



SAFE PLACES CODE OF CONDUCT

An initiative of the Safe Places Unit
ACC-NSW

March 2008

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INTRODUCTION

The ACC is responsible for the provision of a wide variety of ministry and services within the community in New South Wales & the Australian Capital Territory. It is expected that all staff and volunteers will conduct themselves in a way that honours the moral, ethical and social standard of the organisation, respects the members of the community with whom we interact and endeavour at all times to ensure safe ministry is undertaken. In order to achieve this, a SAFE PLACES CODE OF CONDUCT has been established to provide guidance as to the way employees & volunteers should behave when engaged in activities relating to the ACC.

The following Code of Conduct summarises for ACC in NSW/ACT church workers:

- The values and attitudes of the ACC in NSW & ACT on Safe Ministry and specifically on the issue of child protection and child safe environments.
- Informed and good practice expectations
- Appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.
- Expectations regarding attitudes, responsibilities, behaviours and partnerships necessary for safe ministry.

Who is covered by the Code?

The way you behave in the workplace/place of ministry reflects your commitment to the values of Australian Christian Churches in Australia (ACC). This Policy therefore applies to all employees, contractors and volunteers of ACC in NSW and the ACT engaging in ministry, whether full time, part time or casual, of any level of seniority. Paid staff and pastors may have additional expectations with regards to conduct. Specific policies for pastors are available from the ACC NSW/ACT State Office. Local church codes of conduct for paid staff should be available through the local church office.

ABOUT ACC

The standards set out in the Code are closely aligned the ACC mission & values:

Who we are

Australian Christian Churches people are Bible-loving, evangelical and Pentecostal. We are committed to bringing other people to a relationship with Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20) and seek to display the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Gal 5:22-23). We believe in the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and have a commitment to fulfilling our destiny in God.

Our Vision & Mission is

Building a Holy Spirit empowered movement in which leaders can lead, churches can grow and people can fulfill their God given destiny to influence the world with the life of Jesus Christ.

This vision can only be realised through you promoting the organisation's core values in your area of ministry and in your dealings with all members of the community.

The Core Values of the ACC in Australia are:

Love God

- We honour a triune God as the Creator of all life
- We celebrate God's Presence through dynamic praise & worship
- We obey God's commission through Holy Spirit empowered world mission
- We declare God's infallible Word through contemporary ministry

Love People

- We respect the right of every individual to find and fulfill their God-given destiny
- We recognise the local church as God's unique vehicle in empowering people for life
- We value people of all races and gender, and accept them as equal before God

Love Life

- We receive God's gift of eternal life
- We enthusiastically enjoy life by celebrating and sharing God's abundance with others
- We value all human life as a gift from God to be honoured and protected

Our Core Beliefs

We believe that the Bible is God's Word. It is accurate, authoritative and applicable to our every day lives.

We believe in one eternal God who is the Creator of all things. He exists in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He is totally loving and completely holy.

We believe that sin has separated each of us from God and His purpose for our lives.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ as both God and man is the only One who can reconcile us to God. He lived a sinless and exemplary life, died on the cross in our place, and rose again to prove His victory and empower us for life.

We believe that in order to receive forgiveness and the 'new birth' we must repent of our sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and submit to His will for our lives.

We believe that in order to live the holy and fruitful lives that God intends for us, we need to be baptised in water and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to use spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues, which is the initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God has individually equipped us so that we can successfully achieve His purpose for our lives which is to worship God, fulfill our role in the church and serve the community in which we live.

We believe that God wants to heal and transform us so that we can live healthy and prosperous lives in order to help others more effectively.

We believe that our eternal destination of either heaven or hell is determined by our response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again as He promised.

ADHERING TO THE CODE

The SAFE PLACES CODE OF CONDUCT represents a commitment to ethical, fair and safe behaviour in the organisational environment with particular reference to provisions for safe ministry with children and young people. It is the responsibility of all employees whether volunteer or paid to uphold this commitment and abide by the standards set out in the Code.

We all have a duty to our congregation members, our colleagues and to the community to behave responsibly, ethically and in a manner that reflects well on Christ and His Church.

The Code is positively stated with the expectation of positive response. However, a serious breach of the SAFE PLACES CODE OF CONDUCT may face disciplinary action. This may include withdrawal from active ministry, dismissal or legal action. You should appropriately report any significant breach of the Code to your supervisor, the Senior Minister or the Safe Places Unit.

OUR STANDARD OF CONDUCT

The standards set out below have been developed as a guide to appropriate conduct in the ministry environment. The framework on which they are based combines the ACC core values with basic ethical principles and relevant laws and regulations. The Code is supported by other organisational policies and procedures that will be referenced in the standards. You are encouraged to consult these documents for further detail.

