



Code of Ethics for Ministers

of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc

and all affiliated Churches and Agencies

Version 4

Approved 11th April 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Code of Ethics

The purpose of this document is to define the professional ethical standards and personal behavioural standards required of Ministers within Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc (CCVT).

The Code is designed to enable understanding of and adherence to the responsibilities and obligations of working ethically in Christian ministry. The behaviours and ethical practices described in the Code are essential for healthy and safe ministry. Maintaining these standards has significant implications for the recipients of ministry, those in ministry roles, and the related Affiliated organisation.

The Code also assists employing churches and agencies to understand the unique role of the Minister within their community. A collective understanding of the expectations placed on a Minister will better enable Ministers to work towards health and longevity in their ministry role and will assist churches provide a more supportive work environment.

Accredited Ministers are diverse in age, gender, tradition, leadership style, level of education, level of experience, skills, talents, spiritual giftings, cultural background, socioeconomic background, and political position, and there is also significant diversity across the shape, size, and culture of the faith communities in which they serve. It is nevertheless intended that the Code of Ethics informs and applies to ministry and leadership across all contexts.

The Code of Ethics is designed to address the common areas of learning, development, professionalism, scope of practice, and the standard of practice expected of Ministers of Religion, whilst also allowing for a reasonable degree of self-direction and contextualisation.

The Code is based on the common obligations that Ministers have to comply with criminal law, civil law, human rights law, employment law, best practice, and the expectations of the community in which they serve.

1.2. Application of the Code

The Code of Ethics applies to all Ministers within CCVT, its Affiliates, and associated ministries. This includes but is not limited to senior, executive, associate, families, children, youth and student ministers/pastors, chaplains, and church planters.

These Ministers shall be listed in the “People in Ministry” section of the CCVT Directory and are required to familiarise themselves with the Code of Ethics.

In accordance with policy, all people appointed to formal ministry roles or recognised as Ministers, whether paid or unpaid, are required to be Accredited with CCVT and to progress to Endorsement if not already Endorsed. Adhering to the Code of Ethics is an ongoing requirement of Accreditation and Endorsement with CCVT, inclusive of those applying for Accreditation.

The Code applies to Ministers for the duration of their time under CCVT Accreditation or Endorsement. It is not limited to business hours or while employed but applies at all times.

The Code applies equally to all forms of electronic and online communications as it would to face-to-face or in-person interactions and communications.

1.3 Commitment to Safety

The Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc (CCVT) are committed to building communities of hope and compassion where each place of ministry and mission is a safe space for everyone to grow in their discipleship of Jesus and in their relationships with one another.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13: 34-35 (NIV)

“No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8 (NLT)

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to the view that all people should be able to live, learn, serve, and grow in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind. The adoption and promotion of this Code of Ethics and its associated protocols for responding to breaches of the Code, reflects a deep commitment to creating and maintaining safe ministry.

Ministers are encouraged to enhance their understanding of the requirements of a contemporary Minister through ongoing professional development, including relevant laws, theology, practical skills, and cultural awareness. This equips Ministers to conduct themselves in a safe, effective, and God-honouring manner and to build a healthy and sustainable ministry. Clarity of the professional role they occupy enables them to fulfil their responsibilities as an employee and leader, emphasises self-care, and focuses on their own professional development. These responsibilities give rise to **Standards of Professional Ministry**.

Recognising the unique spiritual authority and power inherent within Christian leadership and ministry, it is the responsibility of a Minister to exercise their duty of care with an exemplary level of relational awareness, high trust and commitment to servanthood. Ministers should adopt an attitude of safe ministry that prioritises the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of recipients of ministry. These responsibilities give rise to **Standards of Pastoral Ministry**.

The unique nature of Christian ministry requires Ministers to be Christlike examples to others in every area of life not just in and through professional and pastoral ministry. Personal behaviour and relationships have a significant impact on the capacity to lead and serve others with integrity. Managing the complexity of dual relationships, conflicts of interest, and family dynamics in the context of ministry requires insight, wisdom, and maturity. These responsibilities give rise to **Standards of Personal Behaviour and Relationships**.

1.4 Format of the Code

Each section of the code contains a ‘Preamble’ which introduces the topic and outlines its guiding principles. Although the Code cannot and is not intended to encompass every scenario faced in Ministry, the preamble offers general guidance and allows for self-direction and context in situations where there may not be a definitive rule on how to act.

The ‘Minimum Standards’ listed then specify the non-negotiable expectations of conduct of those in formally recognised ministry positions.

1.5 The Code of Ethics and other Policies and Procedures of CCVT

The Code of Ethics is to be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures. Where there is any inconsistency between them, the higher standard will apply.

- Affinity:2 (or any future iterations thereof)
- CCVT Accreditation and Endorsement of People in Ministry Policy
- CCVT Safe Places Policy
- CCVT Marriage Licence Policy
- Policies and Procedures including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, and including Reporting Procedures and Individual Employment Contracts

For advice on specific matters or to make a report to CCVT, contact:

CCVT Safe Places Coordinator
Level 5, 111 Cecil Street (P.O. Box 5302)
South Melbourne, Victoria 3205
safeplaces@churchesofchrist.org.au
03 9488 8800

1.6 Evaluation, Review, and Update of the Code

This document is clearly marked below with the date of adoption by the Board of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc.

Just as the role of a Minister continues to evolve, so too do the laws, community expectations, best practices, and the diversity of communities in which Ministers serve. The development and refinement of a relevant Code of Ethics is therefore an ongoing process, so that it continues to be a practical and useful tool which contributes to a sustainable and adaptable ministerial workforce.

The current Code has been developed collaboratively with input from Ministers and professionals from diverse backgrounds. It continues to be refined, and feedback for improvement is encouraged. The Board will provide opportunity for Ministers or members of Affiliates to contribute to the review of this Code.

Formal evaluation of the Code of Ethics will take place every 5 years with a view to making revisions. More regular revision may take place if required.

1.7 Current Authorisation

Responsible person	Rob Nyhuis, EO
Version	4
Approved by the Board of CCVT Inc	11 th April 2024
Review date	December 2028

2. The Professional Duties and Responsibilities of Ministers

2.1 Preamble

Ministers have a responsibility to maintain high standards of knowledge and skill in all the areas of ministry relevant to their role.

