



## OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

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**UNITED CONSTITUTION**  
(Incorporating State By-laws)

**ARTICLE 1 THE NAME**

- 1.1** The name of the Movement shall be the AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.
- 1.2** The name of the movement was previously Assemblies of God in Australia.
- 1.3** Only churches, ministries and ministers properly affiliated with the Movement, shall be authorised to use the logo and name of the "Australian Christian Churches".

**ARTICLE 2 DEFINITION**

**2.1 The Movement**

The Movement is the unincorporated association known as "AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES" It is a national association of Pentecostal churches in voluntary cooperation (Cooperative Fellowship), on terms of equality, uniting for evangelism, fellowship, order, discipline and other purposes. Its supreme governing body shall be the National Conference.

In circumstances where it is necessary for any aspects, initiatives or functions of the Movement to be incorporated, the manner and form of such incorporations must conform to the requirements set out in this constitution.

**2.2 Cooperative Fellowship**

"Cooperative Fellowship" describes the principles of relationship that provide cohesion and structure for the Movement. It is relevant to the relationship of individuals to a local church and the relationship of local churches to the Movement.

**2.2.1 Cooperative Fellowship and the Local Church**

The local church is a body of individual believers that come together, in Christian love, to partner in serving God and the community. The individual believers voluntarily work together for the purpose of spreading the Gospel, meeting needs in the community and building up the church. There is a respect and responsiveness to leadership in the church but each individual has an individual responsibility for his/her relationship with God.

**2.2.2 Cooperative Fellowship and the Movement**

The Movement is a conference of local churches that come together, in Christian love, to work cooperatively to attain common objectives (ARTICLE 3). It is acknowledged that the local church is God's chosen means for communicating the Gospel and as such, it is an express purpose of the movement to empower and encourage local churches to fulfil their mandates.

The Movement recognises the autonomy of the local church within the movement but cooperative fellowship places a responsibility on a local church to function consistently with the United Constitution, the State By-Laws and all policies approved by the National Conference of the movement.

### **2.3 National Conference**

The National Conference is the supreme governing body of the Movement and operates according to ARTICLE 5 of this United Constitution.

### **2.4 State Conference**

State Conferences are established under the authority of the national Movement and operate according to the United Constitution and the State By-Laws of the Movement.

**2.4.1** The Movement within the State of Queensland shall be called "Australian Christian Churches Qld".

**2.4.2** The Movement within the State of New South Wales shall be called "Australian Christian Churches NSW".

**2.4.3** The Movement within the State of Victoria shall be called "Australian Christian Churches Vic".

**2.4.4** The Movement within the State of Tasmania shall be called "Australian Christian Churches Tas".

**2.4.5** The Movement within the State of South Australia shall be called "Australian Christian Churches SA".

**2.4.6** The Movement within the State of Western Australia shall be called "Australian Christian Churches WA".

**2.4.7** The Movement within a Territory of Australia may be called either by using an abbreviation of the name of the Territory after "Australian Christian Churches" or not named separately and included within the administration of the State in the discretion of the National Executive from time to time.

### **2.5 Incorporation**

In circumstances where it is considered necessary for any aspects, initiatives or functions of the Movement to be incorporated, the manner and form of such incorporations shall conform to the requirements of ARTICLE 22 of this Constitution.

## **ARTICLE 3 OBJECTIVES**

**3.1** To present the Gospel in a way that is consistent with the doctrines of the Movement as outlined in ARTICLE 4.

**3.2** To encourage integrity and righteous living in its leaders, credentialed ministers and

congregation members.

- 3.3** To plant and sustain churches that provide a safe and nurturing environment in which Christians can grow and others can find faith in Christ.
- 3.4** To engage in Christian action in the relief of human suffering and need by all available means and in development programs appropriate to developing countries and disadvantaged groups.
- 3.5** To train, ordain and send out ministers of the Gospel, missionaries and other ministries, for the work of God in Australia and overseas.
- 3.6** To allow and encourage individuals and churches to fulfil their God given purpose without undue interference or restriction on their activities and ministries.
- 3.7** To establish a code of conduct, policies and standards of behaviour, endorsed by the National Conference, that will be required standards for credential holders and churches.
- 3.8** To establish and maintain such departments and institutions as may be necessary for the fulfilment of the Movement's mission both in Australia and overseas.
- 3.9** To establish corporate entities on the basis set out in ARTICLE 22, under the ultimate control of its elected executives (National and State), to carry out the business of the Movement in an efficient and lawful manner.
- 3.10** To use whatever means are available, whether traditional or electronic, to communicate information to its ministers, constituents and the community at large.
- 3.11** To, either directly in its own right where possible or by its corporate entities, own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, lease or otherwise dispose of such property, real or otherwise or engage in any lawful activity whatever, as may be considered necessary to fulfil the objectives of the Movement.

## **ARTICLE 4 DOCTRINAL BASIS**

### **Preamble**

The Holy Scriptures, known as the Bible, is the inspired Word of God and our all sufficient rule for faith and practice.

These articles of faith of the Australian Christian Churches, grounded in these scriptures, are given as a basis for belief, fellowship and ministry "that we all preach the same thing" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Let it be remembered, however, that this is not given as a summary of the complete revelation of biblical truth, only that it covers our present needs as to these fundamental doctrines.



#### **4.1 The Eternal Godhead**

We believe in the unity of the true and living God who is the eternal, self-existent one, who has revealed himself as one being in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who is the Creator and preserver of things visible and invisible (Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 86:9-10; Isaiah 43:10-11; Matthew 28:19, Mark 12:29; John 1:1-3).

#### **4.2 The Lord Jesus Christ**

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the triune Godhead, who was and is the eternal Son of God; that he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary.

We believe in his sinless life, miraculous ministry, substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, glorious ascension, and abiding intercession (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 24:39; Acts 1:9; 2:22; 10:38; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:8-10; Hebrews 7:25-26; 9:12; 1 Peter 2:22).

#### **4.3 The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune Godhead, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is ever present and active in the work of convicting and regenerating the sinner, and sanctifying and guiding the believer into all truth (John 14:26; 16:8-11; Romans 8:14; 1 Peter 1:2).

#### **4.4 The Holy Scriptures**

We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, namely the Old and New Testaments in their original writings. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is infallible, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us all in all things necessary to our salvation, and is absolutely supreme and sufficient in authority in all matters of faith and conduct. The Bible does not simply contain the Word of God, but is, in reality, the complete revelation and very Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith (Matthew 5:17-18; 24:35; John 4:39; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

#### **4.5 The Devil**

We believe in the personality of the devil, who, by his influence, brought about the downfall of man, and now seeks to destroy the faith of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:1-15; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; John 13:2; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8).

#### **4.6 The Fall of Man**

We believe that man was created by God by specific immediate act and in his image and likeness, morally upright and perfect, but fell by voluntary transgression.

Consequently, all men are separated from original righteousness, being depraved and without spiritual life (Genesis 1:26-31; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-21).

#### **4.7 The Atonement**

We believe that God's answer to man's sinful state is in the death of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross, whose sufferings and shed blood have made full atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and that there is no other ground for salvation (2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:25-26; 1 Peter 1:19-20).

#### **4.8 Salvation of Man**

We believe that salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This experience is also known as the new birth and is an instantaneous and complete operation of the Holy Spirit whereby the believing sinner is regenerated, justified, and adopted into the family of God and becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus and heir of eternal life (Titus 2:11; 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 5:1).

#### **4.9 The Church**

We believe that the church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfilment of its great commission. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:22; Hebrews 12:23).

#### **4.10 Water Baptism**

We believe that baptism, by single immersion, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is enjoined on all who have repented and have believed in Christ as Saviour and Lord, and that it is symbolic of our identification with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47-48; 2:38-39; Romans 6:4-5; Colossians 2:12).

#### **4.11 The Lord's Supper**

We believe that the Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4); a memorial of his sufferings and death (1 Corinthians 11:26); and a prophecy of his second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26), and is enjoined on all believers "until He comes" (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:15-20; Acts 20:7).

#### **4.12 Sanctification**

We believe that sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God. We believe it is the glorious provision for every believer in Christ to be made pure in heart and wholly sanctified, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, by the blood of Jesus and the Word of God (John 17:15-19; Acts 15:8-9; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23-24; Hebrews 2:11; 10:16-19).

#### **4.13 The Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

We believe that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the bestowing of the believer with power to be an effective witness for Christ. This experience is distinct from, and subsequent to, the new birth; is received by faith, and is accompanied by the manifestation of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, as the initial evidence (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4; 8:15-19; 11:14-17; 19:1-7).

#### **4.14 Gifts**

We believe in the present day operation of the nine supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. We also believe in the ministry gifts of Christ, as recorded in Ephesians 4:11-13.

#### **4.15 Divine Healing**

In accordance with the teachings of the scriptures, we trust our heavenly Father to protect and heal our bodies from sickness and disease. We believe that divine healing for the body, as with all redemptive blessings of God, has been provided for us by the atoning death and victorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the privilege of all believers and it is appropriated by faith in our heavenly Father's unfailing promises (Exodus 15:26; Psalms 103:3; Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:16-17; Mark 16:17-18; 1 Peter 2:24; James 5:14-15).

#### **4.16 The Second Coming of Christ**

We believe in the premillennial, imminent and personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ to gather his people to himself. Having this glorious hope and earnest expectation, we purify ourselves, even as he is pure, so that we may be ready to meet him when he comes. (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Titus 2:13; James 5:7-8; 1 John 2:28; 3:2-3).

#### **4.17 The Millennium**

We believe in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up his millennial reign on this earth (Psalm 11; 96:10-13; Daniel 7.22; Zechariah 14:5; Revelation 5:9-10; 20:1-10).

#### **4.18 The Punishment of the Wicked**

We believe in the everlasting punishment of the wicked (in the sense of eternal torment) who wilfully reject and despise the love of God manifested in the great sacrifice of his only Son on the cross for their salvation (Matthew 25:46; 13:49-50; Luke 12:47-48; Romans 6:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 20:11-15).

We believe that the devil and his angels and whoever is not found written in the book of life shall be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Revelation 19:20; 20:10-15).

#### **4.19 The New Heavens and the New Earth**

"We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation chapters 21-22).

#### **4.20 Creation**

We believe that the heavens and earth and all original life forms, including humanity, were made by the specific immediate creative acts of God as described in the account of origins presented in Genesis, and that all biological changes which have occurred since creation are limited to variation within each species.

## **ARTICLE 5 THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES**

### **5.1 Purpose**

It shall be the function of the National Conference as the supreme governing body:

- 5.1.1** To promote possibilities for fellowship between local churches.
- 5.1.2** To make whatever decisions may be necessary in the interests of the Movement.
- 5.1.3** To carry out elections to office in accordance with this United Constitution and to appoint committees for special work as occasion may arise.
- 5.1.4** To receive and consider reports from the states, departments, officers and committees and, where appropriate, make any decisions or recommendations arising there from.
- 5.1.5** To consider and decide on any constitutional matter that may arise.

### **5.2 Constituents**

The voting constituents of the National Conference of the Movement shall be:

- 5.2.1** Those churches which at the date of adopting this constitution hold a current Certificate of Fellowship.
- 5.2.2** Such registered churches as shall thereafter be received into the Movement by the granting of a Certificate of Fellowship.
- 5.2.3** Those individuals who hold a current Ordained Minister's Credential at the time of commencement of a National Conference.
- 5.2.4** Churches will cease to be voting constituents of the National Conference of the Movement at such a time as they no longer hold a current Certificate of Fellowship, and individuals will cease to be a voting constituent when, and from the time, an Ordained Minister's Credential is withdrawn.
- 5.2.5** Pastors and churches must be up to date with their National dues to be a voting constituent at the National Conference.