1. Stay Connected

- Make every effort to maintain a strong personal relationship with God.
- Attend church regularly even when not serving on a ministry team.

2. Be Faithful

- Endeavour to live a life of good character, being faithful in marriage and living free of substance abuse.
- Minister in accordance with the stated Mission & Vision, Core Values and Core Beliefs of the Australian Christian Churches in Australia.
- Endeavour to pray regularly for the church, its leadership and the people to whom you minister.
- Be faithful to roster/ministry commitments, training requirements, team meetings and policy requirements.
- Actively seek to lead people to Christ through the ministry you undertake.

3. Bring Honour

- Conduct yourself in a way that sets a good example for others and represents the church and Christ well both inside and outside church programs. This includes respectful language, appropriate dress and behaviour. Specifically:
 - ACC volunteers & employees are not to engage in any behaviour that could be construed as sexual harassment or sexual misconduct as defined in the ACC NSW & ACT SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

- ACC volunteers & employees are not to initiate or become involved in a relationship of a sexual or inappropriate nature with any person to whom s/he is not married (Inappropriate nature means a level of contact and intimacy with a person that goes beyond the bounds of a “normal” social relationship)
 - It is not acceptable for a volunteer or employee to be the perpetrator of verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse (Any reports of this behaviour will be treated seriously and sensitively)
 - ACC volunteers & employees are expected to treat all persons with dignity and respect regardless of age, sex, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or personal circumstances
 - Volunteers & employees are not to engage in any illegal activity or assist persons engaged in illegal activities
 - It is expected that employees will report to their supervisor any behaviour within the organisation that could be considered illegal or have the potential to seriously affect the good standing of the local church or the ACC in the Christian and wider community
- Speak well of the church, its leadership, and congregation members.
 - Be a co-operative team member and follow directions given by the Ministry Leaders and/or Pastor (except in the situation where their directions were to directly contradict stated OUR POLICY - CHILD-SAFE AND CHILD FRIENDLY POLICY 2008 - 2011).
 - Advise church leadership if you are accused or convicted of any criminal offence or if relevant criminal proceedings are pending.
 - Avoid any conflict between your private interests and your role within the organisation.
 - It is not appropriate for an employee to use their position for private gain or advantage
 - Volunteers & employees must declare any interests that could be construed as potentially conflicting with their role in the organisation to their supervisor
 - Carry out the responsibilities of your ministry role with integrity.

It is important to note that:

- The use of a volunteer or employees' position to seek or actively encourage the offer of, any form of **personal** donation, benefit or gift, is not appropriate while representing the ACC unless specifically endorsed in writing by the local church board or senior minister
- It is acceptable to engage in official fundraising activities or other form of ministry support for endorsed church ministries and charities
- It is appropriate for volunteers & employees to accept gifts in accordance with normal social or hospitality custom (These are usually of nominal value and do not suggest any future obligation)
- If you are unsure of how to respond to the offer of any gift or service, or it appears inappropriate in light of this code, the matter should be discussed with your supervisor / pastor
- Gifts from family members or close personal friends would be deemed to be of a personal nature and not reportable

4. Be a Leader of Integrity

- Make every effort to be aware of and abide by the policy, protocols and procedures that govern the operations of Safe Ministry in the ACC in NSW/ACT.
- Take responsibility and the initiative where and when appropriate to ensure that children and young people are both **valued** and **protected** while in your care.
- Endeavour to deal with personal issues that may affect your ability to lead others.
- Actively seek to strengthen your skills and understanding in the area of ministry in which you serve.
- Act with good stewardship over the resources used within your area of ministry or church. These include financial resources as well as equipment and property.

Information and Communication

- Protect the privacy of others. Not all information that may be received in the course of your duties is public:
 - Church workers must not disclose confidential information received in the context of pastoral ministry to their spouse, family, friends, colleagues or any other person without the consent of the person providing the information, except where disclosure is required by law; or disclosure is clearly in the public interest (such as to avoid the risk of serious injury or harm to any person)
- Maintain and preserve all official records and ministry documentation as per the requirements of local church policy or ACC state policy, as outlined in OUR POLICY - CHILD-SAFE AND CHILD FRIENDLY POLICY 2008 - 2011.

