



# 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 pastor(s) and other leaders understand that they have a legal duty of care and a duty to protect children and that they also have related reporting obligations.

They review and clarify their legal responsibilities at leadership meetings, at least once a year.

- 1.2 Our pastor(s) and other leaders advise all newly appointed leaders of their child safety responsibilities, before the leaders commence their duties.

Our pastor(s) and other leaders also provide child safety resources that help the new leaders to fulfil their responsibilities.

- 1.3 Our pastor(s) and other leaders prioritise the physical, spiritual, emotional, cultural, and sexual safety of children.

In situations where child safety concerns are raised, our pastor(s) and other leaders prioritise the safety of children over the pastoral care needs of known or alleged offenders.

- 1.4 Our pastor(s) and other leaders communicate important messages about child safety to our congregation by regularly promoting child safety messages, including information about appropriate behaviours when engaging with children.

Child safety messages are shared before, during and after worship, during children's ministry, and in our congregational communications, such as in our newsletters, on our webpage, and on our social media pages.

(This helps our congregation to understand and model appropriate behaviours. It also helps our congregation participants to readily identify and report inappropriate or disturbing behaviours relating to children, such as grooming behaviours.)

- 1.5 Our 'Statement of Commitment to Child Safety' and the Child Safety Standards poster are permanently displayed within our congregation spaces, on our webpage, and in our congregational communications, such as our newsletters and social media posts.

- 1.6 Our pastor(s) and other team leaders remind the congregation that the Child Safety Standards booklet, which describes the standards and their elements, is available to download at [www.lca.org.au/css](http://www.lca.org.au/css) and is also available in hard copy on request.

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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.



## 2 STANDARD



## WE VALUE, RESPECT, AND LISTEN TO CHILDREN

Our congregation understands that children have the right to have a say, raise concerns, and be listened to. We take the views of children seriously, and we are committed to listening to children and to providing them with opportunities to participate and be heard. We work especially hard to help children raise concerns if they need to.

### HOW WE SHOW THIS:

- 2.1 We promote the child-friendly version of the LCA Child Safety Standards, as well as the 'Your Rights' and 'Speak Up' messages, in our spaces and in our communications, such as newsletters and social media posts.
- 2.2 Our pastor(s), leaders, employees, volunteers, and ministry leaders value the opinions of children by providing children with age-appropriate opportunities to give feedback about their safety, to raise concerns, and to participate in decision-making.  
  
We also periodically ask children about what helps to make them feel safe and comfortable during worship, children's ministry, and other congregational activities.
- 2.3 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, volunteers, and ministry leaders listen to children and take them seriously if they raise a safety concern or are worried about something.
- 2.4 Our congregation is welcoming to children, and we try to help children to develop and strengthen their church friendships.
- 2.5 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers acknowledge children during worship and other activities.

We show children that they are valued and loved by including them in worship and prayer.

# 3 STANDARD



## WE INCLUDE FAMILIES IN CHILD SAFETY DECISION-MAKING

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 and ministry leaders regularly remind parents that we take their children's safety and wellbeing seriously.

We do this by regularly informing parents and carers of all the ways we keep children safe and our commitment to risk management for all children's activities.

3.2 Our leaders regularly remind parents and carers that the LCA child safety-related policies, procedures, and resources are accessible on the LCA website by periodically posting information and links about these resources in our newsletters, on social media sites, and in other communications.

3.3 Our leaders regularly remind parents and carers that they can raise concerns at any time.

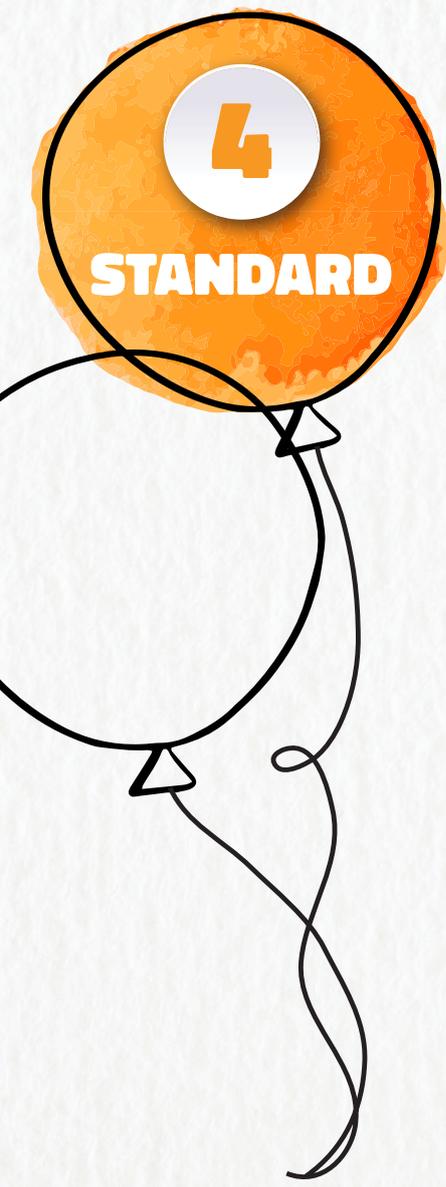
We provide parents and carers with information about safe people to approach in our congregation if they have a concern by displaying the LCA 'Speak Up' poster for families in our congregational spaces and in our online communications. We listen and respond appropriately to all concerns raised by parents and carers.

