Families are the single most significant influence in shaping the way Children or Young People develop and perceive their sense of identity. We expect ACC People to recognise, respect and work to strengthen the capacities of parents/carers and other family members to care and protect their Children or Young People.

We expect ACC People to make available information about this Policy to Children or Young People and parents/carers. The information will be made available in developmentally appropriate language and translated to accommodate the main communities that access our services.

We expect ACC People to put the rights of a Child or Young Person to the protection from harm ahead of any cultural and religious practices of families who come to our Churches.

No cultural or religious belief will take precedence over the right of Children or Young People to protection from harm.

We expect ACC People to understand and respond to the special needs of Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities.

We acknowledge that Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities have special needs. We expect ACC People to act in ways that communicate effectively with and are supportive of Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities. We also understand that we will need to be proactive in recognising the additional vulnerability to harm that Children or Young People with developmental delays or disabilities experience.

We expect ACC People to be respectful of Children or Young People.

As part of our commitment to Children or Young People, we will facilitate opportunities for Children or Young People to tell us their views and feedback about the services we provide to them. We will treat Children or Young People as individuals and respect their unique abilities and vulnerabilities. We expect ACC People to express attitudes and engage in behaviour that respect and support Children or Young People.

We expect ACC People to act on any concerns raised by Children or Young People and/or their parents/carers.

We will take seriously any concerns or issues raised by Children or Young People and/or their parents. We will investigate all complaints or allegations made against any of ACC People. We will ensure that we promptly report any suspected, alleged or reported crimes against Children or Young People or other family members to the police or other authorised body in accordance with the policies and operational procedures of the ACC at a local level. We expect ACC People to follow our complaints procedure without hesitation in response to concerns raised by Children or Young People and/or their parents/carers.

We expect ACC People to understand the definitions, indicators and impact of harm on Children or Young People.

Experiences of harm are significant sources of trauma for Children or Young People and intensify the risk of Children or Young People developing a range of emotional, psychological, social and behavioural problems. Child physical abuse and sexual abuse is a crime. Intervention which identifies and prevents abuse from occurring is instrumental in supporting Children or Young People and families. When abuse has occurred, it is imperative that action is taken to protect Children or Young People from further experiences of abuse. Where there is a risk of harm, it is also imperative that action is taken to protect the Child or Young Person from that risk eventuating. We expect ACC People to know how to define harm, be aware of its indicators and understand its consequences. The more informed we are, the more effective we will be in our efforts to protect Children or Young People from all forms of harm.

We expect ACC People to know and follow regulations in relation to the care of Children or Young People.

There are number of regulations governing the provision of Child care. These regulations

define our minimum responsibilities and obligations towards Children or Young People and families. We expect all ACC People to know and follow these regulations. It is the responsibility of the managers of our Child care services to ensure that the regulations are adhered to by all ACC People under their supervision.

We expect ACC People to know and follow the law in relation to reporting harm.
We expect ACC People to know and follow relevant laws in their state jurisdiction as set out in a relevant State Child protection policy by making an appropriate report to the relevant government department in respect of actual harm to a Child or Young Person or a risk of harm to a Child or Young Person. Notwithstanding our obligations under the law, we expect ACC People to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing or safety of a Child or Young Person. For the avoidance of doubt, when there is no mandatory reporting obligation at law, nevertheless we require a report to be made to the relevant government agency and/or law enforcement body.

We expect ACC People to co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations.
In every circumstance, we expect ACC People to co-operate to the best of their ability with any formal investigation undertaken by the ACC (National or State Executives), police or other authorised body in relation to the care and protection of Children or Young People.

We expect ACC People to use the policies and operational procedures defined at the local level whenever they have a concern that a Child or Young Person may be experiencing harm.
The State Child protection policies have been designed to facilitate decision making in relation to the protection of Children or Young People. At all times, we expect ACC People to have a comprehensive understanding of the contents of this Policy and the relevant policies and abide by them whenever they have concerns about the possibility that a Child or Young Person has experienced or may be at risk of experiencing harm.

We expect ACC People to always follow any Child Protection Practice Guidelines implemented by the ACC or Constituent Church that has engaged or employed them.
Where Child Protection Practice Guidelines have been promulgated ACC and Constituent Churches ACC People will be asked to personally endorse these Guidelines and ensure that they adhere to it when they are at work and away from work. These guidelines will aim to ensure that ACC People are always safe adults who act protectively of Children or Young People.