Ministry Representation

- Do not make public comment or enter into public discussions or debate while acting in your capacity as employees or volunteers of the church or ministry unless this has been sanctioned by the senior minister or ACC State Executive. Any public comment made by volunteers & employees made through any form of media, must be communicated in such a way that it is clear that it is made in their private capacity unless otherwise authorised to do so.
- Outside of the established ministry activities, you should maintain accountability for your interactions with others that may be perceived as 'church' related or endorsed. Specifically this requires you to abide by the following:
 - Do not organise any 'official' church event, activity or outing without prior approval from the appropriate source (*This is usually a ministry leader or pastor*)
 - Except in the case of parents arranging activities for their children & their friends, do not organise any unofficial children's or young person's event, activity or outing involving children without consultation with the children's or youth ministry leader or pastor

Computer and Technology Use

- Abide by the guidelines set out in the local church's technology, internet and email policies in regards to the use of computers and other technology that may be provided for ministry activities.

5. Ensure Safe Ministry

Volunteers & employees are required to comply with OUR POLICY - CHILD-SAFE AND CHILD FRIENDLY POLICY 2008 - 2011. When responsible for the supervision of others, volunteers & employees must act with high regard to the duty of care they have over these people, particularly when it comes to minors.

Health, Safety and Security

- Complete all security & reference checks and training that is either a requirement of federal or state law or is a stated matter of OUR POLICY - CHILD-SAFE AND CHILD FRIENDLY POLICY 2008 - 2011.
 - Assess risks and act appropriately to ensure the safety of all people in your care while serving in your area of ministry. (*see SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROCEDURES for details*)

Appropriate Behaviour

- Conduct yourself in a manner that is considered appropriate with children & young people. Pay particular attention to the following guidelines for Appropriate behaviour.
- Do not meet with a child or young person other than your own child(ren) in an unsupervised (non-public) context. This includes:
 - Transport arrangements
 - Pre & post ministry situations
 - Official children's ministry activities
 - Non-children's ministry activities whether on or off church property
- Avoid 'special' relationships or favouritism with children or young people.
- Don't give personal gifts or invitations without consultation with the children's ministry leader & parental consent.
- Use appropriate language at all times. Swearing /foul language is inappropriate. Using sexually explicit language is inappropriate.
- Dress should be clean, tidy and appropriate for the activities being undertaken.
- Value a child's expressions of affection but keep your responses appropriate (*see **Appropriate Physical Contact***).
- Keep all interactions with children & young people (*in your care*) public. Do not visit or meet with a child or young person privately (*i.e. in an unsupervised context*).
- Respect parents/guardians and their role as primary carers for their children. Avoid usurping their authority in ministry situations.
- Teach children through your behaviour to respond confidently BUT appropriately to unknown adults.

For further information on appropriate behaviours and practices please refer to the OUR POLICY - CHILD-SAFE AND CHILD FRIENDLY POLICY 2008 - 2011 & associated documentation.

- **Appropriate Physical Contact** includes:
 - Keeping all interactions public
 - Allowing children to initiate expressions of affection but discourage any display of affection that is inappropriate, given the age and maturity of the child. (For example: it is appropriate to pick up and cuddle a distressed 1 year old. It is not appropriate to allow a 13 year old girl to sit on the lap of a leader and request a cuddle.)
 - Responding appropriately to expressions of affection initiated by others by limiting touch to safe zones of upper arms, shoulders and to commonly accept public expressions of friendship

- Avoid all behaviours that can be considered inappropriate or could be identified as placing a child or young person at '**Risk of Harm**'.

This includes behaviours that can:

 - Cause psychological or emotional harm (This includes teasing, bullying, discrimination, spiritual abuse & harassment)
 - Cause physical harm (all activities should be age and developmentally appropriate, with due consideration for the environment in which they will be conducted. Risk assessments should be completed prior to activities)
 - Result in neglect
 - Be defined as sexual misconduct or abuse
- In addition:
 - DO Not Provide alcohol or tobacco to a child or young person
 - Do NOT provide a child/young person with any drug not prescribed by a physician and authorised by a parent (documentation required)
- Immediately report to a ministry leader or pastor any and all:
 - Suspicious behaviour
 - Potentially reportable conduct or conduct that may place a child or young person at risk of harm
 - Disclosure or awareness of inappropriate behaviour or abuse of a child/ young person, whether on the part of a children's worker, child or other person
- Participate as requested in any training, counselling or course of action that the ACC in NSW/ACT advises as necessary to prevent or address situations that could/have place(d) children or children's workers at risk.
- Check with a children's ministry leader if you are unsure of the appropriate action in any given situation.

REVIEW

This document will be reviewed accordingly to ensure it complies with relevant laws and remains relevant and effective. Any proposed amendments recommended for approval should be submitted to the Safe Places Unit for consideration.