### **5.3 Sessions**

The National Conference shall be held biennially, at a time and place determined by the National Executive or by a sitting of the National Conference.

### **5.4 Notice**

The National Secretary shall send to all voting constituents, a notice in writing of the Conference, not later than four months before the commencement of conference. All remits from voting constituents, which must be in the form of a resolution, shall be in the hands of the National Secretary three months prior to the commencement of conference.

If a voting constituent wishes to submit a remit to National Conference it must first be submitted for discussion at Regional level and receive endorsement by the regional leadership body. If the Regional leadership endorses the remit, it may then be forwarded to the appropriate State Executive. In states where there are no regions, the remit may be sent directly to the State Executive.

If the State Executive endorses the remit, it must then be forwarded to the National Secretary for inclusion on the agenda for the National Conference. If the State Executive fails to endorse a remit, the Region has the right to appeal to the next State Conference. If the State Conference endorses the remit it must then be forwarded to the National Secretary for inclusion on the agenda for the National Conference.

If a remit fails to pass at a Regional or State level, there is no further right of appeal. Remits may be submitted direct to the National Secretary by State Conferences, State Executives and the National Executive. All remits shall be notified to registered churches and ministers holding a current Ordained Minister's Credential six weeks prior to the commencement of conference as part of a provisional agenda.

## **5.5 Voting at National Conference**

**5.5.1** All registered churches that hold a current Certificate of Fellowship and are in financial standing, may be represented by one delegate for every two hundred and fifty (250) adults in regular attendance (18 years and over) or part thereof and each such delegate shall be entitled to one vote.

**5.5.2** Every ordained minister is entitled to one vote.

**5.5.3** In the event that the name of a church delegate is not received by the National Secretary, twenty-one days prior to the commencement of the National Conference, the National Executive may, in its absolute discretion, veto such delegate's voting power in which case the delegate shall have no voting rights but may attend as an observer.

## **5.6 Special Conference**

Special conferences may be called by the National Executive at its discretion, or at the request of two or more of the State Executives. A written notification of the Conference setting forth the reasons for the special conference shall be distributed to the State Secretaries, churches and those holding Ordained Minister's Credentials, not less than three weeks prior to the commencement of the special conference, which shall consider the matters listed on the notice but no other business, except as provided for in ARTICLE 19 of this Constitution.

## **5.7 Chairman**

The National President, or their nominee, and in their absence, the National Vice President, shall preside over all meetings of the National Conference. In the event of the National President and the National Vice President being absent, the National Conference shall be presided over by a member of the National Executive appointed by the National Conference at that meeting.

## **5.8 Business**

- 5.8.1** The National Conference may discuss any business not on the agenda but brought forward by the National Executive. General remits received less than three months prior to conference may be placed on the agenda at the absolute discretion of the National Executive.
- 5.8.2** No remits involving constitutional changes shall be brought before the National Conference unless included on the provisional agenda.
- 5.8.3** The National Executive shall prepare the agenda.
- 5.8.4** The only persons eligible to vote are delegates of Registered Churches and holders of an Ordained Minister's Credential attending in person. No proxy votes are allowed.
- 5.8.5** In the normal course of business all resolutions shall be decided by a show of hands. However, the chairman may require that a secret ballot be taken.
- 5.8.6** All resolutions shall require a 55% majority of the voting constituents present at the meeting to be carried except where different percentages are specified in this constitution.
- 5.8.7** Quorum: Provided that notice has been given, consistent with ARTICLE 5.4, the voting constituents present at a conference business session shall constitute a quorum. To be clear, there is no minimum number of voting constituents whose presence is necessary to validate the transactions of the National Conference.

## **ARTICLE 6 NATIONAL OFFICERS**

- 6.1** The officers shall consist of the National President, National Vice President(s), National Secretary, National Treasurer or National Secretary/Treasurer, together with such other officers as shall be appointed from time to time.
- 6.2** The National President and National Vice President(s) shall only be chosen from the ordained ministers, and shall be persons of mature experience and ability, who shall have been ordained for at least five years.
- 6.3** The National Secretary and the National Treasurer or National Secretary/Treasurer may be chosen from the ordained ministers or from individuals in fellowship and good standing with any church forming part of the Movement and shall be of mature experience and ability. If the National Secretary and/or National Treasurer are not holders of an Ordained Minister's Credential, they shall be ex officio members of the National Executive without voting rights.
- 6.4** The National Secretary, National Treasurer or National Secretary/Treasurer shall be ex officio delegates to National Conferences with full voting rights provided they have no vote by virtue of ARTICLE 5.5.2 of this United Constitution.
- 6.5** The roles and job descriptions of the National Officers shall be set and modified by the National Executive.

## **ARTICLE 7    NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

### **7.1        Membership**

Each biennial National Conference shall elect a National Executive. The National Executive shall consist of nine members and shall include the National President, National Vice President(s), National Secretary, National Treasurer or National Secretary/Treasurer. Persons nominated for the National Executive shall have been ordained for at least four years except a National Secretary and a National Treasurer or a National Secretary/Treasurer, who is not the holder of an Ordained Minister's Credential. In special circumstances, the National Executive may waive the four year requirement.

Note: As per ARTICLE 6.2, the National President and National Vice President(s) shall have been ordained for at least five years.

### **7.2        Term of Office**

With the exception of the National President and full time office bearers, whose initial term shall be a period of four years, the term of office shall be from the conclusion of the National Conference at which elected, until the conclusion of the National Conference next following.

### **7.3        Vacancies**

In the event of a vacancy or vacancies occurring on the National Executive, the same shall be filled by the National Executive from those who have been ordained for at least four years. In the event of any member being incapacitated through illness or any other cause, the National Executive may likewise appoint any other eligible person to act in place of that member so incapacitated.

### **7.4        Meetings**

The National Executive shall meet at such times and places as it may, from time to time, decide. Meetings shall be convened by the National Secretary, at the request of the National President or at the request of a simple majority of the National Executive. All members of the National Executive shall be entitled to receive notice of meeting. The National Executive may resolve from time to time the manner and form of such notice and a minute of its meeting to the effect will be conclusive evidence as to the form of notice required.

### **7.5        Quorum**

The quorum necessary for the transaction of the business of the National Executive shall be a majority or such greater numbers as it shall fix from time to time.

## **7.6 Technology Meetings**

For meetings other than those held in person after written notice, a majority of the National Executive shall be deemed to hold or be present at a meeting when they communicate through a telephone conference call, video or other electronic conference method in circumstances where each of them can simultaneously hear what is said by and can speak to the other members. Such a meeting shall be deemed to be held at the place where the chairperson was present during the meeting. A resolution passed at a meeting under this sub-clause must be ratified at the next National Executive meeting where notice has been given to all members.

If a majority of the National Executive shall have advised the National Secretary in writing by fax or email that they are in favour of a resolution in particular terms such resolution shall be deemed to be passed at a meeting of the National Executive provided it shall be ratified at the next National Executive meeting where notice has been given to all members.

## **7.7 Powers and Duties**

Between biennial National Conferences, the National Executive is authorised to provide leadership and act in all matters that affect the Movement, at their discretion. All decisions of the National Executive must be in harmony with the provisions of this United Constitution and any decisions of the National Biennial Conference.

## **7.8 Nominations**

**7.8.1** Nominations for the National Executive, may be made by National and State Executives, State Conferences or voting constituents.

**7.8.2** Nominations must be received, in writing, by the National Secretary, not less than two months prior to the commencement of the National Conference, which nominations shall be assented to, in writing, by the nominee. In the event that the number of nominations is less than the number of positions or offices to be filled, the National Executive shall make nominations up to the number required. Not less than six weeks prior to the commencement of the National Conference, the National Secretary shall advise all voting constituents of the nominations.

**7.8.3** The National Executive shall recommend to the National Conference, one or more of the persons nominated for the offices of National Secretary, and National Treasurer or National Secretary/Treasurer, but all nominations shall be presented to the National Conference.

**7.8.4** Nominees do not have to be present at the National Conference to be eligible for election.

## **7.9 Election Procedure**

**7.9.1** All elections shall be made by secret ballot. A separate ballot shall be held for each of the following:

- National President;
- National Vice President;
- National Secretary or National Secretary/Treasurer;



- National Treasurer (if required);
- Members of the National Executive other than National Officers.

**7.9.2** The first office to be filled shall be that of the National President. The offices of the National Vice President(s), National Secretary or National Secretary/Treasurer shall then be successively filled, and then the ordinary members of the National Executive.

**7.9.3** When the nominee for National Treasurer is a holder of an Ordained Minister's Certificate and is being considered for executive office, his election shall take place immediately following that of National Secretary.

**7.9.4** All candidates must achieve at least a simple majority of votes cast to be declared as elected.

**7.9.5** In ballots for National Officers, the candidate with the highest number of votes over a simple majority shall be declared as elected.

**7.9.6** If no candidate, in the election for a National Officer, obtains a simple majority in the first ballot, a second ballot shall be held. Only the two candidates who achieved the highest and second highest number of votes in the first ballot shall be included in the second ballot.

**7.9.7** In ballots for election of members of the National Executive other than office holders, all candidates achieving a simple majority, at least, up to the number of positions to be filled, shall be declared as elected in the order corresponding to the number of votes achieved by each candidate from the highest to the lowest.

**7.9.8** If all vacancies for members of the National Executive other than office holders have not been filled following the results of the first ballot, a second ballot shall be held. The number of candidates in the second ballot shall be the number of remaining vacancies plus one. The candidates in the second ballot shall be chosen in the order corresponding to the number of votes achieved by each candidate in the first ballot from the highest to the lowest.

**7.9.9** In the event of a tied vote between candidates for any vacancy, a further ballot shall be held, between the candidates with the tied vote, to fill the vacancy.

## **ARTICLE 8    AUDIT**

The National Executive shall ensure that a proper audit of all books and accounts administered by the National Secretary/Treasurer or National Treasurer is carried out, for presentation to the membership of the appropriate corporate entities. It shall also ensure that a summary report be prepared, together with covering letter from the Auditor, for presentation to the National Conference.

## **ARTICLE 9    STATE CONFERENCES AND BY-LAWS**

**9.1** Whilst the Movement is a national movement, it recognises the necessity of administration of some matters at a state level.

- 9.2** Each state shall have its own Conference, State Executive and executive officers, consistent with the provisions of this constitution and the State By-Laws. The roles and job descriptions of the State Officers shall be set by the State Executive.
- 9.3** A conference shall be held in each state biennially, at a time and place to be fixed by the State Executive or by the sitting conference, to consider matters affecting the state. A conference may also be held at any time and place deemed necessary by the State Executive.
- 9.4** The administration of state matters not affecting the national Movement shall be vested in the State Executive between State Conferences.
- 9.5** All State Conference and Executive decisions are required to conform with the decisions of the National Conference and the National Executive.
- 9.6** In the event of a State being unable to appoint suitably qualified officers or executive members, the National Executive may appoint persons to fill the vacancies, at its sole discretion, until the next State Conference.
- 9.7** A State Executive may, by resolution, invite the National Executive to intervene in the management and affairs of that state for such period as it determines or until the next State Conference whichever is earlier. For the term of such intervention the National Executive shall replace the role of the State Executive or make additions to the State Executive, to represent the National Executive, with full voting powers.