Affinity:2 outlines the requirement that affiliated churches and agencies seek the Accreditation of all appointed Ministers.

Ministers within the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania (CCVT) have a duty to know and abide by all Federal and State laws and regulations governing their work, to know and abide by all Policies adopted by CCVT under which they are accredited, and to know and abide by the Constitution and documented Policies of the local church in which they are employed to lead and serve.

Ministers must recognise their own personal and professional limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond their competence or certification, or that is not part of the role for which they have been trained and qualified.

Christian Ministry may encompass a very wide variety of activities, processes, and events with individuals and groups across a diversity of ages. It is the responsibility of the minister as a leader of community to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all involved in a ministry event or activity which occurs under their oversight.

Christian ministry requires that Ministers undertake continuing professional development appropriate to contemporary pastoral leadership.

When Ministers are appointed into roles involving professional team relationships with other ministers, all are called to form and maintain a co-operative work environment.

To ensure competency to serve, Ministers must take responsibility for their own emotional, physical, spiritual and mental health and wellbeing.

2.2 Minimum Standards of Professional Behaviour

1. Ministers are responsible to seek and maintain Accreditation with CCVT.
2. Ministers have a duty to know, uphold and abide by the legal, professional, and ethical standards, rules and policies which regulate their ministry.
3. While recognising that ministry is a partnership between professional Ministers and collective lay governance, Ministers will follow the counsel and accept the oversight of those to whom they are accountable.

Professional Competence

4. Ministers have a duty to maintain professional standards of knowledge and skill in areas in which they minister and offer the highest quality of ministry of which they are capable.
5. Ministers must only offer and provide ministry, counsel, and services for which they are trained, qualified and competent to perform, ministering within the limits of their expertise, experience, gifting, and skills.
6. Ministers must not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training, or experience.
7. Ministers must not engage in psychological counselling in areas for which formal training is normally required for diagnosis and treatment, unless they are appropriately qualified, supervised, and maintain current professional registration.

8. Ministers must not offer or provide advice around investments, financial planning, or financial administration services unless they are qualified, maintain current professional registration and are independently accountable to a body external to the church.
9. Ministers must not facilitate processes, run events, or lead activities which could put others at risk of physical, psychological or emotional injury unless they are appropriately trained, qualified and hold current relevant certification of the capacity to manage the process, event or activity safely.
10. Ministers will make appropriate referrals when they do not have the professional competence or expertise, pastoral competence, or cultural competence to offer ministry to an individual or group.
11. Ministers will communicate with the Affiliate's governance group immediately if they begin to doubt their capability to fulfil professional or pastoral responsibilities.

Occupational Safety

12. Ministers will carry out their work safely with awareness of the occupational health and safety risks of the activities in which they engage and with appropriate risk mitigation strategies in place.
13. Ministers will not misuse alcohol, drugs, or other substances at work or when engaged in work related activities.
14. When on medication that could affect work performance or the safety of others, ministers must inform the person or body to whom they are accountable of the potential impact, to ensure any necessary precautions or adjustments to work can be put in place.

Financial Integrity

15. Ministers must only use, or authorise the use of, the Affiliate or entity's financial resources or facilities for work-related purposes, unless otherwise stipulated in their employment agreement.
16. Ministers must fully disclose and be publicly accountable for all Affiliate or entity monies which they handle.
17. Any fees or honoraria received for ministry activities conducted within the normal course of their work, must be passed on to the Affiliate or entity in which they work, unless specifically approved by a policy of that Affiliate or entity.
18. Ensure that where fees and payments are charged for any service, those to whom they minister are aware of all fees beforehand and can give informed consent.

Professional Development

19. Ministers will undertake continuing education or professional development to ensure that they remain competent to minister, improve the standard and quality of ministry within the affiliated organisation and remain aware of significant changes in the context of ministry.

Self-Care

20. Ministers will tend to their own physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health and wellbeing through intentional processes of self-care to be fit and able to fulfil the responsibilities of their role.

21. Ministers will ensure they maintain a sustainable and healthy balance between personal, family, and ministry responsibilities giving due weight and priority to each at appropriate times.

Professional Relationships

22. Ministers should seek and maintain regular pastoral supervision with a professional who offers support, personal accountability, and the opportunity for reflective practice in relation to ministry situations, pastoral ethics and the impact of ministry on personal wellbeing.
23. Ministers should recognise and respect the call, appointment, abilities, expertise, areas of responsibility, skills, commitments, and views of colleagues.
24. When in leadership roles, Ministers must ensure that colleagues for whom they are responsible are provided with:
 - a. A safe working environment (including safe housing where provided);
 - b. Role clarity with reasonable expectations of ministry commitments;
 - c. Opportunities to develop their ministry and leadership skills; and
 - d. Personal encouragement, support, and regular constructive feedback.
25. Ministers will refrain from comments that may damage the reputation of colleagues or damage the wider profession and Church, except where appropriate under the relevant complaints policy or whistleblower legislation.
26. Ministers will participate in processes to resolve misunderstanding and conflict with colleagues, seeking reconciliation and resolution in a timely manner and engaging mediation or facilitation if interpersonal processes do not lead to resolution.
27. When participating in any complaints or disciplinary processes, Ministers will ensure their actions and conduct are professional, upholding the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.
28. Retired ministers and ministers in non-congregational appointments must recognise the inherent power they are perceived to possess. They are to respect and support the congregational Ministers, exhibiting leadership only at the invitation of the formal congregational leadership and avoid being party to discontent.

Employment Responsibilities

29. Ministers should carry out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with their employment agreement and position or role description.
30. As employees, Ministers must know and abide by all organisational rules, policies and procedures governing the ministry activity, occupation, or entity in which they are serving.
31. Ministers should utilise leave entitlements in accordance with their employment agreement.
32. Ministers should consult with the Affiliate's governance group, before accepting remuneration or employment other than that which is stipulated in their employment agreement.
33. Ensure that any bi-vocational or external employment does not impede or adversely affect their ability to minister within the agreed vocational ministry time, as assessed together with the Affiliate's governance group.

