



Christian Reformed Church of Sydney

Christian Reformed Church of Sydney (CRCS)

Child Protection Policy Overview

CRCS is a part of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). The CRCA are establishing the Safe Church Unit (SCU). The SCU is committed to providing all CRCA congregations, classes, organisations, and committees with the best possible support, advice and resources in relation to Safe Church matters, including prevention and response to child abuse and adult abuse-related issues.



The SCU Mission Statement seeks to:

- Be a Church Reforming to Reach the Lost for Christ
- Honour God in thought, word and deed
- Minister the Gospel and fellowship together in obedience to Scripture
- Protect and care for the young and the vulnerable in our church
- Care for the victims of abuse and hurt in our community
- Provide a loving Christian witness to those around us
- Comply with the laws of the states and territories where we serve.

Under the banner of the CRCA we will be supported and guided by the SCU. At CRCS we have an extensive Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Procedures. For the full document please check our website or contact the church admin.

Our Commitment to Child Protection

The purpose of our Policy is to guide CRCS in developing a child protective culture. CRCS is committed to welcoming children and their parents or carers and providing a 'child-safe' environment, culture and programs for children and other vulnerable people who attend the services and other programs. We see such a commitment as flowing naturally from our vision and mission to operate according to biblical, Christian principles for living and for

recognising the unique value and potential of every person, regardless of race, age, gender, ability or disability.

All children who come to CRCS have a right to feel and be safe. The welfare of children in our care will be our first priority. The authorised leaders accept the responsibility of providing a safe and friendly environment where children are listened to, feel safe, have fun, accept challenges, learn and grow. This duty of care applies at all times, although when children attend church and remain with their parents, then the parents have the primary duty of care. We recognise the particular need for sensitivity for those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including those with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage.

We take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities and seek to include them and make them feel safe and welcome. Our Policy recognises both Federal and State legislation and commits workers to responsibly and reasonably cooperate with Government departments, law enforcement and child protection agencies. The operational principles of our Code of Conduct support and facilitate the protection of children and young people.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is an act by a person or persons that endangers a child or young person's physical or emotional health or development. In all states and in the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct a child or young person is a person under 18 years of age.

There are different kinds of child abuse including:

- **neglect** (a failure to provide the basic necessities of life, such as love and affection, safety, food, clothing, hygiene, medical care and education),
- **emotional abuse** (depriving a child or young person of love and attention which can include but is not limited to constant criticism, isolation, excessive teasing or terrorising.),
- **physical abuse** (All non-accidental physical injuries. This can include but is not limited to hitting, beating, burning, scalding or shaking, and actions that cause serious pain without any legitimate disciplinary purpose as judged by the standards of the time when the incidents occurred),
- **sexual abuse** (sexual abuse includes involvement in sexual activities with anyone who is older, bigger, in authority or perceived authority or more powerful where a **child or young person** is unable to give informed consent. It also includes sexual activities with a person under 18 years of age (such as another child or sibling) where a **child or young person** is unable to give informed consent. These activities may be initiated by either party.
- **Online sexual exploitation.** Online sexually exploitative abuse of children is growing exponentially in Australia due to the popularity of online activity and in particular, social media use by children. Always report online sexually exploitative abuse of children to police and SCU. For helpful parent and leader resources regarding this visit www.esafety.gov.au

Domestic Violence

Any of the above forms of abuse within the context of a family is considered to be a form of domestic violence. It also includes social isolation and/or financial control or deprivation. Domestic violence can be carried out upon a **child or young person** or they can be a witness to violence. That is, to fall within this provision, the violence does not have to be directed at **the child or young person**.

Listening to Children

In Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, “*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.*”

Following the teaching of Jesus, *listening* to our children (regardless of their age, background or abilities) and helping them *participate* in our Church is something we actively value and live out.

Working with children checks, training and code of conduct

As part of our commitment to being a child-safe organisation, all ministers, elders, staff, ministry leaders and volunteers in any ministry that includes children, are required to apply for a working with children check, undertake regular child-safe training, and sign the CRCS Code of Conduct.

If you would like a full copy of the **CRCS Child Protection Policy**, please see our website.

If you have any questions or concerns please see Elicha Reistma or contact one of our Church Elders. Contact details of our Childsafe Officer and Elders can be found on the last page of our weekly Church bulletin.

May the Lord help us to provide a safe place for all our children and young people that will enable them to grow in their Christian faith.

This version current May 2023
Originally endorsed by CRCS Session
23rd May 2023