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 or until the next State Conference whichever is earlier. In these circumstances the role of the State Executive is terminated upon written notification by the National Secretary that the National Executive has intervened under the provisions of this clause.

- 9.8** In the event of the National Executive replacing the role of the State Executive, a Special Conference, for the state, must be held within two months of the intervention. The special conference shall be informed of the reason for the replacement of the State Executive and determine the timing of the election of a new State Executive.

## **ARTICLE 10 MINISTRY**

- 10.1** The Movement acknowledges that the church, both local and universal, has been endowed with Ministry Gifts as outlined in Ephesians 4:11-12.
- 10.2** Accepting that the Call of God, Ministry Gifts and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit have been bestowed on men and women without respect of gender, the Movement acknowledges the right and privilege of men and women to have their ministries recognised.

- 10.3** The Movement recognises ministries, by the granting of the appropriate certificates as set out in ARTICLE 11 of this Constitution. The movement may grant an OMC or a PMC to individuals who reside outside Australia subject to the provisions of this constitution.

## **ARTICLE 11 CREDENTIALS**

### **11.1 Certificates**

The Movement recognises four certificates with respect to ministry, namely:

- Ordained Minister's Credential (OMC)
- Provisional Minister's Credential (PMC)
- Specialised Ministry Certificate (SMC)
- Overseas Associate Minister's Certificate (OAMC)

### **11.2 Qualifications and Requirements of all Credential and Certificate Holders**

- 11.2.1** To be a person of God in good standing with those within the church and of good report by those outside the church.
- 11.2.2** To have demonstrated the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9 for a leader in the church and have been baptised in the Holy Spirit, as described in ARTICLE 4 of the United Constitution.
- 11.2.3** To have undertaken a recognised Bible study course and/or given evidence to the interviewing committee that he/she is equipped by private reading and study to fulfill the relevant ministry.
- 11.2.4** To be acquainted with, accept and adopt the United Constitution, structure, policies and administration of the Movement.
- 11.2.5** To be living consistent with the Code of Conduct and other policies of the Movement.
- 11.2.6** To be regularly attending a church that holds a Certificate of Fellowship or a Provisional Certificate of Fellowship. This will not apply to credential holders resident overseas but the National Executive may require overseas resident credential holders to demonstrate that they are involved in appropriate church fellowship to the extent considered reasonable by the National Executive.
- 11.2.7** To complete professional development as required by the National and State Executive.
- 11.2.8** To be prepared to sign, as required, a declaration in relation to moral standing, compliance with legal requirements and doctrinal consistency with the Movement.

### **11.3 Ordained Minister**

#### **11.3.1 Definition**

An "Ordained Minister" is one who is a proven minister as described in Ephesians 4:10-12. An Ordained Minister's Credential will only be granted to a minister who has held a Provisional Minister's Credential for at least two

years. Ministers who have been ordained in another recognised movement may, at the discretion of the State Executive (with appropriate references and endorsement), be recommended for the issuance of an Ordained Minister's Credential.

### **11.3.2 Rights and Responsibilities**

Those holding Ordained Minister's Credentials shall have the right/responsibility to:

- 11.3.2.1** Do all those things which befit one as a minister of the Gospel.
- 11.3.2.2** Attend Regional, State and National Conferences (of which he/she is a member) with full voting rights.
- 11.3.2.3** Be registered to solemnise marriages, except in the case of a credential holder residing outside Australia.
- 11.3.2.4** Pay all National, State and Regional dues, levies and other charges payable.
- 11.3.2.5** Live consistently with the qualifications and requirements as outlined in ARTICLE 11.2 of the United Constitution.

## **11.4 Provisional Minister**

### **11.4.1 Definition**

A "Provisional Minister" is one showing clear signs of a divine call and God-given ability, and an evident purpose to devote his/her life to the preaching of the Gospel.

Recommendations for an Ordained Minister's Credential may be made by a supervising pastor on behalf of those who have satisfactorily completed at least two years as a provisional minister.

### **11.4.2 Rights and Responsibilities**

Those holding a Provisional Minister's Credential shall have the right/responsibility:

- 11.4.2.1** To minister, under supervision, in any area that the Senior Pastor of a local church, or the State Executive deems to be appropriate.
- 11.4.2.2** To attend State and Regional Conferences of the state/region in which he/she resides, with full voting power.
- 11.4.2.3** To attend National Conferences with the courtesy of the floor but without voting rights unless as an official delegate of a registered church.
- 11.4.2.4** To be registered to solemnise marriages only if local circumstances require it (e.g. isolation) and the State Executive authorises it.

**11.4.2.5** Pay all National, State and Regional dues, levies and other charges payable.

**11.4.2.6** Live consistently with the qualifications and requirements as outlined in ARTICLE 11.2 of the United Constitution.

## **11.5 Specialised Ministry**

### **11.5.1 Definition**

A "Specialised Ministry" is one authorised to engage in various types of ministries on a specified basis, in a specific location or field of activity.

There is no articulation from a Specialised Ministry Certificate to Ordination but, if the holder wishes to proceed to a wider sphere of ministry, application may be made for a Provisional Minister's Credential after the satisfactory completion of at least one year as a specialised ministry.

### **11.5.2 Rights and Responsibilities**

Those holding a Specialised Ministry Certificate shall have the right/responsibility:

**11.5.2.1** To be involved in a ministry that requires recognition within a specific church or engage in ministry in a recognised field of ministry.

**11.5.2.2** To attend Regional Conferences of the region in which he/she resides with full voting power and to attend the State Conference in which he/she resides with courtesy of the floor unless as an official delegate of a registered church.

**11.5.2.3** To attend National Conferences with the courtesy of the floor but without voting rights unless as an official delegate of a registered church.

**11.5.2.4** Pay all National, State and Regional dues, levies and other charges payable.

**11.5.2.5** To report to the appropriate State Executive any change of location or ministry. Note: Since the Specialised Ministry Certificate is location and ministry specific, there is no obligation on a State Executive to continue a SMC if location or ministry changes.

**11.5.2.6** Live consistently with the qualifications and requirements as outlined in ARTICLE 11.2 of the United Constitution.

## **11.6 Overseas Associate Minister's Certificate**

### **11.6.1 Definition**

"Overseas Associate Minister" is one who is living and ministering outside of Australia, holds a credential with an accrediting body within their nation of

residence but has, in the opinion of the National Executive, a significant ministry and clear connectedness with the Movement that makes the maintenance of the relationship advantageous. The minister's primary accountability rests with the accrediting body in their nation of residence and an overseas Associate Minister's Certificate will not be issued without the approval of the accrediting body within their nation.

If a minister does not hold a credential in his/her nation of residence and has a close connection with the Movement but does not qualify to hold an OMC according to the guidelines set out in the Overseas Credential Policy (specifically relating to the historical connection), the National Executive may grant him/her and OAMC if it believes there is a compelling reason to do so provided always that the candidate fulfils the qualifications in Article 11.2.

#### **11.6.2 Rights and Responsibilities**

Those holding Overseas Associate Minister's Certificates shall have the right/responsibility to:

**11.6.2.1** Be acknowledged as an associate minister of the Movement.

**11.6.2.2** Transfer directly to an appropriate credential/certificate upon relocation in Australia provided that the credential in the overseas nation is relinquished.

**11.6.2.3** Attend Regional, State and National Conferences with the courtesy of the floor but no voting rights.

**11.6.2.4** Pay all National, State and Regional dues, levies and other charges payable.

**11.6.2.5** Live consistently with the qualifications and requirements as outlined in ARTICLE 11.2 of the United Constitution.

#### **11.7 Issuance and Suspension of Credentials and Certificates**

**11.7.1** All credentials and certificates are issued by the National Executive.

**11.7.2** The National Executive may establish such procedures as it considers just and necessary to investigate any complaint against a credential or certificate holder prior to consideration of such complaint by the National Officers.

**11.7.3** Credentials and certificates may be suspended or withdrawn on the grounds of improper conduct or false teaching by decision of a majority of the National Officers either on their own motion or upon recommendation of a State Executive. The National Executive may appoint other persons in particular cases to comprise a panel to assist the National Officers in the task of deciding whether or not to suspend or withdraw a credential or certificate in such cases.

- 11.7.4** All applications for credentials and certificates shall be made on the application forms and according to the processes prescribed by the National Executive.
- 11.7.5** The administration of the application and processing of credentials and certificates may, at the discretion of the National Executive, be delegated to the states but the responsibility for setting standards and required qualifications shall remain the responsibility of the National Executive. States may not change application procedures and requirements for the holders of these credentials and certificates except on a uniform national basis with the approval of the National Executive.
- 11.7.6** If, in the opinion of the National President, circumstances exist which, in the public interest, justify the suspension of a minister's credential, the National President or delegate appointed for that purpose, may do so, by notice in writing to the Minister, for a period not exceeding sixty days while the matter is being investigated by the State Executive. Where the National Executive is of the opinion that further time is required to fairly and justly investigate the matter, it may extend the period of suspension for further periods not exceeding 60 days each. Before each new suspension period the National Executive must freshly consider all elements of the investigation and the reasons for extension.
- 11.7.7** The National President should be immediately informed of a formal complaint against a credentialed minister that may, in the opinion of the State President, lead to the suspension of the minister's credential or ministry certificate.

## **11.8 Right of Appeal**

All credential/certificate holders who have their credentials or certificates withdrawn shall have right of appeal to the National Executive.

- 11.8.1** The right of appeal to the National Executive shall be granted, provided that written notice of appeal is lodged with the National Secretary, not later than thirty days after notification of the withdrawal of his/her credential or certificate.
- 11.8.2** The right of hearing shall, in such cases, be before the National Executive or any persons they may appoint.
- 11.8.3** The decision of the National Executive shall be final in relation to substantial outcome of, and procedure to be adopted upon, the appeal.

## **11.9 Right of Appeal for National Executive Personnel**

If the credential/certificate holder whose credential/certificate is suspended or withdrawn is a member of the National Executive:

- 11.9.1** The right of appeal shall be to an appeals board, consisting of the State President of each state (or his appointee if the State President is a member of the National Executive)

**11.9.2** The right of appeal to the appeals board shall be granted, provided that written notice of appeal is lodged with the National Secretary, not later than thirty days after notification of the suspension or withdrawal of his/her credential/certificate.

**11.9.3** The decision of the appeals board, in relation to the appeal, shall be final.

#### **11.10 Procedure for Issuance of Credentials and Certificates**

**11.10.1** Ordained Ministers Credentials shall be renewed biennially.

**11.10.2** All other certificates and credentials shall be renewed annually.

**11.10.3** Credentials/certificates, signed by the National President and National Secretary, must be held by all ministers in the Movement.

**11.10.4** Without a credential/certificate, a person cannot be regarded as an active minister.

**11.10.5** State Executives shall review all credentials and certificates as they become due, through the appropriate renewal form and submit the recommended ministerial list to the National Secretary by 31 October or other date specified in writing by the National Secretary.

**11.10.6** Credentials and certificates will not be issued until the appropriate dues have been paid.

#### **11.11 Active Ministry**

"Active ministry" is defined as:

**11.11.1** Ministers having the oversight of an ACC church or holding a state or national ministry/administrative position.