3. The Pastoral Duties and Responsibilities of Ministers

3.1 Preamble

Pastoral ministry must always be exercised in the service of others for their spiritual growth and wellbeing. The practice of pastoral ministry comes with the responsibility to create and maintain relationships of trust founded on respect, care, and nurture.

Pastoral ministry is offered to all regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, economic circumstances, education, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

The duty of care and responsibilities inherent in **pastoral relationships** are formed through the commitments and promises made by a minister in public services of commissioning, ordination, or recognition of appointment. All members of a congregation in which a Minister serves along with all who meet and interact with a Minister by virtue of their appointment to and performance of their pastoral role, are in a pastoral relationship with the Minister.

Pastoral relationships are concerned with fostering maturity in Christian life and for fullness of life for all people.

The authority and training associated with appointment to the role of Minister means that those serving in this capacity have significant **spiritual authority and power** in pastoral relationships. The potential for spiritual abuse means that this authority and power must always be exercised with humility, understanding and insight, and used for the benefit of others. It is the duty of any Minister not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, and to refrain from any form of conduct that exploits another for their own advantage or the advantage of any third person. This includes any action, verbal, written or electronic, physical, or emotional that could reasonably be interpreted as abuse, regardless of whether it was intended.

Positional power means that any sort of sexual or romantic behaviour or relationship between a minister and recipient of ministry can never be as equals and is therefore prohibited. A Minister must take full responsibility for initiating and maintaining clear sexual boundaries, recognising that sexual misconduct by a Minister has a particularly significant impact on victims, the Minister's family, and on the ministry itself. Ministers require a mature understanding of **sexual ethics in ministry**.

Pastoral ministry is a high trust relationship in which private and personal information is often shared with the Minister. **Privacy and Confidentiality** refers to the processes of those in ministry to protect the personal information of those receiving ministry. The limits to confidentiality and the principle of informed consent need to be understood by Ministers and by recipients of pastoral ministry at the outset of intentional pastoral interactions.

3.2 Minimum Standards for Pastoral Ministry

1. Ministers will always point those to whom they minister to centre their faith on Jesus Christ, to trust in God, and live out Christian values as guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Pastoral Relationships

2. Ministers must treat all to whom they minister, and all with whom they come into contact, with compassion, justice, and respect, always acting in their best interests.
3. Ministers will provide pastoral ministry that is beneficial to individuals and the community and does not harm them.

4. Ministers must uphold their duty of care to all people regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference.
5. Ministers will enable those to whom they minister to make their own decisions and choices in life, encouraging them to move toward self-determination under God, and recognising their responsibility for their own lives.
6. Ministers will respect the right of others to hold and articulate divergent views around issues of religion and society while encouraging robust and authentic debate and dialogue.
7. Ministers will ensure continuity of care through making alternative arrangements for pastoral ministry when on leave or unable to fulfil their responsibilities through illness or any other reason.

Spiritual Authority and Power

8. Ministers must be aware of the spiritual authority, personal and relational power they possess within pastoral relationships, and use it only to care, to serve, to support or to nurture others.
9. Ministers must not abuse their authority and power for any personal purpose, gain, recognition or benefit.
10. Ministers must not misuse their authority and power through any form of spiritual, emotional, verbal, physical, financial or sexual abuse.
11. Ministers must not engage in, or condone in others, any form of exploitation, discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, coercive control, or marginalising behaviour.
12. Ministers must not seek or obtain financial or material gain for themselves or others from pastoral ministry beyond their regular stipend, allowances and recognised fees.

Sexual Ethics in Ministry

13. Ministers must be aware of the dynamics of sexual attraction which occur within ministry environments and always accept professional responsibility for establishing and maintaining sexual boundaries with recipients of ministry.
14. Ministers must not solicit or engage in any sort of sexual or romantic activity with a recipient of pastoral ministry or any person with whom they have a pastoral duty of care.
15. Ministers must not ask questions about the intimate details of a person's sexual life or share details of their own sexual behaviour in the context of ministry, without legitimate reason, and without their spouse's consent (if applicable).
16. When preaching, teaching, counselling, or providing pastoral care, the use of theological and educational materials, including online material, must be appropriate and honouring of the God-given gift of sexual expression.
17. If a Minister becomes aware of a pastoral relationship in which the recipient of ministry gives any indication of emotional or sexual attraction, the Minister must:
 - a. Immediately raise the situation with a professional supervisor
 - b. Provide for alternative primary pastoral care for the recipient of ministry.

Privacy and Confidentiality

18. Ministers will implement and comply with organisational privacy policies and procedures in an open and transparent manner.

19. Ministers must not disclose confidential information received in pastoral ministry to their spouse, family, friends, colleagues, or any other person, unless:
 - a. Informed consent has been given for the particular disclosure;
 - b. Retaining such information would result in physical, emotional or sexual harm to another person; or
 - c. Required by law.
20. Ministers should ensure the nature and limits of confidentiality are clearly understood by the recipient of ministry at the beginning of any intentional pastoral conversation, counselling, or professional supervision arrangement or program.
21. Where information needs to be disclosed, Ministers should obtain informed consent from those who have provided the information prior to disclosing, or, where prior consent was not possible or appropriate, advise those who have provided the information as soon as possible after the disclosure.
22. Ministers should ensure that accurate, secure, and reliable pastoral records as required by relevant legislation, policies and procedures are maintained in such a way that requirements of privacy and confidentiality are met.

4. The Personal Conduct, Interests and Relationships of Ministers

4.1 Preamble

Ministers within CCVT are expected to be conscientious examples and models of Christian faith and practice, keeping their public and private life above reproach.

The personal conduct, interests and relationships of a Minister will have an impact on the professional standing of that Minister, on the church community and on the profession of Christian ministry.

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual has competing interests or loyalties. A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived. In ministry it relates to circumstances in which a Minister's personal financial, relational, or material interests (including those of family members, friends and associates) conflict with the interests of the affiliate which they serve or the ministry to which they are committed. Where conflicts of interest are perceived by observers, questions are legitimately raised around integrity and the capacity of the individual for objectivity and independence of judgement.

A 'close personal relationship' refers to a relationship between a Minister and another person that is separate from a professional or pastoral relationship. These include marriage, family relationships, personal friendships, and romantic relationships. Each of these relationships have quite different relational dynamics and assumptions and create duties and expectations which are different to those created by a pastoral duty of care. All dual relationships need to be recognised and managed with wisdom and objectivity.

