

JOINT STATEMENT OF WAYNE ALCORN, SEAN STANTON & PETER BARNETT

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1. The Royal Commission has made inquiry as to how the ACC has addressed, or otherwise proposes to address, each of the Royal Commission's 10 elements of a child safe institution. Our response to this enquiry is set out below.
2. In providing these answers we note that the ACC's National Child Protection Policy ('CP Policy') & ACC Safer Churches Guidelines were written and implemented by December 2015, prior to the production of the Royal Commission's 10 elements of a child safe institution in July 2016. Further, the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines are currently in the process of being amended so as to ensure Victorian ACC constituent churches comply with the seven "Child Safe Standards" as now legislated in the State of Victoria.

The ACC has or proposes to address the Royal Commission's 10 elements of a child safe institution as follows:

ELEMENT ONE: Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.

3. The ACC is a movement of self-governing churches, who commit themselves to work together with other churches in the movement for the purpose of mutual support and the spread of the gospel in Australia and in the world.
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4. At present, the ACC has over 1,000 affiliated churches and over 315,000 constituents.
 5. The ACC's highest governing body is the National Conference.
 6. Since the Royal Commission's Case Study No. 18 was finalised, the ACC National Conference, in May 2015, adopted a National Child Protection Policy (ACC.0014.001.0002) (CP Policy).
 7. This action by the National Conference made the National CP Policy binding as a minimum standard for all Credential and Certificate holders and Constituent churches. The CP Policy, Section 3, page 2, states: "*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.*"
 8. As contained in the Purpose of the ACC National CP Policy (page 1, ACC.0014.001.0002),

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 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.
 9. The CP policy, Section 6 outlines the responsibilities of National Executive, State Executives and Constituent churches in the implementation of the CP Policy (ACC.0014.001.0002).
 10. The CP Policy, Section 9 provides behavioural expectations for all ACC People in relation to child protection and well-being (ACC.0014.001.0002).
 11. The CP Policy, Section 7 makes it a requirement of the ACC National and State Executive to develop, and then for Constituent Churches to adopt, the ACC National Child Protection Practice Guidelines as a minimum standard (ACC.0014.001.0002). These are known as the ACC Safer Churches Guidelines (ACC.0014.001.0015).
 12. The National Executive has developed and implemented the 'ACC Safer Churches Strategy' to ensure that child safety (and safety of all vulnerable people) is considered and implemented from the highest level of leadership in the ACC movement, (the National Executive), and then disseminated consistently across the entire national affiliate.
 13. The ACC Safer Churches Strategy Includes:
 - a. the National Child Protection Policy (ACC.0014.001.0002),
 - b. Safer Churches Guidelines (ACC 0014.001.0015),
 - c. Safe Churches Manual (ACC.0014.001.0086),
 - d. Safer Churches Awareness Training,
 - e. Safer Churches Implementation Kit (ACC ACC.0014.001.0024)
 - f. ACC Volunteer Church Worker Declaration (ACC.0014.001.0151
 - g. ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct (ACC.0014.001.0153)

- h. ACC Volunteer Church Worker Code of Conduct (ACC.0014.001.0152)
- i. ACC Grievance Procedure for Certificate Holders (ACC.0014.001.0266)
- j. Access to Safer Churches 1800 Helpline

14. To assist with the implementation of the ACC Safer Churches strategy at the National, State and local church levels, officers have been appointed at both the National and State levels. These officers are known as the 'National Safer Churches Panel' and 'State Safer Churches Officers'.
15. Further, Safer Churches Guideline 8 (ACC 0014.001.0015) recommends that each local ACC church appoint a local Safer Churches Contact Teams/Person.
16. Prior to the development and Implementation of the ACC National Safer Churches Strategy, each state adopted its own state-based approach dependent on relevant legislation in that State.
17. Having a single National child protection policy and ACC Safer Churches Strategy adopted at the National Executive level of the ACC, gives a strategic way of developing like-mindedness amongst ACC People. With like-mindedness, the ACC has been able to, and will continue to, develop a strong institutional culture concerned with protecting the best interests of every child and of holding child safety as paramount. It has also improved the level of governance, accountability and transparency across the ACC in relation to matters of child protection.
18. Over time, and with ongoing reference to, and review of, these child safe policies and strategies, a child safe mentality has become increasingly imbedded in the ACC organisation.

