



# **LCA CHILD SAFETY STANDARDS FOR CONGREGATIONS**



## **LCA STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY**

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) is committed to providing a safe church environment for children and young people. The LCA acknowledges that children are a precious gift from God, with special vulnerabilities, that they require nourishment and nurture in their spiritual development and that they are to be protected from all forms of abuse. The LCA also affirms that it has no tolerance for child abuse and that all its people have an important responsibility to care for children and to keep them safe. The way we care for children reflects our genuineness of faith. It is also a reflection of God's love and his divine protection.



1

**STANDARD**



## **OUR CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE ARE CHILD SAFE**

Child<sup>1</sup> safety is embedded in the culture, leadership, and governance of our congregation. Our congregation prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and demonstrates this through all levels of its leadership. Our congregation has no tolerance for child abuse in any form.

### **HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 1.1 Our “Statement of Commitment to Child Safety” is displayed within our congregation spaces and is communicated using various means to our community
- 1.2 Our pastor(s) and other leaders model a child safe culture by acknowledging the vulnerabilities of children and reminding us of our shared responsibility to keep children safe
- 1.3 Our pastor(s) and other leaders communicate important messages about child safety to our congregation
- 1.4 Our leadership understands that child safety must be prioritised in decision-making when child safety concerns are raised
- 1.5 Our pastor(s) and other leaders understand their legal responsibilities, are aware of the required steps, and know who to contact and report to if there is a child safety concern
- 1.6 Everyone at our congregation displays appropriate behaviours when interacting with children
- 1.7 Our leadership team encourages employees and volunteers to raise questions or concerns about child safety.



2

**STANDARD**



## **WE VALUE, RESPECT AND LISTEN TO CHILDREN**

Our congregation takes the views of children seriously. We are committed to listening to children and to providing them with opportunities to participate and be heard. We work especially hard to make sure children can raise concerns if they need to.

### **HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 2.1 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers acknowledge children during worship and other activities and show children that they are valued and loved by including them in worship and prayer
- 2.2 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers value the opinions of children by asking them about what helps to make them feel safe and comfortable
- 2.3 Our congregation helps children develop and strengthen their church friendships
- 2.4 Our congregation spaces display child-friendly information which encourages children to speak up if they have a concern and children know who they can talk to if they need support
- 2.5 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers know to listen to children and take them seriously if they raise a concern or are worried about something
- 2.6 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers understand that some children have additional needs and require extra support to help them engage in activities or to raise concerns if they need to.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘child’ and ‘children’ are inclusive of all children and young people under the age of 18 years.



3

**STANDARD**



## **WE INCLUDE FAMILIES**

Our congregation works in partnership with families and carers to keep children safe. We are committed to keeping families informed, to listening to their concerns, and to helping them be involved in decisions that affect their children.

**HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 3.1 Our leadership advises parents that we take their children's safety and well-being seriously
- 3.2 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers talk to parents and carers about their children's wellbeing and safety and keep them informed about how we keep their children safe
- 3.3 LCA child safety related policies, procedures and resources are accessible for parents and carers
- 3.4 We remind parents and carers that they can raise concerns with us at any time, we make sure that parents and carers know who they can talk to if they have a complaint, and we listen and respond when concerns are raised
- 3.5 Our leadership reminds parents and carers that families also have responsibility for keeping their children safe while they are engaged in congregational activities.
- 3.6 We invite parents and carers to contribute to activity planning and decision-making which relates to their children
- 3.7 We seek feedback from parents and carers about child safety in our congregation using a range of methods.



4

**STANDARD**



## **WE RESPECT AND WELCOME CHILDREN WITH DIVERSE NEEDS AND CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS**

Our congregation recognises that children from diverse backgrounds have unique vulnerabilities and are more likely to be at risk or experience abuse and neglect. We know this is particularly true for children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, children from refugee backgrounds, children from other diverse cultural groups, children with disabilities, and children who are unable to live with their families. We appreciate that all children have the right to worship God and to participate freely and happily in our church community. With this in mind, we are committed to minimising the barriers that these children face as we work towards ensuring that our congregation is a safe and welcoming place for all God's children.

**HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 4.1 Our pastor(s) and other leaders communicate to our congregation that children from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs have the right to worship in the same way as all God's children
- 4.2 Our leadership promotes cultural understanding and inclusivity that reflects our wider community
- 4.3 Our congregation actively encourages children and families from different cultural groups and backgrounds to participate in worship and church activities
- 4.4 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers understand that children with special needs or children from diverse backgrounds find it harder to raise concerns or make reports
- 4.5 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers work hard to identify and then reduce barriers faced by children with diverse needs to help them participate and raise concerns if they need to.



## 5 STANDARD

### OUR PEOPLE ARE SAFE, INFORMED AND SUPPORTED

Our congregation ensures that our employees and volunteers with designated roles that involve interaction with children as well as our pastor(s) and leadership team are suitable, safe, well informed, and supported.