Sexuality is a gift from God, is fundamental to human nature and is an aspect of all relationships and interactions. It is important for Ministers to have a mature understanding of the spiritual, physical, emotional, psychological, and relational dynamics of sexuality and to have clear commitments and boundaries in place around their personal sexual behaviour.

4.2 Minimum Standards for Personal Conduct

The Law and Legal Action

1. Ministers must not break the law or encourage another to do so except in circumstances where they consider it is required by a commitment to higher Christian principles.
2. Ministers must inform the Executive Officer of CCVT Inc of any material matter which involves legal action against themselves or their Affiliated organisation.

Personal Behaviour

3. Ministers must speak with care and respect for others and not use offensive language including blasphemy, verbal harassment, racial and other forms of vilification, personal insult or comment, or obscene words.
4. Ministers should demonstrate a commitment to honesty and truthfulness and not knowingly deceive others.
5. Ministers must respect property that belongs to others, including intellectual property and not knowingly plagiarise.
6. Ministers must not use or consume any substance banned or prohibited by law and not misuse alcohol, drugs or other substances.
7. Ministers must not participate in, or allow, hazing or secret ceremonies.

Personal Finances

8. Ministers must pay all taxes, debts, and family support obligations as required.
9. Ministers must maintain a strict separation between work-related and personal financial matters, ensuring that clear account and transaction boundaries are maintained.
10. Ministers in bi-vocational roles must maintain separate expense accounts.

Conflicts of Interest

11. Ministers should make decisions and provide advice that is free of prejudice, favouritism, bias and self-interest.
12. Ministers must ensure their personal, financial, and material interests (including the interests of family members, friends, or associates) do not influence, or could not be perceived to influence, the performance of their role.
13. Ministers must not enter into relationships or situations that diminish their ability to maintain professional integrity and independence.
14. Ministers should declare any real or potential conflicts of interest to the governing body of the Affiliate or entity and where possible remove themselves from decision making processes.
15. Where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, Ministers must act in accordance with the judgement of the governing body of the Affiliate or entity in managing the conflict of interest and follow the Affiliate or entity's policies and procedures.

Close Personal Relationships

16. Ministers should ensure that there is a clear demarcation between pastoral responsibilities and the duties inherent in close personal relationships and that both parties appreciate the nature of the distinction.
17. Ministers must not take sole or primary responsibility for pastoral ministry to anyone with whom they have a close personal relationship.
18. Ministers should ensure that appropriate alternate primary pastoral care is arranged for the other person in a close personal relationship.
19. If a Minister and a person with whom they currently have or have previously had a pastoral or professional relationship identify a potential romantic relationship, the Minister must:
 - a. Apply Standard 17 above by immediately disengaging from any current pastoral or supervisory relationship with the person with whom there is a potential relationship.
 - b. Apply Standard 18 above through immediately ensuring that alternative pastoral care for the person has been arranged with another Minister or professional.
 - c. Immediately obtain advice on the appropriateness of such a personal relationship through professional supervision and then maintain a high level of supervision, mentoring or accredited counselling to facilitate reflection on the power and attractional dynamics in the relationship and the appropriate management of dual roles.
 - d. Immediately disclose the situation to an appropriate officer of the entity (e.g. Board Chair, Senior Minister or other appropriate person within the Affiliate or entity.)

- e. Immediately encourage the recipient of ministry to obtain independent and separate counselling to discuss the potential personal relationship.
 - f. Ensure that enough time to adjust to any change of the basis of the relationship is allowed for.
20. If family members or close personal friends of the Minister are called, gifted and wish to serve in ministry roles, the Minister must:
- a. Ensure that a person or entity who holds responsibility for the employment of the Minister exercises final approval for an appointment to any formal role.
 - b. Ensure that, while the Minister may exercise overall team leadership, supervision of the friend or family member in the ministry role is provided by another professional.

Personal Sexual Behaviour

- 21. Single Ministers must maintain sexual chastity in accordance with the definitions prescribed.
- 22. Ministers must maintain faithfulness in marriage or any committed romantic relationship.
- 23. Ministers must not sexually abuse, harass, exploit, groom or exhibit any form of coercive sexual behaviour to any person.
- 24. Ministers must not view, access, possess, produce, or distribute any form of pornography or exploitative material of any kind.
- 25. Ministers must not participate in sexually explicit conversation or online activity via social media, apps, gaming, or any other means, with anyone other than their own spouse, without legitimate reason.
- 26. Ministers must not engage in, solicit, or provide prostitution, escort, or sex work services of any kind.

5. Breaches of the Code of Ethics

5.1 Preamble

Any conduct that does not meet or maintain the minimum standards, regardless of the intention of a Minister, or the knowledge, awareness, and identity of a recipient of unethical ministry is a breach of the Code. The minimum standards of the Code of Ethics must not be compromised, even in the face of internal pressure from the entity to which one belongs, or external pressure from outside organisations and groups.

It is the responsibility of Minister to uphold the Code of Ethics and to develop a positive culture of safety within their community in which both known breaches of the Code and allegations are responded to promptly and appropriately. Creation of cultures of secrecy, and any practice involving closing ranks in relation to wrongdoing or incompetence, will typically foster collusion with unethical practice.

It is always preferable, where possible, that an individual directly impacted by any form of unethical behaviour or misconduct in ministry makes the report themselves to the relevant authority. Ministers wherever possible enable and support direct reporting. Any person may bring a complaint or allegation of a breach of the Code against a Minister.

All Ministers must, however, be aware of their mandatory reporting obligations in relation to criminal conduct, their obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme in their state, and their responsibilities to report any breaches and allegations under this Code to the CCVT Safe Places Co-ordinator as soon as possible.

Ministers need to be aware of when it is appropriate to raise and discuss a concern around conduct or a relationship directly with a colleague and when it is appropriate to raise the allegation with relevant authorities including the governing authority of the Affiliate or with the CCVT Safe Places Co-ordinator.