ELEMENT TWO: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

19. The ACC has greatly considered how best to include children in the decision making process. In particular, the ACC considers it paramount that children are taken seriously, in order for the organisation to have an effective response to reports of child sexual abuse.
20. The CP Policy, Section 6 places a responsibility of the ACC National Executive, States and Constituent churches to: *"Advocate and promotes Child rights, empowering and engaging Children and Young People in support of this policy."* (ACC.0014.001.0002, pages 6 -7)
21. The CP Policy, Section 8 includes as part of the behavioural expectations that:

"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 services we provide to them. We will treat Children and Young People as individuals and respect their unique abilities and vulnerabilities. We expect ACC People to express attitudes and engage in behavior that respect and support Children or Young People."
22. ACC Safer Churches Guideline 5 makes the recommendations that:

"ACC People actively assist Children and Young People to:

 - *trust their feelings,*
 - *say 'no' when they feel unsafe,*

- understand when to be confidential and when to talk to others about their concerns,
 - find safe people to talk to,
 - know when they feel vulnerable, and
 - have a say in the activities and programs in which they participate as far as practical"
- (ACC 0014.001.0015).

23. Under the heading 'Disclosures' at 23 of the ACC Safer Churches Manual (ACC.0014.001.0086), this element is reflected in the ACC's procedures,

"The fact that a child or young person tells you that they have been abused means that they have a high respect for you and that they trust you greatly, because disclosures are rare. Therefore, it is important that you respond appropriately."

24. It is an obligation on all ACC People that they will report concerns to the appropriate party (and ultimately to the appropriate government agenc(ies) (whether that be a Safer Churches Person / Team, the police and/or the appropriate authorities) *whenever* a child or young person discloses they have been, or are at risk of being abused (page 3, ACC.0014.001.0015). This is an objective obligation to ensure that all children and young people are taken seriously.
25. Aside from the objective obligation to report all instances of disclosure, ACC People are also encouraged to report any other concern of child sexual abuse, regardless of whether they are legally obligated to in their State or Territory or not, as we consider everyone to be a voluntary reporter (page 23 ACC.0014.001.0086). The Christian beliefs of the ACC imposes a biblical calling to care for the vulnerable, meaning that we need to act appropriately to our concerns about a child or group of children who are or may be at risk of being harmed.
26. As part of the ACC's commitment to children, we facilitate opportunities for them to tell us their views and feedback about the services we provide them. ACC People are expected to express attitudes and engage in behaviour that displays respect and support towards children, including taking their concerns seriously. Moreover, ACC People are expected to follow the ACC complaints procedure without hesitation when a child raises a concern of abuse (page 9, ACC.0014.001.0002).
27. The ACC has introduced the Helpline which in part, seeks to provide a safe, unthreatening place where children can report actual or suspected abuse and seek advice.
28. The commitment of ACC People to listen to children means that children will always be respected and active participants, whenever practicable, where there are decisions to be made that affect them.

ELEMENT THREE: Families and communities are informed and involved.

29. The CP Policy, Section 8 (page 7, ACC.0014.001.0002) states the commitment ACC People have to parents and carers to (amongst other things):

...[communicate] 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.

...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.

...involve parents whenever possible and practicable in the decision-making process that impacts on them and the Children or Young People.