**11.11.2** Those ministering as recognised assistant pastors or assistants to the pastor in an ACC church.

**11.11.3** Recognised itinerant preachers and evangelists or those engaged in a recognised form of ministry activity.

**11.11.4** Recognised pioneer ministers.

#### **11.12 Inactive Ministry**

**11.12.1** An ordained minister, on ceasing to engage in active ministry, shall continue to be recognised as a minister in the Movement, until the expiration of their Ordained Minister's Credential. This is subject to the minister continuing to attend a church with a Certificate of Fellowship or a Provisional Certificate of Fellowship.

**11.12.2** Those who have held an Ordained Minister's Credential which has lapsed and who desire to accept a call to the ministry, shall complete an appropriate application and any other required documentation. They should apply immediately for a reissuance of their credential.

**11.12.3** The reissuance of a credential will only occur following the advice of the appropriate State Executive.



- 11.12.4** Emeritus ministers shall continue to receive their annual Ordained Minister's Credentials whilst they otherwise remain qualified according to this United Constitution.

## **ARTICLE 12 CHURCHES AND SERVICES**

### **12.1 Registered Church**

#### **12.1.1 Definition**

A "Registered Church" shall be defined as a church that holds a current Certificate of Fellowship issued by the Movement.

#### **12.1.2 Certificate of Fellowship**

Certificates of Fellowship shall be issued and may be withdrawn at any time at the discretion of the National Executive. Certificates will only be issued and retained by churches that meet the following requirements:

- 12.1.2.1** For the initial issuance of a Certificate of Fellowship, a church should have at least 50 adults in regular attendance.
- 12.1.2.2** For the renewal of a Certificate of Fellowship, a church should have at least 30 adults in regular attendance.  
Note: The appropriate State Executive may recommend an exception to this requirement in the case of churches in small or isolated rural communities.
- 12.1.2.3** A church must appoint, as its senior pastor, a person holding a current Ministry Credential/Certificate of the Movement. If it wishes to appoint a person not holding a current credential/certificate, it may only do so with the express permission of the appropriate State Executive and only on condition that that person immediately begins the process of applying for an appropriate credential/certificate.
- 12.1.2.4** A church must have an appropriate written constitution consistent with this United Constitution and the State By-Laws. It should also have a functioning board of at least three members, independent of each other, including a Secretary and Treasurer or a Secretary/Treasurer. This administration should have been functioning for at least 12 months prior to the granting of a Certificate of Fellowship.
- 12.1.2.5** Acceptance of the United Constitution, State By-Laws, Code of Conduct and Policies of the Movement and Agreement to function according to them must be included in the church constitution.
- 12.1.2.6** Attendance of appropriate people at required compliance training sessions and a demonstrated cooperation with National, State and Regional Executives.

**12.1.2.7** Payment of all National, State and Regional dues, levies and other charges payable.

**12.1.2.8** Compliance with all applicable Federal, State and Local Government legislation as pertaining to churches and charities.

**12.1.2.9** The church must maintain an appropriate insurance policy including coverage for “public liability” and “officers and directors”.

### **12.1.3 State Executive Intervention**

**12.1.3.1** The appropriate State Executive of the Movement may accept a written and signed invitation to hold a meeting of members, or to assist or advise in the business or affairs of the church, by either the senior minister, or the board, or by a majority of the current membership of the church.

**12.1.3.2** Such meeting shall be chaired by a member of the State or National Executives (or their appointee), appointed by the State Executive who shall set the agenda.

**12.1.3.3** All business conducted shall be in accordance with the constitution of the church, and the State or National Executive official of the Movement may not institute any rule, take any action, or make any decision affecting the church unless such motions are carried by a majority of the members.

## **12.2 Provisional Church**

### **12.2.1 Definition**

A “Provisional Church” shall be defined as a church that is recognised by the appropriate State Executive as working towards becoming a registered church but having not yet fulfilled the requirements of obtaining a Certificate of Fellowship. Such a church shall be under the authority and oversight of the relevant State Executive.

### **12.2.2 Provisional Certificate of Fellowship**

A Provisional Church shall be granted a Provisional Certificate of Fellowship, upon being recognised by its State Executive. The certificate shall be subject to the maintenance of governance and legal requirements deemed appropriate by the State Executive and may be withdrawn at any time on the advice of the State Executive. The certificate shall be subject to review and renewal every two years.

### **12.2.3 State Executive Intervention**

The State Executive shall have the right to give advice and direction as it sees fit and the State Executive should be consulted prior to any major decisions being made by the provisional church.

## **12.3 Satellite or Extension Service**

### **12.3.1 Definition**

A "Satellite or Extension Service" shall be defined as an outreach from a registered church that has a regular and distinct ministry to a community or people group but comes under the authority and control of the registered church. A service catering for a distinct group or ministering in a different location would qualify as a satellite or extension service but multiple services in one location would not qualify.

### **12.3.2 State Executive intervention**

The State may only intervene in Satellite or Extension Services through the registered church as allowed in 12.1.3. The registered church is responsible for compliance with all requirements (including payment of dues) for the Satellite or Extension Service

### **12.3.3 Transition to church status**

In the event that the responsible registered church and its satellite or extension service agree for the satellite or extension service to be separately listed as a church, the State Executive may accept it as a registered or provisional church depending on its meeting the required criteria. If the responsible registered church and the satellite or extension service are in dispute about becoming a separately listed church, the State Executive may intervene and make a determination.

## **ARTICLE 13 NATIONAL DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTRIES**

The National Executive may establish departments and ministries that function at a national level, to facilitate the objectives of the Movement. Such ministries shall have the right to operate under their own constitutions and by-laws, approved by the National Executive. The ministries are subject to the direction of the National Executive and must present a report to the biennial National Conference. The leaders of all national departments and ministries shall be appointed by the National Executive. In the event that a national department is incorporated, the provisions of ARTICLE 22 shall apply.

## **ARTICLE 14 WORLD MISSIONS**

The Movement shall give priority to World Missions. The National Executive shall ensure that structures and initiatives are put in place to facilitate an effective ministry outside of Australia. Where it is deemed advisable to establish corporate entities, to fulfill the purpose of World Missions, the provisions of ARTICLE 22 shall apply.

## **ARTICLE 15    EDUCATION**

The Movement shall give priority to the education of its constituents, particularly in relation to the practical training of prospective ministers for Australia and overseas. To this end, the establishment of institutions at all levels of education shall be encouraged.

Specifically, a National College shall be established, for the training of prospective ministers. The National College shall be authorised to establish such corporate entities that facilitate its educational purposes subject to ARTICLE 22.

## **ARTICLE 16    CODE OF CONDUCT AND OTHER POLICIES**

- 16.1**    The National Conference shall adopt, as policy, a "Code of Conduct" and such other policies that reflect the moral and ethical standards of the Movement.
- 16.2**    All persons who have been issued with a credential or certificate by the Movement are required to adhere to such policies and a failure to do so may be regarded as improper conduct under ARTICLE 11.7.3 of this Constitution and lead to discipline according to ARTICLE 11.7.
- 16.3**    All policies shall be circulated to registered churches and Ordained Ministers for consultation prior to introduction or amendment. They will then be ratified by the National Conference with a vote of at least 65%.

## **ARTICLE 17    PROPERTY**

### **17.1    National Property**

The National Executive will make appropriate provision for the holding of the Movement's properties under their absolute control, on behalf of the Movement. Appropriate provision may include the establishment of trust(s) or the formation of company(ies) as set out in ARTICLE 22.

### **17.2    State & Regional Property**

Each State Executive will make appropriate provision in their absolute discretion for the holding of State and District properties, on behalf of the state Movement.

### **17.3    Local Church Property**

Local church property may be held:

- 17.3.1** In its own name where incorporated; or
- 17.3.2** By the State Executive making provision for the holding of local church properties on behalf of the local church where unincorporated; or
- 17.3.3** By a corporate body controlled by the local church, where unincorporated, upon trusts determined in accordance with the constitution of the local church; or
- 17.3.4** By individuals appointed by the local church in accordance with and upon trusts determined in accordance with its constitution.
- 17.3.5** Local church property means any property held for or controlled by a church that holds a Certificate of Fellowship or Provisional Certificate of Fellowship and any property of an outreach commenced by such a church.

## **ARTICLE 18 INDEMNITY**

### **18.1 Indemnity**

Subject to the terms of this Article 18, the Movement indemnifies:

- (a) any person who holds or who has held any elected or appointed office within the Movement whether or not validly appointed to occupy such a position;
- (b) any executive officers; and
- (c) any employees.

from any loss suffered in respect of any wrongful act asserted against such person while acting in their individual or collective capacities as office bearers within the Movement.

### **18.2 Exclusions**

The Movement will not indemnify any person for any claim arising from or attributable to:

- 18.2.1** A wilful breach of duty, the dishonest, fraudulent or malicious act or omission committed with criminal intent;
- 18.2.2** Sexual abuse claims, which means any actual, alleged or attempted assault or abuse of a sexual nature or any other lewd conduct.

### **18.3 Limits to Indemnity**

**18.3.1** The Movement's liability in respect of this indemnity is limited to the greater of:

- 18.3.1.1** The value of assets held on trust on behalf of the Movement; and
- 18.3.1.2** To the extent the claim made against a person is covered by a policy of insurance, whether or not that policy is held by or for the benefit of the Movement or not, the sum insured under that policy.

**18.3.2** This indemnity is limited to office bearers, officers or employees, of the National Conference.

### **18.4 Advancement of Defence Costs**

The Movement will pay all reasonable defence costs incurred in defending any civil or criminal proceedings commenced in respect of any wrongful act asserted against such a person while acting in their individual or collective capabilities on an on-going basis as they are incurred prior to the final payment or settlement of any claim provided that:

- 18.4.1** Such defence costs are incurred with the written consent of the Movement. Such consent not to be unreasonably withheld; and

- 18.4.2** Such advance payments by the Movement shall be repaid to the Movement in the event that the person is not entitled to payment of any loss under this indemnity."

## **ARTICLE 19 SUSPENSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

To allow members to bring forward business, which is of a special and urgent nature, which is not on the agenda, the requirements of this Constitution, in relation to business, may be suspended without notice by a motion carried by a 65% majority of the delegates present and eligible to vote. On the carrying of such motion, the National Secretary will place the said business on the agenda.

## **ARTICLE 20 INTERPRETATION**

The official interpretation of this Constitution and the State By-Laws, including the substantive meaning of any aspect of the Doctrinal Basis, shall be vested in the National Executive between conferences.

## **ARTICLE 21 AMENDMENTS**

Proposed amendments to this Constitution must be submitted in writing, as a remit under ARTICLES 5.4 and 5.8 to the National Secretary at least three months prior to the date of the ensuing National Conference of the Movement. Such shall be considered carried when carried by a 75% majority of the delegates present and eligible to vote.

The National Executive is empowered to make any spelling and grammatical corrections that make no significant change to the meaning of this constitution. The National Executive is also empowered to make changes to by-laws and policies that are made necessary by constitutional amendments approved by the conferences. Such changes shall be notified to the Movement.