It is usually not appropriate that concerns regarding abuse or criminal conduct be addressed directly with another Minister alleged to have engaged in this form of misconduct. Neither is it appropriate that private investigation be undertaken other than to reasonably clarify a criminal allegation with a victim. Investigation and interviewing is the role of the statutory authorities who have the training and authority to carry out these functions.

If a Minister becomes aware of misconduct or has good reason to believe that another Minister has not followed a minimum standard of the Code other than those listed above, it is usually appropriate to approach the Minister directly and identify the concern, stating the actions that are thought to be in breach of the code and cite the section of the code which may have been breached.

If it is not safe or practical to do so, or if the Minister is persisting in disregarding the Code, matters can be reported to the governing authority with responsibility for the Minister, or the CCVT Safe Places Coordinator.

If in doubt about the appropriate process, obtain advice from the CCVT Safe Places Coordinator.

Following a completed Professional Standards complaint or investigation process, findings of breaches of the Code may result in requirements for professional development, performance management, counselling, dismissal from employment, removal of Accreditation or Endorsement, and/or being placed on the Churches of Christ in Australia list of Ministers Disqualified from Service (MDS).

5.2 Minimum Standards for Reporting Breaches of the Code

1. Ministers must clearly understand and act in accordance with their legal responsibilities to protect children and vulnerable individuals.
2. A Minister who becomes aware of allegations of criminal conduct including:
 - a. Child sexual abuse;
 - b. Sexual harassment;
 - c. Fraud; or
 - d. Culpable negligence;

must report the matter promptly to the police, except where it is known to have already been reported.

3. Any allegation of Reportable Conduct against a Minister in Victoria or Tasmania must be reported to the relevant Reportable Conduct Scheme in accordance with the relevant state legislation, except where it is known to have already been reported.
4. Any Minister who becomes aware of:
 - a. Abuse against any person;
 - b. Bullying or harassment;
 - c. Criminal behaviour;
 - d. Sexual misconduct;
 - e. Conduct that resulted in a person suffering harm or being at risk of harm; or
 - f. Relationships that breach the Code of Ethics;

by a Minister subject to the Code, must report it to the CCVT safe Places Coordinator, except where it is known to have already been reported.

5. Ministers must protect whistleblowers and not discriminate against, or have action taken against, any person who reports reasonable concerns made in good faith regarding breaches of this Code of Ethics.

For more information or advice on specific matters, or to make a report to CCVT please contact:

CCVT Safe Places Coordinator
Level 5, 111 Cecil St.,
South Melbourne, Victoria 3205
safeplaces@churchesofchrist.org.au
03 9488 8800

Appendix: Key Terms and Definitions

This section lists and defines the key terms used in this document.

Abuse: includes Bullying, Harassment, Emotional Abuse, Elder Abuse, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Spiritual Abuse, Coercive Control, Domestic/Family Violence, Stalking, Financial Abuse and also Child Abuse.

Accountability: the state of being accountable, liable, or answerable.

Accredited: the status of a person who has completed all the requirements of the CCVT Accreditation process.

Adult: any person aged 18 years or older.

Affiliate: a church or agency affiliated with CCVT.

Affinity:2 (or any approved successor document): the document that outlines the agreed relationship between CCVT Inc and affiliated churches and agencies.

Allegation: a statement saying that someone has done something wrong.

Bivocational: a reference to a pastor or staff member that works for multiple organisations.

Breach: failure to act in a required or promised way, or do what is required by a law, obligation, standard, agreement or duty.

Bullying: behaviour that is repeated and unreasonable, and directed towards a person or group of people, including:

- abusive, offensive, or intimidating behaviour, language or comments;
- belittling or humiliating comments;
- practical jokes, initiation, or hazing; or
- unjustified criticism or complaints.

Some bullying is indirect, like not including someone in certain activities at work, on purpose.

Behaviour which is *not* bullying includes:

- disagreeing respectfully with someone's beliefs or opinions;
- setting reasonable performance goals, standards or deadlines;
- giving reasonable directives, feedback or assessments of performance or behaviour; and
- taking legitimate disciplinary action.

Chastity: the state or practice of abstaining from all forms of sexual activity inclusive of oral sex, digital penetration, and any kind of sexual intercourse.

Child: any person under 18 years of age. This includes those also referred to as a young person. Some State/Territory based legislation indicates a child to be under 16 with regard to certain rights, however anyone under 18 years of age is still considered a child in accordance with general Child Protection legislation.

Child Abuse: a broad term covering any intentional and non-intentional behaviours by parents, caregivers, or other adults considered to be in a position of responsibility, trust or power that results in a child being harmed physically or emotionally (AIFS 2014; WHO 1999). It includes Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect, Sexual Abuse, and exposure to Family Violence.

Child Abuse Material¹: material that:

(a) depicts or describes—

(i) a person who is, or who appears or is implied to be, a child—

- as a victim of torture, cruelty or Physical Abuse (whether or not the torture, cruelty or abuse is sexual); or
- as a victim of Sexual Abuse; or
- engaged in, or apparently engaging in, a sexual pose or sexual activity (whether or not in the presence of another person); or
- in the presence of another person who is engaged in, or apparently engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity; or

(ii) the genital or anal region of a person who is, or who appears or is implied to be, a child; or

(iii) the breast area of a person who is, or who appears or is implied to be, a female child; and

(b) reasonable persons would regard as being, in the circumstances, offensive.

Child Protection: the safeguarding of children and young people. It involves legislative compliance and requires the use of Statutory Authorities within each state and territory. Child Protection is everyone's responsibility.

Child Safety Policy: A Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy should outline how an organisation keeps children safe and well and promotes and protects their human rights. CCVT no longer provides a Child Safety Policy as an umbrella policy. This policy must be developed by each local church/agency in consultation with the children and families affected by the policy, as dictated by the Victoria Child Safe Standards (for Victorian Affiliates) and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (for Tasmanian Affiliates).

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania (CCVT): a movement of Churches and Agencies (Affiliates) spread across Victoria and Tasmania.

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc. (CCVT Inc.): the networking and coordinating body that serves and supports affiliated churches and agencies.

Code of Conduct: a document that sets out expectations regarding the behaviour of staff and volunteers and includes an agreed commitment to uphold policies, procedures and practices within the church or agency and its ministries.

Coercion: the action or practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats.

Coercive Control: a pattern of controlling and manipulative behaviours within a relationship.