30. The CP Policy, Section 8 (page 8, ACC.0014.001.0002) places behavioural requirements on ACC People to (amongst other things):

... understand and acknowledge the significants of family relationships for Children and young people"

31. ACC Safe Churches Guideline 7 (ACC.0014.001.0015) in relation to the use of electronic communication recommends that ACC people *"in the case of communication with Children under 16 will be done with the full knowledge of the parents of carers"*.
32. ACC Safer Churches Guideline 8 (ACC.0014.001.0015), related to the ACC process for reporting of concerns about children and young persons at risk of harm is to provide ongoing support and pastoral care for all parties involved, including the child or young person and their family, as much as is practical.
33. The ACC has also introduced the Helpline which in part, seeks to provide a safe, unthreatening place where children, young people, family members and the wider community can report actual or suspected abuse and seek advice.
34. Under Guideline 6 of the Safer Churches Guidelines (ACC.0014.001.0015), *all* ACC People must learn the indicators of Child or Young Person abuse.
35. ACC local churches, as self-governing entities, bear the ultimate responsibility for implementing the ACC Safer Churches strategy in their church. However, the ACC National Child Protection Policy establishes that it is the role and responsibility of each Constituent Church to ensure all ACC People within the respective Constituent Church understand, and adhere to, their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy. This is the ACC's central method of ensuring that families and communities remain informed.
36. Additionally, the ACC Safer Churches Awareness Workshops (or an equivalent program), are mandatory for all ACC Credential and Certificate holders, and are otherwise recommended to all other ACC People. The greater the utilisation of these training sessions, the more widely the community will be informed about matters of child safety, the indicators of child sexual abuse and how to respond.

ELEMENT FOUR: Equity is promoted and diversity respected.

37. The ACC (including all ACC People) are committed to the safety and wellbeing of *all* children and young people who access any of the ACC activities, programs, services or facilities (page 7 ACC.0014.001.0002). This is a non-exclusive commitment without limitation on race, age, background, gender, religious beliefs, disability, culture or otherwise.
38. In the CP Policy, Section 8 ACC People are expected to share a commitment under the National Child Protection Policy to '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' (page 7, ACC.0014.001.0002).

39. ACC Safer Churches Guideline 15 – Safe Spiritual and emotional environments (ACC.0014.001.0015) includes statements from the CP Policy (ACC.0014.001.0002) in relation to promoting equity and respecting diversity.
40. One way in which diversity is respected is through access to State Safer Churches Officers, as well as by attendance at the ACC Safer Churches Awareness Workshops. ACC People who hold the position of State Safer Churches Officer, or who coordinate ACC Safer Churches Awareness Workshops will be familiar with and best equipped to understand and respond to the various diversities amongst their local community.
41. ACC People are expected to make available information about the National Child Protection Policy to children and parents or carers. The information is to be made available in developmentally appropriate language and translated to accommodate the main communities that access ACC services (page 8, ACC.0014.001.0002). This helps to ensure that diverse people groups can be informed about child safety and that even those children or people who do not speak English will have avenues to report concerns of child sexual abuse.
42. The Helpline was created, in part, to support the implementation of the ACC Safer Churches Strategy among ACC's cultural groups, particularly those where English is a second language.
43. ACC People are also expected to be able to understand and respond to the special needs of children with developmental delays or disabilities (page 9, ACC.0014.001.0002).
44. Part of the fabric of the ACC movement includes respect for diversity. ACC's constituents are made up of many different demographics and social classes. The ACC National Child Protection Policy and its implementation is intended to inform and equip all ACC People with the knowledge and tools necessary to address child sexual abuse in every context, language and culture. This is how the ACC has sought to promote equity (and access to justice) since Case Study No. 18 as well as implementing objective, national standards that are expected to be followed irrespective of subjective ideology.
45. While the ACC's National Child Protection Policy was prepared in respect of the diversity the ACC movement maintains, we expect ACC People to put the rights of the child to protection from harm ahead of any cultural and religious practices of families who come to our churches (page 9, ACC.0014.001.0002).

ELEMENT FIVE: People working with children are suitable and supported.

46. The ACC National Executive, ACC State Executive and Constituent Churches have committed themselves to:
- a. using best practice standards in the recruitment, screening and employment of the ACC People;
 - b. providing ACC People with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles;
 - c. to providing ACC People with regular supervision and development; and,

- d. to ensuring ACC People will 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 (page 8, ACC:0014.001.0002).