## **ARTICLE 22 MOVEMENT INCORPORATION PROVISIONS**

- 22.1** In circumstances where the National Executive is of the view that it is necessary to legally incorporate any aspects (including State aspects), initiatives or functions of the Movement, it may approve such incorporation provided the following principles are adopted.
- 22.2** Except in circumstances where the National Executive deems it to be otherwise necessary, the constituent documentation of such incorporated bodies must provide:
- 22.2.1** Acceptance of the Doctrinal Basis set out in Article 4 of this constitution;
  - 22.2.2** The voting constituency must consist of either the National Company or the individual members of the National Executive and State Executives where it is not possible for the National Fellowship Company to do so because of legal requirements of the jurisdiction where the incorporated body is to be formed and;
  - 22.2.3** The controlling directorship or committee must only be eligible for election or re-election with the prior written approval of the National President or National Secretary except for State Companies where the board must be

comprised by the State Executive elected in accordance with State Bylaws adopted by the National Conference and;

**22.2.4** Annual financial reports be provided to the National Treasurer without demand.

**22.3** The term "National Company" means any corporate body so designated by the National Executive from time to time.

**22.4** The term "State Company" means a body incorporated within a state or territory of Australia where it is necessary to do so.

## **ARTICLE 23 NON-PROFIT**

The income and property of the Movement however derived shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Movement as set out in this United Constitution. No portion thereof shall be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit, to individual persons who, at any time are or have been associated with the Movement, or to any person claiming through any of them provided that nothing herein shall prevent the payment in good faith or remuneration to any officers or servants of the Fellowship or other person in return for services actually rendered to the Movement or for goods supplied in the ordinary way of business (but not for services rendered as an office bearer) nor prevent the payment of interest on borrowed money, the maximum rate of interest to be not more than the current rate charged by Banks in Australia similar circumstances or the payment of rent for premises or goods let or hired to the Movement.

## **ARTICLE 24 DISSOLUTION**

If the Movement should be dissolved and there be any property or assets after satisfaction of its liabilities, the same shall not be paid to or distributed among individuals associated with the Movement, but shall be paid forthwith, without demand to such other organisation with similar objects as the voting constituents present at the meeting of the National Conference to dissolve the Movement shall determine or in default thereof as determined by the Supreme Court of a State provided always that such payment or distribution shall only be made to such other organisation that is not carried on for the purposes of profit and gain to its individual members and where that entity is able, at the time of such payment or distribution, to satisfy the Movement that it holds endorsement from the Australian Taxation Office as a tax concession charity or other such qualification required under Australian law that results in the entity being exempt from income tax.

## **STATE BY-LAWS**

### **ARTICLE 1 DEFINITION**

AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES is a National Movement, governed according to its United Constitution. State Conferences are established according to Article 2.4 and Article 9 of the National Constitution and are under the authority of the National Conference of Australian Christian Churches.

### **ARTICLE 2 CORPORATE ENTITY**

State Conferences shall have the right to establish corporate entities for the purpose of holding property, conducting business and undertaking financial transactions on behalf of the State Conference. The corporate entity shall be established consistent with ARTICLE 12 of these By-Laws.

### **ARTICLE 3 BY-LAWS**

These By-Laws are set forth for the guidance of constituents, ministers and officers for the orderly conduct of the business of the movement within each state and territory of Australia. The United Constitution of the Movement takes precedence over these By-Laws should any conflict of provisions appear at any time.

### **ARTICLE 4 STATE CONFERENCE**

#### **4.1 Purpose**

It shall be the function of the State Conference, within the state:

- 4.1.1** To promote possibilities for fellowship between local churches.
- 4.1.2** To make whatever decisions may be necessary in the interests of the Movement.
- 4.1.3** To carry out elections to office in accordance with the State By-Laws ARTICLE 6 and to appoint committees for special work as occasion may arise.
- 4.1.4** To receive and consider reports from the states, departments, officers and committees and, where appropriate, make any decisions or recommendations arising therefrom.

#### **4.2 Constituents**

The voting Constituents of the State Conference of the Movement shall be:

- 4.2.1** Those churches which at the date of adopting the United Constitution hold a current Certificate of Fellowship and located in the appropriate State.
- 4.2.2** Such registered churches, located in the State, as shall thereafter be received into the movement by the granting of a Certificate of Fellowship.
- 4.2.3** Those individuals, resident in the State, who hold a current Ordained Minister's Credential (OMC) or Provisional Minister's Credential (PMC) at the time of commencement of a State Conference.



**4.2.4** Deemed ineligible to vote in the following circumstances:

4.2.4.1 A constituent church will be ineligible to vote at a conference (or entitled to appoint voting delegates) when dues are unpaid at the eligible date.

4.2.4.2 An individual constituent will be ineligible to vote at a conference when, at the eligible date:

- dues are unpaid, or
- their credential is withdrawn, or
- they are no longer resident in the state.

In this sub-clause (4.2.4) 'eligible date' means the day that is fourteen days before the date of the commencement of the State Conference.

**4.3 Sessions**

The State Conference shall be held biennially, at a time and place determined by the State Executive.

**4.4 Notice**

The State Secretary shall send to all churches of the State Conference, and those credential holders entitled to vote, a notice in writing of the Conference, not later than four months before the commencement of Conference. All remits, which must be in the form of a resolution, shall be in the hands of the State Secretary three months prior to the commencement of conference.

Remits may be submitted by the State Executive, churches holding a Certificate of Fellowship, and by ordained ministers. All nominations and remits shall be submitted to churches and ordained ministers six weeks prior to the commencement of conference.

**4.5 Membership**

**4.5.1** The State Conference shall comprise of all churches, located in the state that hold a current Certificate of Fellowship (not a Provisional Certificate of Fellowship) and who are in financial standing, represented by one delegate for every two hundred and fifty (250) adults in regular attendance (18 years and over) or part thereof.

**4.5.2** Every Ordained or Provisional Minister resident in the state shall be eligible to attend as a voting member.

**4.5.3** Missionaries holding an Ordained Minister's Credential, whose Australian residential address is in that state, are entitled to attend and to vote.

**4.5.4** In the event that the name of a church delegate is not received by the State Secretary fourteen days prior to the commencement of the State Conference, the State Executive may, in its absolute discretion, veto the voting power of such delegate, who shall have no voting rights but may attend as an observer.

**4.6 Special Conference**

Special State Conferences may be called by the State Executive at its discretion, or at

the request of not less than one third of the registered churches in the state. A written notification of the conference shall be distributed to churches with current Certificates of Fellowship (not a Provisional Certificate of Fellowship) and those holding Ordained Minister's Credential, not less than three weeks prior to the commencement of the Special State Conference, which shall consider the matters raised but no other business, except as provided for in Article 10 of these By-Laws.

#### **4.7 Chairman**

The State President, and in his/her absence the State Vice President, shall preside over all meetings of the State Conference. In the event of the State President and the State Vice President being absent or in cases where it is deemed beneficial or in the interests of the Conference, the Conference shall be presided over by a member of the State or National Executive appointed by the Conference at that meeting.

#### **4.8 Business**

**4.8.1** The State Conference may discuss any business not on the agenda but brought forward by the State Executive. General remits received less than three months prior to conference may be placed on the agenda at the absolute discretion of the State Executive.

**4.8.2** The State Executive shall prepare the agenda.

**4.8.3** The only persons eligible to vote are members of the State Conference attending in person.

**4.8.4** In the normal course of business, all resolutions shall be decided by a show of hands. However, the chairman may require that a secret ballot be taken.

**4.8.5** All resolutions shall require a 55% majority of the voting strength to be carried except where different percentages are specified in the United Constitution or the State By-Laws.

**4.8.6** Quorum: Provided that notice has been given, consistent with ARTICLE 4.4, the voting constituents present at a conference business session shall constitute a quorum. To be clear, there is no minimum number of voting constituents whose presence is necessary to validate the transactions of the State Conference.

### **ARTICLE 5 STATE OFFICERS**

**5.1** The officers shall consist of the State President, State Vice President(s), State Secretary, State Treasurer or State Secretary/Treasurer, together with such other officers as shall be appointed from time to time.

**5.2** The State President and State Vice President(s) shall only be chosen from the ordained ministers, and shall be persons of mature experience and ability, who shall have been ordained for at least three years.

**5.3** The State Secretary and the State Treasurer or State Secretary/Treasurer may be chosen from the ordained ministers or from individuals in fellowship and good standing with any church forming part of the movement and shall be of mature experience and ability. If the State Secretary and/or State Treasurer are not holders of an Ordained Minister's Credential, they shall be ex officio members of the State

Executive without voting rights.

**5.4** The State Secretary, State Treasurer or State Secretary/Treasurer shall be ex officio delegates to State Conferences with full voting powers.

**5.5** The roles and job descriptions of the State Officers shall be set and modified by the State Executive.

## **ARTICLE 6 STATE EXECUTIVE**

### **6.1 Membership**

The State Executive shall consist of not less than five, or more than seven members of the conference and shall include the State President, State Vice President, State Secretary and State Treasurer or State Secretary/Treasurer. Persons nominated for the State Executive shall have been both ordained and resident in the state for at least two years. Persons nominated for the position of State President or State Vice President shall have been ordained for at least three years, and two years for other officers, except a State Treasurer, or a State Secretary/Treasurer who is not the holder of an OMC.

### **6.2 Term of Office**

The term of office shall be from the conclusion of the State Conference at which elected, until the conclusion of the State Conference next following.

### **6.3 Vacancies**

In the event of a vacancy or vacancies occurring on the State Executive, the same shall be filled by the State Executive, from those who have been members of the conference for at least two years. In the event of any member being incapacitated through illness or any other cause, the State Executive may likewise appoint any other eligible person to act in place of that member so incapacitated.

### **6.4 Meetings**

The State Executive shall meet at such times and places as it may from time to time decide. Meetings shall be convened by the State Secretary at the request of the State President or a simple majority of the State Executive.

### **6.5 Quorum**

The quorum necessary for the transaction of the business of the State Executive shall be a majority or such greater numbers as it shall fix from time to time.

### **6.6 Technology Meetings**

For meetings other than those held in person after written notice, a majority of the State Executive shall be deemed to hold or be present at a meeting when they communicate through a telephone conference call, video or other electronic conference method in circumstances where each of them can simultaneously hear what is said by and can speak to the others of them. Such a meeting shall be deemed to be held at the place where the chairperson was present during the meeting. A resolution passed at a meeting under this sub-clause must be ratified at the next State Executive meeting where notice has been given to all members.

If a majority of the State Executive shall have advised the State Secretary in writing by fax or email that they are in favour of a resolution in particular terms such

resolution shall be deemed to be passed at a meeting of the State Executive provided it shall be ratified at the next State Executive meeting where notice has been given to all members.

#### **6.7 Powers and Duties**

The powers and duties of the State Executive shall be to do all those acts and things, which in its opinion, are necessary and beneficial to further the aims of Australian Christian Churches within the state. Such acts shall be consistent with the United Constitution of Australian Christian Churches and the State By-Laws.

#### **6.8 Nominations**

Nominations may be made by the State Executive, the State Conference, or voting constituents.

#### **6.9 Election**

Elections to office shall be conducted in harmony with the United Constitution.

### **ARTICLE 7 CREDENTIALS**

The State Executive shall work, under the direction of the National Executive to facilitate the granting, reviewing and withdrawal of credentials as required in the United Constitution.

### **ARTICLE 8 STATE DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTRIES**

The State Executive may establish departments and ministries that function at a State level, to facilitate the objectives of Australian Christian Churches. Such ministries shall have the right to operate under their own constitutions and by-laws, approved by the State Executive. The ministries are subject to the direction of the State Executive and must present a report to the biennial State Conference. The leaders of all state departments and ministries shall be appointed by the State Executive. In the event that a state department is incorporated, the provisions of Article 12 of these By-Laws shall apply.