Colleague: a person with whom one works in a profession or business. This may include other Ministers, employed staff, appointed leaders or those working alongside or in the same team within a particular entity, as well as Ministers of other Affiliates or agencies within CCVT or other denominations.

Complaint: a statement in which dissatisfaction is expressed with regard to a particular situation.

¹ In contemporary Australian legislation, the term 'child pornography' has been replaced with the term 'child abuse material'. This is to avoid any suggestion of complicity on the part of the victim, or legality on the part of the sex offender. It also tends to imply images of children posing in 'provocative' positions, rather than children suffering horrific abuse. The term 'child pornography' does not accurately reflect the serious nature of this material.

Consent: the informed and freely given agreement for something to happen or agreement to do something. All parties must be willing *and able* to give consent.

Council of Churches of Christ in Australia (CCCA): the national body for Churches of Christ, made up of representatives from each of the states.

Criminal behaviour: Conduct or actions which are prohibited by law and punishable by the State.

Discrimination²: The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of age, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, marital status, religion, and other characteristics protected by law for which exceptions only apply in certain circumstances.

Discrimination is a complex matter. Ministers should check the particulars with regard to anti-discrimination legislation in their state and seek legal advice as needed.

Domestic/Family Violence:

(a) behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour—

- is physically or sexually abusive; or
- is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- is economically abusive; or
- is threatening; or
- is coercive; or
- in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or

(b) behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in (a) above.

Dual relationships: refers to any situation where multiple roles exist between a Minister and a recipient of ministry, e.g. when one is also a customer, client, student, friend, family member, employee or business associate of the other, regardless of which relationship existed first.

Duty of Care: the moral and legal responsibility that the Affiliate and/or an individual has to ensure the safety and well-being of those who participate in its ministries, services and activities, but particulars should be checked with regard to legislation in each state, seeking legal advice as needed.

Elder Abuse: a single or repeated act or failure to act, including threats, that results in harm or distress to an older person. This will occur where there is an expectation of trust and/or where there is a power imbalance between the party responsible and the older person. Elder Abuse can take various forms, including Financial Abuse, Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse, or Neglect.

Emotional Abuse: (sometimes called psychological abuse), is a form of manipulation and control that can harm a person's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Emotional Abuse is an ongoing pattern of behaviour to emotionally hurt someone, which is sometimes difficult to recognise, as it can take the form of subtle or deceptive behaviours. It can happen on its own, or there may also be other types of abuse happening at the same time (such as verbal abuse, Financial Abuse, or Physical Abuse). Emotional Abuse can happen in any relationship, not just in romantic partnerships. It can also occur in family

² While it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their personal characteristics, the law also recognises that exceptions for organisations may be justified in certain circumstances including (but not limited to): employment where conformity with religious beliefs is an inherent requirement of the job; ordination or the appointing of ministers of religion; or selecting or appointing people to perform functions relating to, or participating in, any religious observance or practice.

relationships, friendships, and carer relationships. It includes constant criticism, yelling, intentional embarrassment, threats or intimidation, gaslighting, consistently making the other person feel scared or unsafe, withholding affection or attention as a bargaining tool or out of anger, financial abuse, isolation, wanting to know what the person is doing all the time and staying in constant contact.

Endorsed: the status of a person who has completed all the requirements of the CCVT Endorsement process and who is therefore eligible for ordination with the Council of Churches of Christ in Australia.

Family Violence: see Domestic/Family Violence

Financial Abuse: when someone takes away a person's access to money, manipulates their financial decisions, or uses their money without consent. It often happens alongside other types of family violence, such as physical or Emotional Abuse. It can leave the victim feeling vulnerable, isolated, depressed and anxious. It can also take away their independence.

Grooming: the preparatory stage of the Sexual Abuse of children and of child exploitation, often undertaken to gain the trust and/or compliance of the child or young person and to establish secrecy and silence to avoid disclosure. A child or young person's parents/carers or other significant adults (including organisations) may also be groomed by someone intending to harm a child. Grooming may occur in person or online in one or more of the following ways.

- Building the child's trust: Using presents, special attention, treats, spending time together and playing games with non-sexual physical contact.
- Favouritism: The offender treats the child as an adult; treating them differently and making them feel like a unique friend, making the child feel more special than others.
- Gaining the trust of the child's parents or carer/s: Careful to be 'seen' as a close, caring, and reliable relative or friend of the family.
- Isolation (from family, friends): To ensure secrecy and lessen chances of disclosure or belief.
- Intimidation and secrecy: The offender may use coercion e.g., threatening looks and body language, glares, stalking and rules of secrecy.
- 'Testing the waters' or boundary violation, e.g. 'innocent' touching, gradually developing into 'accidental' sexual contact.
- Shaping the child's perceptions: The child is often confused as to what is acceptable and can take on self-blame for the situation, as his/her viewpoint can become totally distorted.

Harassment: a practice that can be against the law when a person is treated less favourably on the basis of certain personal characteristics, such as race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, breastfeeding, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status. Some limited exemptions and exceptions apply. Harassment can include behaviour such as:

- telling insulting jokes about particular racial groups;
- sending explicit or sexually suggestive emails or text messages;
- displaying racially offensive or pornographic posters or computer images;
- making derogatory comments or taunts about someone's race; and/or
- asking intrusive questions about someone's personal life, including his or her sex life.

The law also has specific provisions relating to certain types of harassment.

- Sexual harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or consensual behaviour.
- Harassment linked to the disability of a person or their associate is against the law.

- Offensive behaviour based on racial hatred is against the law. Racial hatred is defined as something done in public that offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates a person or group of people because of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin.

A one-off incident can constitute harassment. All incidents of harassment require employers or managers to respond quickly and appropriately.

Employers can also be held liable for harassment by their employees. This is called ‘vicarious liability’.

Hazing: refers to the practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. The initiation rites can range from relatively benign pranks, to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse or criminal misconduct. Hazing is often prohibited by law or prohibited by institutions because it may include either physical, sexual or psychological abuse.

Mandatory Reporting: the legal requirement for certain professional groups to report a reasonable belief of Child Abuse to Child Protection authorities.