47. Recruitment of staff and volunteers in ACC churches is performed by the local church. ACC Safer Churches Guideline 9 (ACC.0014.001.0015) provides a recommended minimum standard for the appointment of all Volunteer Workers and team leaders. This includes providing a sample Volunteer Church Workers Declaration, and Code of Conduct in the ACC Safer Churches Implementation Kit (ACC.0014.001.0024). The Implementation Kit and Safer Churches Manual (ACC.0014.001.0086) provide additional information in relation to due diligence in appointing church workers. There may be additional recruitment requirements for paid workers, as determined by the local churches.
48. Applications to become a credentialed ACC Minister, and all credential renewals must be accompanied by the relevant State Government screening check.
49. All ACC Credentialed and Certificate holders are required to complete child protection training (of which the Safer Churches Awareness Workshops incorporate the ACC Child Protection Policy) to maintain their Credential or Certificate.
50. Board Members and all ACC People who have a direct role with children and youth are to attend Safer Churches training.
51. In having a selective screening and recruitment process, the ACC and its Constituents are able to better ensure that only suitable candidates are positioned in roles that interact with children.
52. The ACC has Constitutional powers in order to force change such as the removal of ACC Credentials/Certificates, and the deregistration of churches. Where an ACC Person is ultimately deemed unsuitable to work with children, or to remain credentialed under the ACC, the ACC will exercise this authority.
53. ACC People working with children are supported through the ACC Safer Churches strategy, including the Safer Churches Awareness training, the Helpline, Implementation Kit, the Safer Churches officers, and other ACC People who can offer guidance and practical assistance as necessary. I will elaborate on these below.
54. ACC People (including those who are working with children) have access (via the ACC website) to ACC Child Safety tools and resources such as the ACC National Child Protection Policy and Safer Churches Guidelines. ACC People are able to contact their local Safer Churches Officer(s), or speak with their senior leader, all of whom should be able to guide them on the correct procedure for matters of child safety.
55. ACC People are also able to contact their ACC State Operations Centre with questions regarding the implementation of the ACC National Child Protection Policy, or the National Safer Churches Helpline for advice or assistance.

ELEMENT SIX: Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.

56. Page 23 of the ACC Safer Churches Manual (ACC.0014.001.0086), best reflects the ACC's overarching approach in responding to complaints of child sexual abuse:

A fundamental question in considering whether we have a reasonable concern is "how is the child experiencing this?" This is a child focused approach, rather than an approach that asks first, 'what will happen to me?' or 'what will happen to... the alleged perpetrator, the caregiver, the leader?' The child focused approach is based on the best interests of the child. This approach is essential if we are to truly protect the vulnerable.

However, even with the child's best interests in mind, we may still be given to subjective decision making based upon our own judgment. It is useful to apply the indicators of abuse to the equation before we make a judgment (see pages 18-20). We might call these indicators 'red flags', alerting us to potential problems. The indicators are objective and can help us make a decision based upon what is best for the child, rather than being based upon our own opinion.

57. This approach ensures that the process to respond to complaints is child focused in two significant ways. Firstly by reinforcing that what is in the best interests of the child should be at the heart of every decision or action, process or procedure. Secondly, that where subjective human behaviour may interfere with pursuing the true best interests of the child, there are a sound set of indicators which can be relied upon to come to an objective decision. If reference to the indicators suggests that there is reason for concern regarding child abuse, then ACC has established an obligation to report those concerns (page 23 ACC.0014.001.0086).
58. In relation to children being provided a safe environment to report in and having information about how and who to report to, the Safer Churches Implementation Kit (ACC.0014.001.0024) has a poster for constituent churches to post in church venues. This poster provides the name of the local Safer Churches Contact and also the Helpline 1800 number.
59. The operation of the 1800 number Helpline is an independent company who provides this service cross-denominationally, with a child focused ethos. In this way the advice that is given is both child focused and independent from any conflict of interest that might arise when considering a child focussed response.

ELEMENT SEVEN: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.

60. Under Guideline 6 of the Safer Churches Guidelines (ACC.0014.001.0015)), all ACC People shall learn the indicators of Child or Young Person abuse, helping to ensure that ACC People are equipped to recognise concerns of child safety as they arise.
61. ACC local churches, as self-governing entities, bear the ultimate responsibility for implementing the ACC Safer Churches strategy in their church. However, it is recommended by the National and State Executive that Safer Churches implementation is a regular agenda item for Local Church Boards. This causes the matter of child safety to be regularly considered within local churches, and should manifest in continual education and training for ACC People.