#### HOW WE SHOW THIS:

- 5.1 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers have current and valid working with children type clearances
- 5.2 Our leadership makes it clear that work with children cannot commence without a current and valid clearance
- 5.3 Our screening compliance is reported to our leadership at regular intervals
- 5.4 Our leadership has a system to keep track of dates for screening renewals
- 5.5 Our leadership requires us to follow LCA procedures when recruiting an employee or volunteer for roles with children, including contacting referees, even when the prospective employee or volunteer is well known to us
- 5.6 Our leadership ensures all leadership members, employees, and volunteers have clear role descriptions which include requirements to follow LCA policies and procedures and also make reference to child safety requirements
- 5.7 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers understand and uphold the obligations outlined in the LCA Child Safety Code of Conduct<sup>2</sup> and the LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour
- 5.8 Our leadership maintains accurate and confidential records of recruitment processes for all leadership, employee, and volunteer appointments.



## 6 STANDARD

### OUR REPORTING AND COMPLAINTS SYSTEM IS CHILD-FOCUSED

Our congregation has a reporting and complaints process which has a clear focus on child safety, is accessible to children and is clear regarding roles and responsibilities.

#### HOW WE SHOW THIS:

- 6.1 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers who engage with children understand their respective roles and legal responsibilities regarding mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, and failure to report
- 6.2 Processes for reporting abuse of a child, a child at risk, or grooming of a child are displayed within our congregation spaces and are accessible to everyone
- 6.3 Child-friendly versions for reporting abuse of a child, a child at risk, or grooming of a child are also displayed
- 6.4 Children in our congregation are provided with a variety of ways to make complaints, raise concerns, or give feedback
- 6.5 Our pastor(s) and other leaders know to support our employees and volunteers in making reports if they reasonably suspect a child is at risk or has been harmed
- 6.6 In situations where child safety concerns are raised in relation to a member of our congregation, our leadership understands its responsibilities to report to the LCA Professional Standards Department and to follow the relevant LCA policies and procedures
- 6.7 Our leadership maintains accurate, confidential, and secure records of all complaints and child safety concerns
- 6.8 All complaints and reports relating to child safety concerns are taken seriously by our leadership, managed promptly, and all parties treated respectfully.

<sup>2</sup> The LCA Child Safety Code of Conduct is being developed in 2022. Please tick N/A if this policy has not yet been approved and implemented



**7**

**STANDARD**

## **OUR PEOPLE UNDERSTAND CHILD SAFETY**

Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers participate in regular training that provides them with an understanding of the fundamentals of child abuse, the importance of ethical conduct, how to respond to concerns, and how to prioritise child safety in a congregational context.

### **HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 7.1 Our pastor(s), other leaders, and all employees and volunteers who engage with children are compliant with the LCA Safe Church Training requirements
- 7.2 Compliance with the requirements of Safe Church Training is regularly reported to our leadership
- 7.3 Our congregation has a system in place to remind our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers when Safe Church Training is due
- 7.4 Our pastors, other leaders, and all employees and volunteers who engage with children have a thorough understanding of children at risk, child abuse and its indicators (including grooming), child safety risk assessment and risk management, reporting responsibilities, how to respond to disclosures of abuse, and the characteristics of institutional abuse
- 7.5 Our leadership supports our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers to undertake further child safety training as appropriate.



**8**

**STANDARD**

## **OUR RISK MANAGEMENT HAS A CHILD-SAFETY FOCUS**

Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers have the knowledge and skills to identify and reduce risks to children in relation to physical and online surroundings, church activities, and church-related outings.

### **HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 8.1 All congregation activities involving children are carefully risk-managed using child safety risk management processes
- 8.2 Our leadership, pastor(s), and relevant employees and volunteers know how to reduce identified risks to children and
- 8.3 Our leadership, pastor(s), and relevant employees and volunteers know to cancel activities if risks to children cannot be adequately reduced
- 8.4 We regularly review our church's physical spaces and reduce identified risks to children
- 8.5 Our leadership provides information to employees, volunteers, children, and families about appropriate and safe online engagement with children as appropriate.





**9**  
**STANDARD**

## **WE REGULARLY REVIEW OUR CHILD SAFETY PROGRESS**

Our congregation is committed to implementing these standards and to making sure that progress is regularly reviewed.

### **HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 9.1 Child safety is on the agenda for all our leadership meetings, including the Annual General Meeting
- 9.2 Our leadership ensures that a self-assessment of our congregation's child-safety progress occurs once a year
- 9.3 Our leadership oversees the preparation of a Child Safety Plan each year using information from our annual self-assessment
- 9.4 Our leadership oversees implementation of the Child Safety Plan and regularly reviews progress
- 9.5 Each year, we submit our Child Safety Plan to the district's Professional Standards Officer for collation.



**10**  
**STANDARD**

## **OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ARE CHILD SAFE**

The church has clear policies and procedures about child safety that help our people to develop and maintain a safe environment for children.

### **HOW WE SHOW THIS:**

- 10.1 Our leadership follows LCA policies and procedures that relate to child safety
- 10.2 LCA policies and procedures that relate to child safety are accessible for children, families, pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers
- 10.3 Our leadership encourages children and families to provide feedback regarding the implementation of our child safety policies and procedures
- 10.4 Our church leadership analyses complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to help us improve.





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