- In Victoria, Mandatory Reporters include “people in religious ministry.”
- In Tasmania, Mandatory Reporters include “a member of the clergy of any church or religious denomination.”

Mediation: Mediation is a process by which a neutral third party helps people in conflict negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement.

Minister: (also known as ‘Pastor’), is a term referring to all people appointed to formal ministry roles, paid or unpaid. This includes senior, executive, associate, families, children, youth, and student ministers/pastors, chaplains, and also church planters. These Ministers shall be listed in the “People in Ministry” section in the CCVT Directory and are required to familiarise themselves with the Code of Ethics. Affinity:2 outlines the requirement that affiliated churches and agencies seek the accreditation of all Ministers, including any people recognised as Ministers within an Affiliate.

Neglect: the failure to provide the basic necessities of life where a child’s health and development are placed at risk of harm. Neglect is a form of Child Abuse. It includes being deprived of food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, education, supervision, safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

Offensive Language: includes blasphemy, verbal harassment, racial and other forms of vilification, personal insult or comment and obscene words.

Ordination: the public recognition by the Council of Churches of Christ in Australia that a Minister has met the requirements set out in their Policy on the Endorsement and Ordination of Ministers.

Pastoral Care/Ministry: the provision of care, counsel and education to persons who seek the support of the church or agency, including:

- guiding spiritual matters by means of Biblical or church teaching;
- prayer (inclusive of worship, intercession, and healing);
- provision of practical support such as meals;
- reconciling someone to God and/or other people;
- spiritual advice, guidance, leadership, and direction; and
- sustaining through a period of hardship and/or crisis.

Pastoral Relationship: means the relationship between a Minister and another person (recipient of ministry):

- in which the Minister is providing spiritual care for the person; or

- where the person has looked to the Minister for guidance, protection, or care; or
- where the person has made contact with the Minister in their responsibility or function as Minister

Ministers may form pastoral relationships in a variety of contexts:

- Ministers are in a pastoral relationship with all members and attendees of a congregation through the commitments they make at their induction, commissioning or other service of recognition.
- Where Ministers are in a non-Congregational placement, they are in pastoral relationship with those persons they meet by virtue of their placement.
- Where Ministers are not in or are yet to commence a placement, they are in a pastoral relationship with those persons they meet by virtue of their role as a Minister.

Personal Boundaries: guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave towards them and how they will respond when someone exceeds those limits.

Physical Abuse: direct assault on the body, such as strangulation, slapping, punching, kicking, shaking or pushing. It may also include using weapons or objects. Physical Abuse can also include throwing objects, the denial of food, and the destruction of property.

Position of Authority: all those in formal ministry roles in a church or an agency including, but not limited to: ministers/pastors; missionaries; deacons; elders; church workers (paid or volunteer); all those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults; and any other recognised leadership position.

Positional Power: the authority you have by virtue of your role or position in the organisational structure.

Procedural Fairness (Natural Justice): acting fairly in administrative decision making. It relates to the fairness of the procedure by which a decision is made, and not the fairness in a substantive sense of that decision.

Generally, administrative decisions, such as those taken in the misconduct process, must have regard to procedural fairness.

Procedural fairness requires that:

- a decision-maker is impartial, and free from actual or apparent bias (the bias rule);
- a person whose interests will be affected by a proposed decision receives a fair hearing, including the opportunity to respond to any adverse material that could influence the decision (the hearing rule); and
- findings are based on evidence that is relevant and logically capable of supporting the findings made (the evidence rule).

Professional Boundaries: limits that define appropriate conduct in accordance with the professional role or duties being assumed.

Professional Standards Committee (PSC): a committee that may be authorised by the CCVT Board to oversee compliance with the CCVT Code of Ethics, investigation of breaches of that Code, and processing and responding to allegations of abuse and misconduct within an affiliated organisation.

Professional Supervision: a joint endeavour in which a Minister, with the help of a Supervisor, develops themselves in relation to their ministry and wider context, attends to the people they minister to, and

feeds back into the knowledge and effectiveness of the wider CCVT movement by developing their own practice. It includes:

- Registered Supervision - practised by an experienced minister/professional who has completed a lower level of training. Training will be provided through CCVT and those who have received training will enter a pool of Supervisors available to CCVT People in Ministry.
- Accredited Supervision - a specialist area of supervision practised by an individual that has been trained through an accredited body.

This process of debriefing and caregiving to those in a pastoral and leadership role provides professional support, formation and accountability. This relationship is confidential, evaluative, and extends over time. It is preferable if the supervisor:

- has no other pastoral or personal relationship with the person being supervised; and
- has been trained in professional supervision.

Reasonable Person: A fictional person with an ordinary degree of reason, prudence, care, foresight, or intelligence whose conduct, conclusion, or expectation in relation to a particular circumstance or fact is used as an objective standard by which to measure or determine something (as the existence of negligence). The reasonable person test is a benchmark of behaviour for objectively determining whether something is reasonable or not.

Recipient of Ministry: any individual for whom a Minister would be deemed to have a pastoral responsibility.

Reportable Conduct (Victoria):

The Victorian Commission for Children & Young People (CCYP) oversees the Reportable Conduct Scheme, which requires the head of organisations to notify the CCYP of any allegations of reportable conduct made against any employee or volunteer over the age of 18 years of age even if that worker does not have direct contact with children as part of their role and/or the alleged conduct occurred outside of the organisation. All Ministers and Affiliates are required to understand and comply with this legislation.

In Victoria, reportable conduct includes:

- sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
- sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
- physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child);
- behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm; or
- significant neglect of a child.

For further details, visit – <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme>

Reportable Conduct (Tasmania): In Tasmania, a Reportable Conduct Scheme is scheduled to be introduced in 2024. The Reportable Conduct Scheme will require leaders of specific organisations to notify an independent regulator when concerns are raised about conduct related to Child Abuse involving a worker.

Reportable Conduct is expected to include:

- significant emotional or psychological harm;
- significant neglect;
- physical violence;
- a sexual offence;
- sexual misconduct;
- grooming; or
- relevant offences such as failing to report Child Abuse and female genital mutilation.

Upon commencement, all Tasmanian-based Ministers and Affiliates are required to understand and comply with this legislation.