62. The ACC National Child Protection Policy establishes that it is the role and responsibility of each Constituent Church to:
- a. Ensure all ACC People within the respective Constituent Church understand, and adhere to, their obligations in accordance with the ACC Child Protection Policy;
 - b. Advocate to promote child rights, empowering and engaging children or young people in support of the Policy; and
 - c. Develop opportunities for regular discussion to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability of child protection (page 6 ACC.0014.001.0002).
63. Additionally, the ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct (page 4, ACC.0014.001.0153) establishes that it is the responsibility of the Senior Minister and leadership of the local church to implement ACC Child Protection Policy.
64. The ACC recommends that local churches appoint a safety team and Safer Churches Contact Officers. Part of the role of Safer Churches Contact Officers is to assist local churches with implementing the Safer Churches strategy.
65. To assist ACC Local churches and pastors with implementing the Safer Churches strategy, the ACC National Executive has made available to them the ACC Safer Churches tools and resources (which can be downloaded through the ACC website), as well as *Safer Churches Awareness Workshops*. The ACC *Safer Churches Awareness Workshops* are aimed at all ACC Leaders (paid or volunteer).
66. In accordance with ACC Safer Churches Guideline 1 (ACC.OO14.001.0015) all ACC Credential and Certificate holders must attend a *ACC Safer Churches Awareness Workshop* (or an equivalent program), at least once every three years to maintain their Credential or Certificate. This helps to maintain their knowledge, skills and awareness.
67. *Safer Churches Awareness Workshops* have been run across the country since late 2015. To date, more than 7,400 pastors, leaders and volunteers have attended these one-day workshops. The *Safer Churches Awareness Workshop Manual* (ACC.0014.001.0086) is the resource used throughout this training, and is then held by the participant as an ongoing reference.
68. ACC International stakeholders including ACCI field workers, fixed term workers, strategic partners, associates, staff, volunteers, board members and overseas ACC credential holders have access to specially developed online child protection training. The online training is a customised version of a course offered by *In Safe hands*.
69. Online training is also available to ACC Credentialed or Certificate holders in extremely remote areas of Australia, or those who are incapacitated and are unable to physically attend an ACC Safer Churches Workshop.

ELEMENT EIGHT: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.

70. As already mentioned, the ACC CP Policy directs all ACC People at a National, State and local church level to promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of the Policy, and developing opportunities for regular discussion on the topic of Child Protection.

Through this approach, the ACC hopes to foster a transparent environment where the risk of abuse is significantly reduced through awareness and confidence in ACC child protection procedures.

71. In addition to the behaviour expectations provided in the CP Policy Section 8 (ACC.0014.001.0002), the ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct (ACC.0014.001.0153) and ACC Volunteer Church Worker Code of Conduct (ACC.0014.001.0152) provide additional guidelines for working safely with all people including children. This includes behavioural expectations in terms of non-abusive leadership.
72. In terms of ensuring safe physical environments for children, the Safer Churches Guideline 16 (ACC.0014.001.0015) provides a recommended set of practices for safe physical environment for children and youth programs and events. These recommendations include: that at all children's programs and events ACC People ensure adequate numbers of leaders are present to supervise the program. ACC People are not to allow leaders or helpers to be alone, one-on-one, with a child, and there should always be a mix of both male and female leaders to provide support for both boys and girls.
73. 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 (Guideline 16 ACC.0014.001.0015).
74. The ACC Safer Churches Manual (ACC.0014.001.0086) chapter 4 "Safe Programs" addressed program and event safety in terms of proper preparation, implementation and appropriately responding to incidents. The focus of this chapter is on emotional, spiritual and physical environments. In relation to safe physical environments the Manual states:
- "Providing safe physical environments is important if attendees are to participate freely in activities. To ensure that both leaders and ministry program participants are kept as safe as reasonably practicable, consider completing a risk assessment and action plan for your ministry program, as suggested in the Approval for Ministry Process. Completing the Approval for Ministry Process will provide transparency and accountability to the congregation and community in terms of a written risk assessment of your program or ministry event annually. (ACC.0014.001.0086, page 46)*
75. In most states of Australia the provision of Safe Environments in churches is also subject to legislation through the Work Health and Safety Act. Chapter 4, pages 41-42 of the ACC Safer Churches Manual (ACC.0014.001.0086) provides information and recommendations including ACC Safer Churches Recommendation 12 in relation to Health and Safety.
76. In relation to the online environment, with the increasing use of technology within churches, the ACC has put in place specific guidelines for ACC People to minimise the opportunity for child abuse to occur online (ACC Safer Churches Guideline 7 ACC.0014.001.0015).
77. Specifically, this Guideline seeks to ensure that online communications between ACC People and children are made, as far as is practical, as a team communication and not one-on-one; that there is no downloading, transmitting and storing of any inappropriate material; and that no ACC Person intentionally sends electronic communication without disclosing their identity.