3.4 Our leaders ensure parents and carers are aware that they share the responsibility for keeping their children safe during activities. We do this by regularly reminding families that children are not to be left alone or unsupervised in church or during church-related activities at any time unless they are signed into an approved program or activity.

We have notices in our congregational spaces, as well as in our online communications, highlighting the importance of this.

3.5 We periodically seek feedback from parents and carers about child safety in our congregation using a range of methods, such as via parent surveys, online reminders, suggestion boxes, and posters.

3.6 We invite parents and carers to contribute to activity planning and decision-making, which relates to their children.



4

## STANDARD

### **WE RECOGNISE THAT CHILDREN WITH DIVERSE NEEDS AND CHILDREN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS ARE MORE VULNERABLE. WE RESPECT, WELCOME, AND SUPPORT THESE CHILDREN TO HELP THEM STAY SAFE AND TO HELP THEM THRIVE IN THEMSELVES AND IN THEIR FAITH**

Our congregation recognises that children from diverse backgrounds have unique vulnerabilities and are more likely to be at risk, or experience abuse or neglect. We know this is particularly true for children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, children from refugee backgrounds, children from other cultural groups, children with disabilities, children who are diverse in their sexuality and gender, 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 We understand that we have a responsibility to help everyone acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture.

We also understand the importance of Aboriginal culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.

4.2 Our leaders do not tolerate racism and regularly remind the congregation of this via our newsletter, social media posts, and other communications.

4.3 Our pastor(s) and other leaders communicate to our congregation that children from diverse backgrounds and children with diverse needs have the right to worship in the same way as all God's children.

Our leaders regularly remind the congregation of the vulnerabilities that families and children from diverse backgrounds face, of the importance of cultural safety, and the need for us all to be supportive and protective.

Our leaders do this by periodically, including notifications in our newsletters, in our worship services, in our social media posts, and in other congregational communications as appropriate.

4.4 Our leadership promotes cultural safety, understanding, and inclusivity that reflects our wider community and encourages children and families from different cultural groups and backgrounds to participate in worship and church activities.

Our leaders do this by displaying cultural materials, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, other national flags, or posters and messages in the languages of the various cultural groups within our congregation and community.

4.5 Our pastor(s) and other leaders understand that children with special needs or children from diverse backgrounds find it harder to raise concerns or make reports.

We address this by providing information about reporting and safety in languages and contexts that reflect the diversity of our congregation.

4.6 Our pastor(s) and other leaders strive to identify and reduce barriers faced by children with diverse needs to help them participate and raise concerns if they need to.

4.7 Our pastor(s) and other leaders empower, encourage, and support children, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children, to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights by including culturally specific activities that celebrate the diversity of the congregation and our wider community.



**5**  
**STANDARD**



## **OUR PEOPLE ARE SUITABLE, SCREENED, AND SUPPORTED**

Our leadership requires that all employees and volunteers who work with children, as well as our pastor(s) and other leaders are suitable, screened, supported, and monitored.

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

- 5.1 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers have current and valid working with children type clearances administered according to our local state or territory legislative requirements.
- 5.2 Our leaders make it clear to the congregation that work with children cannot commence until a current and valid clearance is received.
- 5.3 Our leaders use the Safety Management Online database, for monitoring all screening compliance and renewals.
- 5.4 Our screening compliance is reported to our leadership team on a quarterly basis.
- 5.5 Our leadership requires that all employees, and volunteers who work with children, as well as all other leaders, are provided with clear role descriptions.
- 5.6 Our leadership follows an intentional appointment process, as outlined in Safe Church Training and in Church Worker Support resources, when appointing an employee or volunteer.  
The leadership follows LCA policies and procedures, even when the prospective appointee is well known to us.
- 5.7 Our pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers understand and have committed to following the LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour as well as all approved LCA policies and procedures – [www.lca.org.au/policies](http://www.lca.org.au/policies)
- 5.8 Our leadership maintain accurate and confidential records of all selection processes for all leaders, employee, and volunteer appointments, including in situations where an applicant has not been successful.