For further details, visit – www.justice.tas.gov.au

Risk of Significant Harm: at risk of significant harm is a term used by a number of State/Territory Child Protection services for situations where a reasonable person has current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person. For example, when there is a potential that a child or young person may be injured or harmed as a result of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, ill-treatment, neglect or exposure to violence. Conduct putting a child or young person at risk of significant harm may also be reportable conduct.

Safe Places Policy: the umbrella policy under which all CCVT safety policies and resources sit. It applies to every individual, congregation, and organisation affiliated with CCVT and forms a minimum standard of safety. Communities are encouraged to formulate their own policies that build on this base to reflect the needs of their context.

Scope of Practice: the scope of practice of a Minister is defined by the responsibilities as specified in the relevant position description, as well as the limit of the individual's skills, experience, competency, and level of qualification.

Sexual Abuse: includes Sexual Assault, Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment.

Sexual Abuse of a Child: the use of a child by another person for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification or for that of others. It includes:

- exposing oneself indecently to a child;
- having vaginal or anal intercourse with a child;
- penetrating a child's vagina or anus with an object or any bodily part;
- sexually touching or fondling a child;
- kissing, touching, holding or fondling a child in a sexual manner;
- staring at or secretly watching a child for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification;
- making sexual references, gestures, actions or innuendo in a child's presence using any form of communication;
- discussing or inquiring about personal matters of a sexual nature with a child;
- exposing a child to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material;
- forcing a child to sexually touch or fondle another person;
- forcing a child to perform oral sex;
- forcing a child either to masturbate self or others, or to watch others masturbate; and/or
- forcing a child to engage in or watch any other sexual activity.

Behaviour which is *not* Sexual Abuse includes:

- sex education with the prior consent of a parent or guardian; or
- age appropriate consensual sexual behaviour between peers (i.e. the same or a similar age, where neither has positional power or responsibility for the other).

Sexual Assault: Sexual activity that occurs without the consent of the other (non-assaulting) party. Note that what constitutes "sexual activity" may vary depending on the prescribed legal criteria in each state and territory. For more information on the legal definition in your state, see the relevant Crimes Act.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual exploitation refers to any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. It includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual Harassment: The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) defines sexual harassment as an unwelcome sexual advance, an unwelcome request for sexual favours, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual

nature, in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal, written, in person, and online.

Examples include:

- intrusive questions and comments about someone's private life or body;
- sexually suggestive behaviour, such as leering or staring;
- brushing up against someone, unwelcome touching, fondling or hugging;
- sexually explicit physical contact;
- sexually suggestive comments or jokes;
- displaying offensive images or objects;
- sexually explicit pictures or posters;
- repeated requests to go out;
- requests for sex;
- sexually explicit emails, text messages, or posts on social media;
- sexual assault;
- suggestive behaviour; and
- insults or taunts based on sex.

Sexual Misconduct: Sexual Misconduct covers a broad range of inappropriate and/or unwanted behaviours of a sexual nature.

Definitions differ across state legislation, industries, and organisations.

For the purpose of this Code, Sexual Misconduct is defined as:

- Sexual behaviour and conduct that amounts to criminal offences;
- Sexual harassment;
- Adultery;
- Any form of sexual contact or invitation to sexual contact with any person (other than your legal spouse) with whom there is a pastoral or supervisory relationship, whether or not there is consent, and regardless of who initiated the contact or invitation; or
- Failure to maintain chastity in singleness.

Sexual Misconduct as defined in this Code will amount to 'serious misconduct' for the purposes of the CCVT Recommended Employment Agreement for Ministers.

Sexualised Behaviour: any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature. It includes a broad spectrum of acts which can range from appropriate to inappropriate to concerning, depending on a person's age, relationship status, and their context.

Sexuality: a person's capacity for sexual feelings, sexual orientation or preference, and sexual activity.

Singleness: reference to a person's marital status by which they are not currently legally married.

Spiritual Abuse: the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, a person's faith or religion, and/or the abuse of power in the context of Christian community or fellowship. It may include but is not limited to:

- using biblical or religious texts or terminology to justify abuse;
- using a position of spiritual authority to dominate, manipulate, or seek inappropriate deference from others;
- invoking divine authority in order to manipulate people into carrying out actions that meet the needs of the abuser;

- inflating the vocation and spiritual insight of the Minister above other people, enabling the Minister to get away with abuse or unhealthy behaviour;
- inflating the importance of the religious organisation above the health of the individual;
- exploitation of a recipient of ministry for one's own advantage or profit;
- verbal, emotional, spiritual, and/or physical harm done to recipients of ministry by a person in ministry or those in leadership within a church, agency or other religious organisation;
- isolating a person from friends and family members and/or restricting normal contact with others;
- coercing a recipient of ministry to accept ideas or behaviour that opposes legal standards and/or crosses personal boundaries;
- failure by a Minister to acknowledge a recipient of ministry's presence, value, or worth;
- communication by a Minister to a recipient of ministry that they are worthless and/or inferior to others, devaluing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences;
- behaviour that negatively influences the identity, self-worth, and dignity of a recipient of ministry, such as name-calling, ridicule, insults, intimidation, and condescending commentary;
- threatening behaviour or commentary towards a recipient of ministry such that intense terror or fear is induced; or
- neglecting a recipient of ministry by failing to provide care and concern in a sensitive and responsive manner, when reasonably requested to do so. This may occur when a person in ministry interacts inappropriately, is uninvolved and detached, and/or ignores a recipient of ministry's emotional and/or physical needs.

Stalking: a series of behaviours through which someone imposes themselves into another person's life in a way which causes distress, fear, and disruption.

Statutory Authorities: The Police, government Child Protection services, and other emergency services and government authorities for the administration of laws relating to complaints, allegations and/or disclosures of abuse, misconduct and criminal offences (State/Territory and Federal level).

Transparency: the practice of being willing and able to demonstrate to another responsible person how you are caring for others. It is not only *doing* the right thing but also being *seen* to do the right thing.

Vulnerable Adult: a person who may be more susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. Vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

Young Person: a teenager who is still under the age of 18 years old. This term is used interchangeably with the term child/children. This term can also indicate specific rights for a child in some states/territories (e.g. consent, mandatory reporting and living out of home laws). See also 'Child'.