78. It is recommended that no ACC People have electronic communication with children under 16 without the full knowledge and consent of the child's parent(s) or carer(s).

ELEMENT NINE: Implementation of child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved.

79. One of the implementation measures for the ACC National Child Protection Policy is the discussion of the Policy as a standing item for regular meetings at all levels of ACC National Executive and Constituent Churches (page 11, ACC.0014.001.0002). This includes at Local Church Boards. One of the main purposes for this frequent discussion is the review of implementation. If and when concerns are brought to light, all levels of the ACC are expected to be proactive in addressing those concerns and improving child safety as necessary.
80. An important element of continual review and improvement is the creation of the 'State Safer Churches Officer' position. This is a role appointed by each State Executive, with the primary purpose of assisting the implementation and outworking of the Safer Churches strategy. The 'State Safer Churches Officers' convene, along with other suitably skilled people, to make the 'National Safer Churches Panel'. This Panel meets regularly to carry out reviews of the Safer Churches policies, guidelines, processes and abuse matters reported and provide its recommendation to the National Executive.
81. Another part of the Safer Churches strategy is making the Helpline available as a reporting and guidance method. The National Executive are provided with summaries of Helpline matters as part of a permanent agenda item each time the National Executive meet. This gives the ACC central visibility to child protection issues, as well as highlights to the National Executive any potential or actual flaws in current child protection policy and procedure.
82. In addition to various articles published by the National Executive highlighting training opportunities, the National Executive will annually publish a report to all ACC People about the effectiveness of the implementation of the Policy across the ACC (with the first report to be presented to the 2017 National Conference). These reports will address any areas of concern within the current child protection framework and if there has been any Policy changes. These reports will be a valuable tool for all ACC People to reflect on the best practice procedure for their own implementation of child protection measures.

ELEMENT TEN: Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

83. The ACC has carefully considered, in light of the findings of Case Study No. 18, the different moving parts of child protection within our organisation, and has developed the multifaceted, wide-spread approach that we have described here. The manifestation of this is the ACC Safer Churches strategy which was implemented on 1 December 2015.
84. In particular, Case Study No. 18 revealed several areas in which the ACC policies and procedures could be improved to foster to an even greater degree a child safe institution. The most notable of these areas included:

