Heritage
CHRISTIAN CENTRE

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Policy reflects the moral and ethical standards of the Movement pursuant to Article 16.1 of the United Constitution and forms part of the ACC Safer Churches Strategy for the protection of all people in our churches and is outworked through the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines, Structure, Training, and Implementation Kit.

It is a requirement of the ACC National and State Executives to adopt the ACC Child Protection Policy. ACC Constituent Churches are required to adopt this Policy and the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines (found in document SC011) or use these as a minimum standard.

The structure of the ACC Safer Churches Strategy is found in the Implementation Kit (document SC002).

All ACC Safer Churches documentation, including definitions of relevant terminology used in this Policy and applicable legislation, can be accessed via the ACC website www.acc.org.au

2. PURPOSE OF OUR CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This policy:

2.1 Guides our work in establishing and maintaining safe environments for Children and Young People,

2.2 Underpins our biblical mandate to: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself;

2.3 Ensures that all workers (paid and volunteer) associated with our church fulfil their pastoral, and organisational responsibilities with regard to child protection; and

2.4 Ensures compliance with legislation, and also with the intention of the legislation (including but not limited to the 10 National Child Safe Principles, child protection, work health and safety and the governance standards of the ACNC), as it relates to protecting Children and Young people (see document SC003).

3. SCOPE

The ACC Child Protection Policy covers all ACC People with a role that includes all state and territory legislated definitions for working with children and those under the definitions of state and territory reportable conduct schemes, and those 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).

4. POLICY STATEMENTS

ACC People commit to, according to their role or position (as described in section 5):

4.1 Upholding this policy, applicable state or territory Child Safety and other relevant legislation (see document SC003), and to implementing the related ACC Safer Churches Guidelines (as a minimum standard);

4.2 Providing for and promoting the care, protection, and wellbeing of Children and 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 and Young People to realise their full potential;

4.3 Recognising and responding to the diverse needs of all Children and Young People, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and also the safety of Children and Young People with a disability as relevant in the local church setting;

4.4 Providing for and promoting the provision of services that foster the health, developmental needs, spirituality, self-respect, and dignity of Children and Young People including by ensuring that persons who have a Direct Role with Children and Young People within the movement are appropriately selected, screened, trained, supervised and performing their responsibilities, including ongoing education and equipping;

4.5 Promoting 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 including child focused responses to allegations of risk of harm or harm in line with Safer Churches Guideline 8;

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

4.7 Empowering Children and Young People by engaging with Children and Young People and Caregivers in relation to decisions that impact them, including inviting feedback as part of our services;

4.8 Promoting and recognising 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

4.9 Providing for and promoting a Child safe culture in both physical and online settings 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;

4.10 ACC Constituent churches shall regularly review, evaluate and improve child safe procedures and practices; and

4.11 ACC Constituent churches shall ensure that clear policy and procedural documentation is up to date and readily available.

5. It is a serious breach of this policy for any ACC Person in our Movement to contravene this Policy, the related Safer Churches Guidelines (SC011), or any regulation in law, in relation to the safety and protection of Children and Young People.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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.

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.

Entity	**Role/Responsibility**
ACC National Executive	• Promote the ACC commitment to the ACC Child Protection Policy; • Review on a biennial cycle as a minimum, the ACC Child Protection Policy. The National Executive may also review the policy at any time as required 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, including regular (minimum annually) review, evaluation and improvement of child safe procedures and practices; and maintenance of clear policy and procedural documentation that is readily available. • Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children and Young People in support of this Policy. • ACC National Executive (or its delegate). Shall develop and implement corresponding Child Protection Practice Guidelines (known as the 'ACC Safer Churches Guidelines' - SC011) in accordance with the relevant State/Territory legal obligation.
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; • Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children and Young People in support of this Policy; • Adopt the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines (SC011); • Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation, including the appointment and resourcing of a State Safer Churches Officer/s; • Ensure all ACC People understand their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy; • Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of Child protection; and • Proactively share resources and experience in the development of Child safe initiatives as they are identified.

Constituent Churches and Credential Holders	• Adopt the ACC Child Protection Policy (or one that uses the ACC Child Protection Policy as a minimum standard) • Adopt the 'ACC Safer Churches Guidelines' (SC011) (or alternative guideline that is at least consistent with the 'ACC Safer Churches Guidelines'); • Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children and Young People in support of this Policy; • Ensure all ACC People within the respective Constituent Church understand, and adhere to, their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy including the implementation of the Safer Churches Guidelines (SC011) as minimum standards; • Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of Child protection, including regular (minimum annual) review, evaluation and improvement of child safe procedures and practices; and maintenance of clear policy and procedural documentation that is readily available. • ACC People will support Children or Young People and their families in accordance with this Policy and the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines (SC0011) 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). • 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. POLICY APPROVAL AND REVIEW

6.1 This Policy was revised and updated to reflect current legislative requirements in Australia in February 2023 (Version 2023:1).

6.2 It was approved by the National Conference for adoption and implementation in April 2023.

6.3 The Policy and Guidelines will be reviewed, as a minimum, by the National Executive at minimum every 2 years and as often as necessary, in order to remain compliant with new legislation and insurance requirements.

6.4 6.4 ACC Constituent churches shall ensure that they have adopted all changes to the Policy and Guidelines annually.

7. SAFER CHURCHES TERMINOLOGY (AS USED IN THIS POLICY) are found in ACC Safer Churches Implementation Kit document SC001.