We expect ACC People not to contravene any policies, regulations or laws in relation to the safety and protection of Children or Young People.
It is a serious breach of this Policy, and possibly the law, if any ACC People contravene any regulations or laws in relation to the safety and protection of Children whether or not they are working, volunteering or participating in a Church related activity, service or program at the time. Breaches of this Policy include, but are not limited to, ACC People who:
- sexually abuse Children or Young people;

- physically abuse Children or Young People;
- abduct Children or Young People;
- verbally abuse or bully Children or Young People;
- emotionally abuse Children or Young People;
- groom Children or Young People;
- take, reproduce and/or distribute photos or videos of Children or Young People without the consent of their parents or guardians (unless the Child or Young Person is of a sufficient age and maturity to give informed consent freely and voluntarily – this should be the exception rather than the rule);
- publish any material containing images of Children or Young People who are involved in one of our activities, services or programs that can be used for the sexual gratification of others;
- access, download, store or distribute any form of Child pornography;
- condone or encourage, in any way, the harm (whatever the kind) to Children or Young People;
- fail to take appropriate action in response to a complaint, risk, or suspicion of harm.

We expect that ACC People will support Children or Young People and their families as directed by senior ACC People in the event that a Child or Young Person is harmed by any ACC People.

We recognise that the impact of any form of harm on Children or Young People and their families is traumatic. It is even more complex when the perpetrator of the harm is within ACC. In these situations, we will provide opportunities for appropriate debriefing and/or counselling to the Children or Young People and their families who have experienced the harm and any other Child or Young Person and family in the community who may indirectly be affected by the incident(s).

10   WHAT SUPPORT WILL WE PROVIDE ACC PEOPLE?

In this section the intention is that the support envisaged will be primarily delivered by the local church followed by the relevant ACC state or territory entity.

We will ensure that ACC People receive training about this Policy.

On a regular basis, we will ensure that all ACC People are provided with training to understand and recommit to this Policy and the approved Child Protection Practice Guideline (or an alternative guideline as described at **7**). Such training will also form part of any induction we provide to ACC People.

We will make opportunities available to the ACC People to allow them to feel clear about what is expected of them in relation to Children or Young People's welfare and safety.

We will provide regular opportunities to clarify and confirm the procedures for staff to apply when taking action in relation to Children or Young People's welfare and safety. This will include a discussion of this Policy as a standing item for regular meetings at all levels of ACC National Executive and Constituent Churches. The National Executive will publish an annual report to all ACC People about the effectiveness of the implementation of this Policy across

the ACC.

We will ensure that ACC People are aware of the formal recruitment, screening and employment practices of the ACC in relation to individuals with specific roles in working or volunteering with Children or Young People and families.

All ACC People will be informed during their recruitment that their employment or volunteer services will be subject to clearance under the Working with Children Check system (or equivalent checks under other state legislation). It is a serious breach of this Policy if an individual, who has convictions that would make him/her ineligible to be granted a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance, gains employment or is allowed to volunteer with Children or Young People who access our services. It is also a serious breach of this Policy, if an individual continues in his/her employment or volunteer role with us if he/she has been charged or convicted of a crime that would make him/her ineligible to be granted a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance. ACC People who have been charged or convicted of a crime that would make him/her ineligible to be granted a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance have an ongoing obligation to inform the Constituent Church of this matter and the Constituent Church will deal appropriately with this by removing the person from employment or volunteering service.

We will provide ACC People with guidance in relation to their role with Children or Young People and families.

We recognise that caring for and working with Children or Young People and their families can be complex and challenging. As such, we will provide guidance for ACC People in relation to their specific roles with Children or Young People and families.

We will provide opportunities for ACC People to receive debriefing in the event that it is required.

We recognise that responding to Children or Young People who are at risk of or have experienced harm can be stressful. It is even more complex when the perpetrator of the harm is another staff member or volunteer of the ACC or Constituent Churches. In these situations, we will provide opportunities for formal debriefing and/or counselling to ACC People as required.

REFERENCE GUIDE

The following reports, policy documents, handbooks and websites were used in the writing of this manual and are a good list of resources:

ACT Government Justice and Community Safety website: www.ors.act.gov.au

ACT Government Department of Education, Youth and Family Services, Reporting Child Abuse: Keeping Children And Young People Safe (Canberra: ACT Government Publishing Services, 2003)

Australian Government - Office of the Australian Information Commissioner - Privacy Act 2001 - website www.oaic.gov.au

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Disclaimer: Websites checked as of 16-08-2013

61