### **ARTICLE 9 INDEMNITY**

#### **9.1 Indemnity**

Subject to the terms of this Article 9, the State movement indemnifies:

- (a) any person who holds or who has held any elected or appointed office within the movement whether or not validly appointed to occupy such a position;
- (b) any executive officers; and
- (c) any employees

from any loss suffered in respect of any wrongful act asserted against such person while acting in their individual or collective capacities as office bearers within the movement.

#### **9.2 Exclusions**

The Movement will not indemnify any person for any claim arising from or attributable to:

**9.2.1** A wilful breach of duty, the dishonest, fraudulent or malicious act or omission committed with criminal intent;

**9.2.2** Sexual abuse claims, which means any actual, alleged or attempted assault or abuse of a sexual nature or any other lewd conduct.

### **9.3 Limits To Indemnity**

**9.3.1** The Movement's liability in respect of this indemnity is limited to the greater of:

**9.3.1.1** The value of assets held in trust on behalf of the Movement; and

**9.3.1.2** To the extent the claim made against a person is covered by a policy of insurance, whether or not that policy is held by or for the benefit of the Movement or not, the sum insured under that policy.

**9.3.2** This indemnity is limited to office bearers, officers or employees, of the State Conference.

### **9.4 Advancement of Defence Costs**

The Movement will pay all reasonable defence costs incurred in defending any civil or criminal proceedings commenced in respect of any wrongful act asserted against such a person while acting in their individual or collective capabilities on an on-going basis as they are incurred prior to the final payment or settlement of any claim provided that:

**9.4.1** Such defence costs are incurred with the written consent of the movement, such consent not to be unreasonably withheld; and

**9.4.2** Such advance payments by the movement shall be repaid to the movement in the event that the person is not entitled to payment of any loss under this indemnity."

## **ARTICLE 10 SUSPENSION OF BY-LAWS**

To allow members to bring forward business, which is of a special and urgent nature, which is not on the agenda, the requirements of these By-Laws, in relation to business, may be suspended without notice by a motion carried by a 65% majority of the delegates present and eligible to vote. On the carrying of such motion, the State Secretary will place the said business on the agenda.

## **ARTICLE 11 AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to these By-laws may be made at any meeting of the National Conference, and shall be considered carried when carried by a 65% majority of the delegates present and eligible to vote.

## **ARTICLE 12 INCORPORATION PROVISIONS**

**12.1** In circumstances where the State Executive is of the view that it is necessary to legally incorporate any aspects, initiatives or functions of the Movement it may approve such incorporation provided the following principles are adopted –

**12.2** Except in circumstances where the State Executive deems it to be otherwise necessary the constituent documentation of such incorporated bodies must provide:

**12.2.1** Acceptance of the Doctrinal Basis set out in the United Constitution; and

**12.2.2** The voting constituency must consist of either the State Company or the individual members of the State Executive where it is not possible for the State Company to do so because of legal requirements of the jurisdiction where the incorporated body is to be formed; and

**12.2.3** The controlling directorship or committee must only be eligible for election or re-election with the prior written approval of the State President or State Secretary; and

**12.2.4** Annual financial reports be provided to the State Treasurer without demand.



OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

<b>Title:</b>	<b>ACC Child Protection Policy</b>
<b>Document Type:</b>	Movement Policy
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# 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

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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
- 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**

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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?**

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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?**

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The ACC Child Protection Policy covers all ACC People.

## 5 DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY

Term	Definition
ACC People	ACC People includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• officers or employees of ACC or its State or National ministries,</li> <li>• ACC Credential holders,</li> <li>• officers of a Constituent Church,</li> <li>• employees, volunteers and other members of a congregation of a Constituent Church who may or will have a Direct Role,</li> <li>• contractors (external agents) engaged by the ACC or a Constituent Church who may or will have a Direct Role.</li> </ul>
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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; or</li> <li>• sexual abuse or exploitation;</li> <li>• a single act, omission or circumstance; or</li> <li>• a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the ACC commitment to the ACC Child Protection Policy;</li> <li>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;</li> <li>Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to Child protection;</li> <li>Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children or Young People in support of this Policy.</li> </ul>
ACC State Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the ACC Child Protection Policy is implemented and adhered to by the State Executive and Constituent Churches and ACC Credential Holders;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all ACC People understand their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy;</li> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation;</li> <li>• Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children or Young People in support of this Policy;</li> <li>• Proactively share resources and experience in the development of Child safe initiatives as they are identified;</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of Child protection.</li> </ul>
Constituent Churches and Credential Holders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all ACC People within the respective Constituent Church understand, and adhere to, their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy;</li> <li>• Advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children or Young People in support of this Policy;</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of Child protection.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

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

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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?**

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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?**

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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?**

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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.

## SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINES

### INTRODUCTION

These **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 include the Child Protection Practice Guidelines referred to in section 7 of the Policy.

The Guidelines contained herein are both introductory foundational thoughts which are then built upon in the SMR Safe Ministry Manual ("Manual") and **ACC Safer Churches Awareness Workshops** ("Workshop/s"), as well as good practice procedural suggestions for churches.

These Guidelines are not written as a replacement for participation in the Workshops, rather as a prompt or reminder of some of the key topics from the Workshops.

The Guidelines, Manual and Workshops 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, whether *ACC People* as defined in the Policy or not.

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.

As part of adopting the ACC Child Protection Policy, Constituent Churches are required to adopt the Guidelines, or an alternative guideline that is at least consistent with these Guidelines. In any legal proceedings, Constituent Churches may be asked if any such Guidelines existed and if so, whether or not they were followed.

Visit the Safer Churches section of Pastor's Login for more information and tools.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **1. ACC Safer Churches 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **4. Team ministry**

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.

### **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.

### **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.

## 7. Electronic communication

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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 11. Responding to conflicts, and/or allegations against ACC People

- 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.



## 12. Compliance with WHS legislation

It is **recommended** even in states where there is no legislated WHS 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 15. Safe spiritual and emotional environments in ministry programs and 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)*

## **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.

#### 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.

## **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.



OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

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## SAFER CHURCHES GUIDELINES

### INTRODUCTION

These **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 include the Child Protection Practice Guidelines referred to in section 7 of the Policy.

The Guidelines contained herein are both introductory foundational thoughts which are then built upon in the SMR Safe Ministry Manual ("Manual") and **ACC Safer Churches Awareness Workshops** ("Workshop/s"), as well as good practice procedural suggestions for churches.

These Guidelines are not written as a replacement for participation in the Workshops, rather as a prompt or reminder of some of the key topics from the Workshops.

The Guidelines, Manual and Workshops 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, whether *ACC People* as defined in the Policy or not.

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.

As part of adopting the ACC Child Protection Policy, Constituent Churches are required to adopt the Guidelines, or an alternative guideline that is at least consistent with these Guidelines. In any legal proceedings, Constituent Churches may be asked if any such Guidelines existed and if so, whether or not they were followed.

Visit the Safer Churches section of Pastor's Login for more information and tools.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **1. ACC Safer Churches Awareness Workshops**

All people who have a Direct Role (as defined in the ACC Child Protection Policy) with children in ACC churches **shall** receive adequate training in the concepts of Child Protection at minimum every 3 years.

ACC Credential and Certificate holders **shall** complete ACC Safer Churches Workshop (or recognised equivalent) every three years at a minimum in order for Credentials or Certificates to be renewed.

### **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.

### **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.

### **4. Team ministry**

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.

### **5. Promoting empowerment and participation:**

ACC People and constituent churches **shall** actively promote the empowerment and participation of all people at church in the protection of Children and Young People.

It is **recommended**, for example, 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,
- Raise concerns about abuse,
- Find safe people to talk to,
- Know when they feel vulnerable.

It is recommended that ACC People actively assist the families of Children or Young People to

- Access information about what child abuse is,
- Feel welcome and have a say in the activities and programs in which their Children or Young People participate as far as is practical,
- Engage in two-way communication between families and the church.

## **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.

## **7. Safe Online and Digital practices**

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 actively being safe in all online and digital interactions, including maintaining transparency and accountability 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/text messages/Facebook.

ACC People **shall** not transmit, download or store 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.

ACC People **shall** not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide their identity or represent the sender as someone else.

It is **recommended** that communications with Children under 16 occur with the full knowledge of the parent/s or carer/s of the Child or Young Person.

## **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.

## 9. Appointment of Volunteer Workers (including ACC people)

All people who have a Direct Role (as defined in the ACC Child Protection Policy) with children in ACC churches **shall** be screened, appointed and inducted using a formal accountable / transparent process (For paid workers and leaders, additional steps may be required as part of the Local Church's written employment process).

As a minimum, it is **recommended** that:

### 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.

## 10. Supervision of Volunteer Workers (including ACC people)

All people who have a Direct Role (as defined in the ACC Child Protection Policy) with children in ACC churches **shall** be appropriately supervised in their roles, including being provided with clear behavioural expectations for their role through a code of conduct. (For paid workers, additional supervision may be required as part of the Constituent Church's written employment procedures.)

As a minimum it is **recommended** ACC Constituent churches:

### 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.

## 11. Responding to conflicts, and/or allegations against ACC People

- 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.

## 12. Compliance with WHS legislation

It is **recommended** even in states where there is no legislated WHS 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 15. Safe spiritual and emotional environments in ministry programs and events

ACC constituent churches **shall** provide safe spiritual and emotional environments including a commitment to:

- servant leadership in our ministry to all people,
- upholding National Privacy Act principles,
- respect for diversity culturally, e.g. the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- the safety of children with a disability.

The ACC Child Protection Policy states that ACC people **shall**:

- *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.

- *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.

*- 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)

## **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.

#### 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.

## **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.



OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Ministerial Code of Conduct</b>
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# MINISTERIAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ACC CREDENTIALLED MINISTERS

## The Rationale for a Code

Ministry is a call to serve both God and people. Credentialed Ministers are firstly accountable to God (1 Corinthians 4:4-5), but also to church members and those who receive ministry (Ephesians 4:1-2). Ministers are public figures whose lives are on display and are viewed with considerable public scrutiny. A high degree of conformity is expected with the biblical call to holiness (Matthew 5:48; Titus 2:7-8). Accordingly, pastoral relationships are to be characterised by love, justice, care, and compassion (Micah 6:8). A minister is firstly a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, (1 John 2:6) and as such ministry is grounded by prayer, Bible study, regular worship and a readiness to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20).

Ministers of our Movement are to live and minister in accordance with biblical values. Additionally, it is expected that every profession have a code of conduct that sets an example of excellence for the society in which it seeks to minister. Ministers are to be examples in the creation of healthy communities.

The following guidelines are designed to identify areas, articulate relevant principles, note areas of caution, and state what is clearly prohibited in terms of biblical conduct for Ministers in our Movement.

## The Purpose of the Code

This code is intended to guide the behaviour of Ministers in our Movement. It is articulated to assist leaders to serve in such a manner that it will cause our churches and ministries to be safe places for all; places where integrity is honoured, accountability is practised, misconduct is not concealed, and forgiveness is encouraged to bring about healing and restoration.

Article 11.7 of the United Constitution provides for action that may be taken where the holder of a ministerial certificate has committed improper conduct.