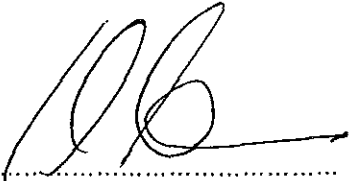
- a. Requiring (rather than recommending) affiliated churches to adopt an appropriate child protection policy and practice guidelines;
 - b. Requiring ACC Credential and Certificate holders to attend regular Child protection Training;
 - c. Reserving the term 'Pastor' for those holding a formal ACC credential, rather than lay leaders;
 - d. Setting out the appropriate way to manage conflicts of interest;
 - e. Documenting how initial reporting should be carried out and how to implement an ongoing response to abuse matters;
 - f. Establishing the standard of behaviour and guidelines for child safe and child friendly ministry programs and events; and
 - g. Ensuring that there was a straightforward and supportive process for individuals to be able to make complaints, as well as an effective way of addressing those complaints.
85. Following the identification of the areas for reform, the ACC redrafted our policy and procedure documents (what we now refer to at the ACC Safer Churches strategy) with a strategic focus.
86. When developing the new ACC Safer Churches strategy policies and procedures, we recognised the importance of seeking input from external parties who were knowledgeable in establishing child safe organisations. Accordingly, the ACC sought input from several outside organisations, including:
- a. Australian Childhood Foundation;
 - b. Child Abuse Consultancy Education & Training (CACET);
 - c. Childsafe Ltd;
 - d. ESPC Services Ltd;
 - e. Safe Ministry Resources (SMR) Pty Ltd.
87. The Australian Childhood Foundation were selected to provide the initial draft of the ACC National Child Protection Policy. SMR were selected to assist with the development of the ACC's child safe procedures.
88. The ACC's new procedure for dealing with conflicts of interest when responding to allegations of child sexual abuse is of particular importance in documenting how the ACC is child safe. The ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct has been amended to include specific references to conflicts of interest. This includes:

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 (page 3, ACC.0014.001.0153).

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

(page 5, ACC.0014.001.0153).

89. The ACC Conflicts of Interest Guidance Statement (ACC.0014.001.0277) as referred to above details specific guidance as to how to identify, avoid and properly disclose conflicts of interest.
90. In addition to the changes in the ACC Ministerial Code of Conduct, conflicts of interest are also managed through the creation of the Helpline which operates as the first point of contact for people wishing to make a report or to seek guidance. The Helpline is run by an independent company and, as such, they are in a position to provide objective and impartial guidance and can navigate conflicts of interests in an appropriate manner.
91. Another aspect of the ACC policy and procedure which we believe will have significant bearing on the institution as a whole being child safe is addressing the misuse of the title "Pastor" amongst constituent churches. The ACC has not, and does not endorse addressing anyone as "Pastor" who does not hold an ACC credential. A person who is referred to as "Pastor" is, for most people within the church setting, automatically assumed as being a person you can trust, a person who has had formal pastoral training and is recognised by a reputable ministerial body. The ACC acknowledges the weight that this title carries and the importance of screening an individual before endorsing him/her as a pastor. To this end, the ACC has expressly discouraged all constituent churches from using the title "Pastor" in the absence of ACC accreditation. In support of this initiative, Wayne Alcorn has written a number of articles (ACC.0014.001.0275) and has spoken at a number of State Conferences and regional events on the subject.
92. The ACC Safer Churches strategy has a number of distinct but inter-related components which all assist in ensuring child safety; these have been provided previously to the Royal Commission. The components include:
- a. the National Child Protection Policy (ACC.0014.001.0002),
 - b. Safer Churches Guidelines (ACC 0014.001.0015),
 - c. Safe Churches Manual (ACC.0014.001.0086),
 - d. Safer Churches Awareness Training,
 - e. Safer Churches Implementation Kit (ACC ACC.0014.001.0024)
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 - i. ACC Grievance Procedure for Certificate Holders (ACC.0014.001.0266)
 - j. Access to Safer Churches 1800 Helpline (provided by Safe Ministry Resources P/L)
 - k. National Safer Churches Panel
 - l. State Executive Safer Churches Officers
 - m. Local Safer Churches Contact People
93. All of the aspects of child protection that are either required at law, or that the ACC believes are critical to child protection, have been reflected in the ACC Safer Churches Strategy.
94. The ACC policies and procedures on child safety are not stagnant, and will continue to adapt as necessary to protect the best interests of each child that ACC People come into contact with.



Signature of Wayne Alcorn

9/3/17


Date



Witness

9/3/17

Date



Signature of Sean Stanton

9/3/17

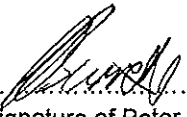
Date



Witness

9/3/17

Date



Signature of Peter Barnett

9/3/17

Date



Witness

9/3/17

Date