**6**  
**STANDARD**

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

Our congregation has a reporting and complaints process that 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 in relation to reporting and responding to child safety concerns.

Our leaders take complaints and reports, in relation to child safety concerns, seriously.

Complaints and reports are managed promptly, thoroughly, confidentially, and respectfully.

6.2 Our leaders review their roles and responsibilities, in relation to reporting of suspected harm of children, at least once a year in a leadership meeting.

6.3 Our leaders ensure all employees and volunteers who engage with children review their roles and responsibilities, in relation to reporting of suspected harm of children, at least once a year.

6.4 Our leaders display information about reporting suspected harm of a child prominently within our congregation spaces.

Our leaders also periodically remind the congregation about the importance of reporting suspected harm of a child in our newsletters, social media pages, and during other events as appropriate.

6.5 Children and families in our congregation are encouraged to raise concerns or make complaints via a variety of child- and family-friendly ways.

Children and families also know who they can talk to if they feel unsafe.

6.6 Our pastor(s) and other leaders understand that they should provide support to employees and volunteers in situations where employees and volunteers are required to make reports of suspected harm of a child.

6.7 In situations where child safety concerns are raised in relation to a member of our congregation, our leadership understand they are required to:

- a) report to LCA Professional Standards, and
- b) follow the relevant LCA policies and procedures.

6.8 Our leadership maintains accurate, confidential, and secure electronic records of all complaints, child safety concerns, and breaches of LCA policy using the Safety Management Online database.





**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 up to date in LCA Safe Church Training.
- 7.2 Our leaders use the Safety Management Online database, to monitor and report Safe Church Training compliance.
- 7.3 There is reporting on Safe Church Training compliance to our leadership team on a quarterly basis.
- 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 (including grooming), indicators of abuse, and the characteristics of institutional abuse.  
We understand how to respond to disclosures of abuse and related reporting obligations.  
We understand and apply safety management practices, using the ChildSafe™ safety management system. We also understand considerations around cultural safety.
- 7.5 Our leadership regularly encourages and promotes the importance of Safe Church Training to our employees, volunteers, and families.  
We do this via our newsletters, social media posts, during and after worship as appropriate, and in other congregational communications at least once a year.
- 7.6 Pastors, lay workers and volunteers are encouraged to develop and improve their skills and knowledge of best practices when working with children, especially in areas of cultural safety and wellbeing.





## **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 programs, activities and events, as well as church-related outings.

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

- 8.1 We use the ChildSafe™ safety management system to document risk assessments and safety plans for all congregational programs and activities involving children, including worship services.  
Activities do not proceed without 'Permission to Proceed' from our Safe Church Coordinator.
- 8.2 Our pastor(s), other leaders, and all employees and volunteers who engage with children and who are responsible for arranging activities and events are confident and proactive in relation to using our risk management tools.
- 8.3 Our risk assessments and safety plans consider the physical environment, the nature of the activity, supervision ratios and all of the surrounding circumstances.
- 8.4 Our leadership, pastor(s), and relevant employees and volunteers understand that, in situations where the risk is assessed as too high, they must reduce the identified risks to children.
- 8.5 Our leadership, pastor(s), and relevant employees and volunteers understand they must cancel activities if risks to children are assessed as too high and cannot be adequately reduced.
- 8.6 Our leadership reviews our church's physical spaces annually and makes sure to reduce any identified risks to children that are found.
- 8.7 Our leadership periodically provides information to employees, volunteers, children, and families about appropriate and safe online engagement with children. We do this via our newsletter, social media posts, and other congregational communications.



**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 undertakes a child safety self-assessment of our congregation's child safety progress once every three years, or more frequently if required.
- 9.3 Our leadership oversees the preparation of a Child Safety Standards Action Plan once every three years and submits this to LCA Professional Standards via the Child Safety Standards online portal.
- 9.4 Our leadership oversees the implementation of our Child Safety Standards Action Plan and reviews the plan's progress on a quarterly basis at a minimum.
- 9.5 Our leadership reviews complaints, concerns, and safety incidents at the earliest opportunity to identify causes and any patterns to help us continually improve.





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

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

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

- 10.1 Our leadership and our congregation follow LCA policies and procedures that relate to child safety.
- 10.2 LCA policies and procedures that relate to child safety are accessible and easy to understand for children, families, pastor(s), other leaders, employees, and volunteers.





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