Improper conduct is generally regarded as behaviour that in all the circumstances of a case is an inappropriate or incorrect way of discharging a person's duties, obligations, or responsibilities.

This Code of Conduct sets out the standard that is expected of credentialed Ministers, and therefore is an important document for determining whether a person has committed improper conduct.

A breach of a **"Prohibited"** provisions will always be improper conduct and will result in disciplinary action. A breach of a **"Cautionary"** provision, depending on the circumstances may be improper conduct, and may result in disciplinary action.

## The Code of Conduct

### 1. Pastoral Example

Ministers should be *“above reproach”* (1 Timothy 3:2). The values of the Gospel of Christ should be obvious to members of the church and wider society (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1). It is also important for an effective minister to have a healthy lifestyle and a balance of service, recreation, and family (Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Titus 1:6). This lifestyle should also be supported and encouraged for all members of church staff.

Ministers should be good citizens and obey the laws of the community (Proverbs 24:21; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:11-17). The only rare exception may be when a Christian engages in non-violent civil disobedience as a matter of protest (Acts 4:18-20).

#### **Caution**

***Addictive behaviours:*** Scripture requires that we exercise caution in the use of alcohol (Proverbs 20:1; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 8). Abstinence is a stand that is highly respected in our Movement. Extreme caution must also be exercised with all potentially addictive and harmful behaviours that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardise our own or another's faith.

***Language:*** The use of offensive language should also be avoided (such as swear words, sexual connotations, and racial or religious slurs).

#### **Prohibited**

A Minister must avoid drunkenness, gambling, and abstain from the use of all illegal drugs (Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21). A Minister must not smoke.

### 2. Ministry Matters

Authority to minister comes from Jesus Christ; the head of the Church (Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 12:27). Christian leadership must never be manipulative or authoritarian (John 15:15). Ministers are servants of Christ, who should endeavour to become servant leaders as modelled by Jesus (John 13:3-14). Leadership in all its dimensions must always be accountable, and it is essential that ministers act responsibly in the best interests of those they serve (James 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2-4).

#### **Caution**

***Qualifications:*** Ministers must not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training, or experience. Ministers should recognise their level of skill and experience. If they are unsure, they must seek additional advice from other colleagues or other professionals.

**Pastoral relationships:** Ministers should also be aware of the danger of dependency developing in pastoral relationships, and seek supervision or advice when such concerns arise. A balance should be found between the need for mutual support and the need for accountability.

**Ministry gifts:** It is a Pentecostal distinctive to honour the role of the Holy Spirit who imparts spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7). There are a variety of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4) and the true exercise of these gifts will always be consistent with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). For example, prophecy is to be exercised for “**strengthening, encouragement and comfort**” (1 Corinthians 14:3). A leader must always be willing to held accountable, admitting to the possibility of human error when exercising the gifts of the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

**Public statements:** We live in a society that has become increasingly sensitive to matters of discrimination and vilification. A Minister must show respect and godly care to all people, inside or outside the Christian community (Colossians 4:6). Care must be taken in how Ministers speak of the ministry of others in public (Mark 9:40) since reputation is something highly valued in Scripture (Proverbs 22:1).

Care must be exercised when Ministers express a personal opinion on controversial matters. They must distinguish expressing an opinion from speaking on behalf of a local church or the Movement (1 Corinthians 7:12).

**Staffing and volunteers:** There is a need for transparency and Godly motivation in any employment or ministry offer extended to a Minister, staff member, or volunteer serving in another church. The offer must only be made with the prior knowledge and agreement of the Senior Minister of the church where they currently serve. It is inappropriate that an approach be made to a Minister or staff member serving in a church that is geographically local. It is additionally inappropriate for a Minister or staff member serving in a pastoral team to seek a position in a neighbouring church without the endorsement of their Senior Minister.

After retirement or resignation from a ministry, the Minister must terminate existing pastoral relationships to allow their successor to assume responsibility. Friendships may continue as long as the end of the pastoral relationship is mutually recognised. Any request for a continuing pastoral relationship must only occur with the permission of the new Senior Minister or the person who has overall pastoral oversight.

It is unethical to be employed by a church, to build up that ministry, and then resign or be dismissed and then start a new work incorporating former church members without the prior knowledge and consent of the former Senior Minister. It is also unethical for a Minister to do anything to encourage a member of another church to join his or her church/ministry.

**Conflicts of Interest:** It is important to avoid any actual, apparent or potential conflicts between personal interests and pastoral responsibilities. If there is anything that could lead to a conflict of interest that will or could have an effect upon or undermine an individual’s impartiality in a given situation, then it must be immediately disclosed in full outlining the nature and extent of the conflict

of interest to the Relevant Persons as set out in the ACC Conflicts of Interest Guidance Statement.

### **Prohibited**

A Minister must not be abusive in any way toward others (1 Timothy 3:2-5; Titus 1:7).

The misuse of authority can be a particular temptation in leadership and must be avoided. Ministers must not attempt to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to manipulate or coerce a person. This includes attempting to use healing for financial gain; attributing miracles for personal glory; or using a word of knowledge to control an individual; or using prophecy to change church membership or to enlist support for a ministry. Accountability in all areas of ministry is essential.

## **3. Sexual Behaviour**

Sexuality is a gift from God and integral to human nature. Ministers must value this gift by maintaining chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage (Proverbs 5:18, 6:32; 1 Corinthians 7:2). Homosexual behaviour is forbidden by Scripture (Romans 1:24-25).

### **Caution**

***Children:*** Being especially vulnerable, children are entitled to be safe and protected. Ministry to children needs to be characterised by absolute trustworthiness. The Senior Minister and leadership of the local church are responsible to implement the appropriate **Child Protection Policy** for their State or Territory.

***Physical contact:*** Caution must always be exercised when initiating or receiving physical contact including gestures of comfort that may be unwanted or misinterpreted.

***Pastoral conversations:*** A Minister must be careful in pastoral conversations when a person talks about sexual problems. Consideration must always be given to whether it is appropriate to refer a person to a suitable counsellor.

Ministry to people in the sex industry requires clear boundaries, a high level of accountability and mixed gender peer support (Proverbs 5:21).

***Pastoral relationships:*** It is only in the rarest of circumstances that a pastoral relationship can legitimately develop into a romantic relationship. If two single people meet in a pastoral setting (not a counselling relationship), and there is mutual attraction, then it is important for both parties to acknowledge that the nature of the relationship is changing. Once mutually recognised and acknowledged, it is the responsibility of the Minister to disclose this to the Senior Minister or their supervisor, and to arrange for someone else to assume pastoral responsibility for that person.

### **Prohibited**

All inappropriate sexual behaviour is forbidden. A Minister must not have a sexual relationship with a member of the church or anyone who is receiving, or has recently received, pastoral ministry. It is never acceptable to blame the person who has received counselling or ministry.

Sexual innuendo or compliments of a sexual nature are always inappropriate.

A Minister must not view pornographic material or go to places of commercialised sex such as strip clubs or visit a brothel (Matthew 5:28; 2 Peter 2:14a; Proverbs 5:3-6; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:12). Additionally, they must avoid chat rooms or internet sites of a sexual nature.

A Minister must adequately respond to reported instances of sexual abuse. An adequate response requires complete and timely adherence to all policies and procedures adopted by the ACC surrounding the reporting of sexual abuse.

Ministers must consider their other duties, such as their duty of confidentiality, and the duty to avoid conflicts of interest in discharging their duties to adequately respond to reported instances of sexual abuse.

Apart from strict adherence to all policies and procedures adopted by the ACC, a Minister who has been notified of an instance of sexual abuse must not engage in poor administrative practices, which include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Failure to take any action that should reasonably have been taken;
- 2) Failure to notify the relevant State President, their appointee or other relevant officer;
- 3) Failure to follow an appropriate consultative process;
- 4) Excessive or unreasonable delay in process;
- 5) Inadequate record-keeping;

#### **4. Financial Matters**

A Minister must set an example and have integrity in all their financial dealings. This would include the timely payment of debts, the effective management of finances, as well as providing for their family (Romans 13:7-8). Failure to do so will have a significant impact on the church and the perceptions of the wider community.

The Senior Minister and the leadership of the local church have responsibility for the sound management of church and ministry finances. They may or may not be involved in actual transactions, but must ensure the implementation of a proper system for financial integrity and accountability. All church and ministry accounts should be independently audited.

##### **Caution**

***Conflicts of interest:*** It is important to avoid any potential conflict between personal finances and pastoral responsibilities. If there is anything that could lead to a conflict of interest, then it

must be immediately disclosed to the Board or Elders. It is important to disclose to the Senior Minister or Board or Eldership any personal gift or bequest (2 Corinthians 8:21; James 2:1, 2-4).

A leader must avoid borrowing money from, or lending money to, a person with whom there is a pastoral relationship.

Particular care must be exercised in the appointment of a spouse or family member to a paid position in the church or ministry. It must be done only with careful consultation with the Board or Eldership.

***Taxation:*** A Minister must exercise caution with tax minimisation strategies and must not improperly use fringe benefit allowances.

### **Prohibited**

A Minister must not seek additional personal advantage or financial gain because of a pastoral role. Naturally, this includes any benefit to a spouse and/or immediate member of his or her family. Various professions forbid dual relationships (2 Timothy 2:4). For example, a doctor cannot enter into a business relationship with a patient. A Minister must disclose to their Board or Eldership any situation that could be viewed as a dual relationship, including business agreements.

A Minister must never borrow or take church funds without proper authorisation. A Minister must not seek financial support from people in a previous church or ministry unless there is authorisation by the current Senior Minister, Eldership, or Board. On termination of employment with a church (ministry or agency), a Minister must not expect a payment that is excessive, illegal or by private arrangement. In cases of dispute, the matter must be referred to the State President or their appointee.

## **5. Confidentiality**

Trust is essential in pastoral ministry. Those involved in pastoral care must note that both formal interviews and casual conversations in a ministry context are pastoral encounters where confidences are shared and confidential information received. This information must not be disclosed, and must be treated with the utmost care. Exceptions include when disclosure is required by law (subpoena or abuse notifications), there are concerns for the safety of the person or others, or when the information is in the public domain.

### **Caution**

***Pastoral records:*** Pastoral notes and records are important, but caution must be taken with securing them. Any record of a pastoral counselling session is considered a health record, which is governed by national legislation. Computer records must be password protected and access limited to authorised persons. Paper records must be locked up and access limited to authorised personnel.

Particular care must be exercised in the publication of personal information in church directories,

newsletters, rosters, and websites, etc. This also extends to publishing voices and images of individuals.

Confidentiality should be preserved in peer supervision or in mentoring relationships. All care should be taken to avoid disclosing those being discussed. Preachers should be careful with sermon illustrations, in teaching and especially in publications (Proverbs 11:13).

### **Prohibited**

A Minister must not disclose confidential pastoral conversations except if required by law or if there is a concern for the safety of the person or another person (James 5:16).

## **6. Ministerial Development**

It is important to continue to develop ministry skills through a variety of means including education, professional supervision, peer support, mentoring, and a regular ministry review (Proverbs 27:17). It is expected that Ministers will regularly attend District, State, and National Conferences and special events, and undertake ongoing professional development (Romans 13:7). This includes an expectation the Ministers demonstrate a loyalty the Movement and its vision, values, and mission.

### **The Implementation of the Code**

If questions arise with areas of **“Caution,”** the individual Minister must talk to a supervisor, mentor, consult with peers, and if necessary pursue voluntary counselling.

With any breach of the Code of Conduct in a **“Prohibited”** area the Minister in breach must notify the State President (or the person fulfilling those duties at that time) within 7 days (24 hours if civil or criminal action is involved). The State President will implement the **Grievance Procedure for Certificate Holders** upon notification.

Failure to notify in accordance with the paragraph above will itself be a **“Prohibited”** breach of the code.

## **Acknowledgements.**

This code has drawn on the following codes of conduct, ethical statements, and ministerial guidelines:

*Faithfulness in Service:* A national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers (General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia Child Protection Committee, Draft - 2004)

*Code of Professional Ethics for the practice of Pastoral Ministry:* A guide for church workers and their communities (General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia Child Protection Committee, Draft - 2003)

*The Code of Good Practice:* (Anglican Church of Australia Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 2005)

*Code of Ethics applicable to ministers of Churches of Christ and The protocol for investigating complaints on matters pertaining to Sexuality:* (Churches of Christ in Australia adopted 1997 and amended for Churches of Christ in Queensland 1998-1999)

*Pentecostal Ministerial Ethics:* Pastor Harry Leesment (1988)

*Statement of Moral Integrity:* Pastor Rick Warren.

*A Statement of Restoration and Re-instatement of Disciplined Ministers.*

New South Wales Registration Board Guidelines for Psychologists.



## VOLUNTEER CHURCH WORKERS DECLARATION

Thank you for your desire to volunteer at \_\_\_\_\_. This declaration is part of our church's commitment to ensuring our duty of care to all people, and also to fulfil our insurance obligations, health and safety and other requirements.

### PERSONAL DETAILS

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ First and Middle Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Any Former Names: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Male ☐ Female (Please select) Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK AND/OR WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

I hereby consent to an Australian Federal Police Check if one is considered necessary for my role.

My state based working with children check (or similar) details, where required are as follows:

State of Issue: \_\_\_\_\_ Reference Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

### CONSENT TO HOLD INFORMATION

I consent to the information contained in this application including the subsequent pages to be kept by our church. I understand that this information will be kept in a confidential file and used only for screening and disciplinary purposes.

### REFEREE CHECK (if you have been at the church for less than 3 years)

Please nominate a character reference. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of my previous church and pastor (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

### DECLARATION

- I understand that the church operates in an environment of numerous legal and ethical restrictions, and I will fully cooperate with the church in abiding by these. I assure the church, in considering me for a volunteer role that:
  - I have no health impediment that will put me or any other person at risk in the fulfilment of my designated role
  - Other than those matters disclosed by me to the church (noted above) at the time of making this declaration, i know of no past behaviour that renders me unfit to serve as a volunteer or which detracts from the obligation of the church to operate as a place of safety to a minor or any other person. Such past behaviour may include being the subject of an allegation of sexual abuse (whether convicted or not), including any type of molestation, indecent exposure, sexual harassment or intimidation.
- I understand that if I am unclear as to any of the statements in this document, I will seek clarification from a team leader or church leader before signing.
- I have provided this information, and any documents accompanying it in good faith and declare they are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- I understand that any material misstatement in or omission from this questionnaire may render me unfit to hold a particular role in the church.
- I have received a copy of the *Volunteer Church Workers Code of Conduct* and I agree to uphold it.
- I understand that when considering whether there is an avenue for my voluntary services, my church may refer to ACC and local church policies, guidelines and position papers.
- I will respect the decision of my church as to where I volunteer my services within the church, and whether my services are required, from time to time.
- I understand that a team leader will be available to me to discuss my service.

Proposed Volunteer's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
(if under the age of 18, please have the form co-signed by your parent/guardian)

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Endorsement of church leadership for this person to volunteer:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

## VOLUNTEER CHURCH WORKERS CODE OF CONDUCT

Codes of Conduct are a part of the ACC's commitment to safe emotional and physical environments, an expectation of our Child Protection Policy and a commitment to providing appropriate duty of care, including health and safety considerations.

Volunteering in church life is a highly valued and important part of service to the church. This **Volunteer Workers Code of Conduct** outlines the standards of behaviour that are expected for all *volunteer workers* in ACC Churches.

**Volunteer workers** are all volunteers involved in serving the local church in teams, on rosters and in any other way.

ACC volunteer workers lives are on display and are subject to public scrutiny and as such these standards of behavior should apply not only to your church life but also your personal life.

The **ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct** (a separate document) applies to ACC Certificate and Credential holders.

### 1. SERVANT HEARTED

Volunteer workers are servants of Christ, who should endeavour to become servant leaders as modelled by Jesus (John 13:3-14). The misuse of authority can be a particular temptation when being given a position of trust and power – this must be avoided.

### 2. BEHAVIOUR

Volunteer workers:

- will act in the best interests of those we serve.
- must not be abusive in any way toward others, spiritually, emotionally, physically or sexually, including domestic and family violence.
- will avoid the use of offensive language (e.g. swear words, sexual connotations, and racial or religious slurs).
- will exercise caution with all potentially addictive behaviours and/or harmful substances. Drunkenness is never acceptable.
- will refrain from using any illicit substances.
- will use caution when initiating or receiving physical contact with those we serve, including gestures of comfort as such gestures can unwanted or misinterpreted.
- will act with sexual integrity. Sex is a gift from God and integral to human nature. All inappropriate sexual behaviour is forbidden (e.g. sex outside of marriage). Sexual innuendo and harassment of a sexual nature are always inappropriate.
- will report their concerns of abuse according to *ACC Safer Church Guidelines*.
- will treat all program participants fairly and in accordance with ACC and local church policies, guidelines and position papers.
- will communicate with integrity, including accountable and wise use of electronic communication.
- will acknowledge when they are out of their depth, do not possess the required skill set in difficult pastoral situations, such as helping a victim of abuse, or a person who needs professional counselling, and seek help from a supervisor or church leader.
- will not take property belonging to others, including intellectual property (copyright).

### 3. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Volunteer workers are encouraged to have integrity in their financial dealings. Volunteer workers must not seek financial gain from their church role.

### 4. CONFIDENTIALITY

Trust is essential in serving the church. Confidential information must not be disclosed, and must be treated with the utmost care. Exceptions include when disclosure is required by law, abuse notifications whether required by law or not, there are concerns for the safety of the person or others, or when the information is in the public domain. Disclosure is a serious matter and the assistance of a supervisor or church leader should be sought.

### 5. COMMITMENT TO TEAM MINISTRY

Volunteer workers:

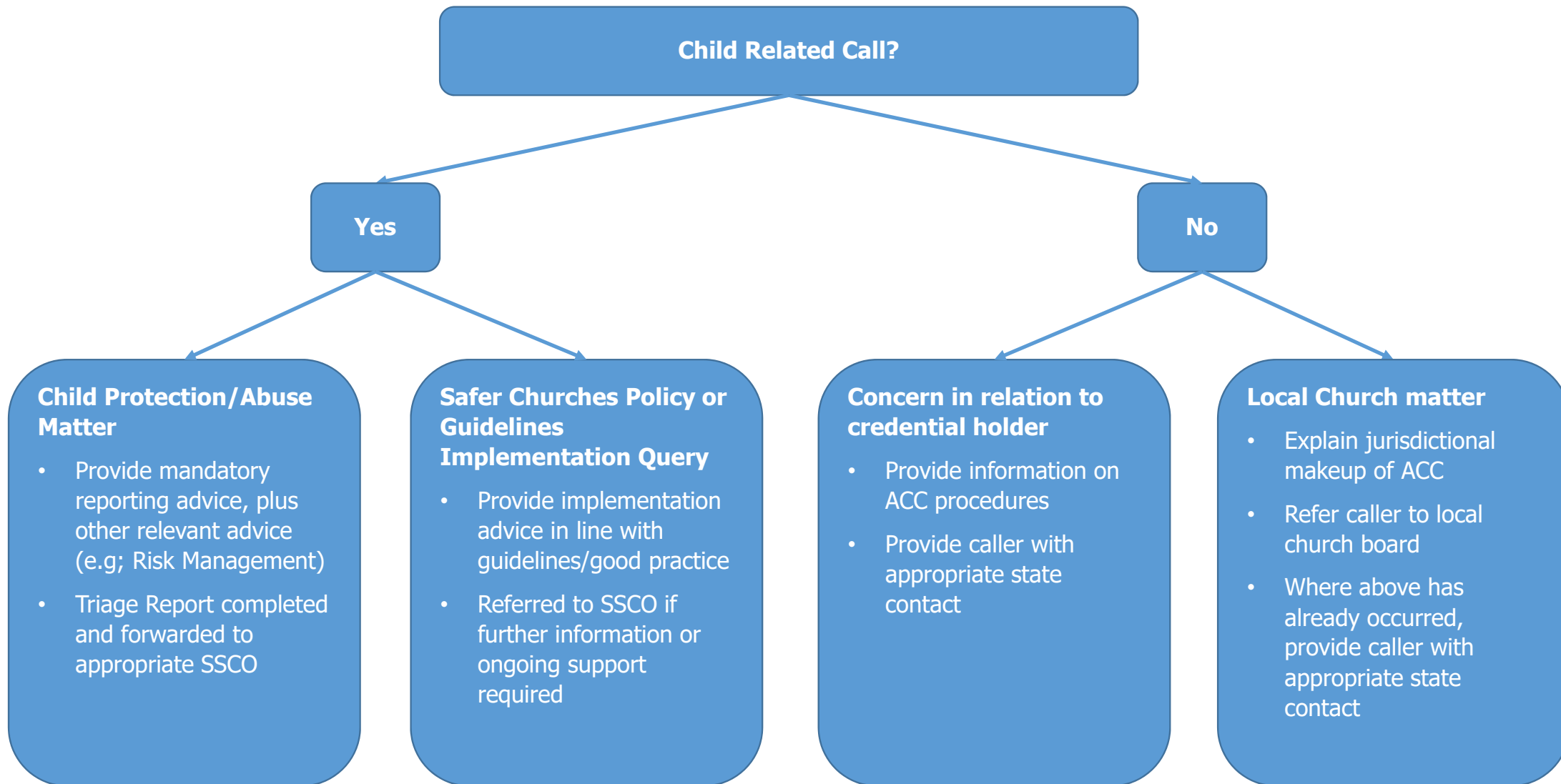
- will embrace the vision, values, and mission of the Church, and continue to develop ministry skills through a variety of means including team meetings.
- are accountable to team, watch out for each other and protect each other's integrity.

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT

Any breach of this code involving a criminal offence may lead to a report being made to the relevant authorities. Any breaches relating to the harm, or risk of harm, of a child or young person will be dealt with under the ACC Child Protection Policy – a copy of this policy should be provided to a volunteer who has a direct role with a child or young person. Any other breach will be considered in the light of the best interests of the volunteer and those we serve and may result in the volunteer being stood down either temporarily or otherwise.

Volunteer workers need to be open to correction and humble enough to modify behaviours so as to not discredit the gospel.

## SMR Response to ACC Safer Churches Helpline Call





We want our church to be a safe place for our children and youth. If you have any concerns about any form of child abuse please contact our national helpline.



NATIONAL HELPLINE  
**1800 070 511**

(Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm AEST)

**LOCAL CHURCH CONTACTS**

SAFER CHURCHES CONTACT PEOPLE: \_\_\_\_\_

HEALTH & SAFETY TEAM:  
(FOR HAZARDS AND SITE SAFETY) \_\_\_\_\_