



# **A Guide for Clubs on the Role of a Sports Chaplain**

***From the SCA National Director – Rev. Cameron Butler***

*Dear Club President, Captain, Coach,*

*I would personally like to thank you for choosing to have a chaplain serve at your club.*

*We take great enjoyment in helping sports care for their community and grow rich and healthy clubs. While our chaplains come with a diverse set of skills – their defining characteristic is that they have time for people and show genuine care and compassion for all in your club.*

*This short document will give you a snap-shot of a Sports Chaplain. I trust you find it helpful.*

*We are here to serve you. Please let me know if we can help you further?*

*Kindly,*

***Cameron Butler***

*National Director*

*Sports Chaplaincy Australia*

## **Background to Australian Sports Chaplaincy**

The role of a chaplain has taken many forms over the past thousand years. Including traditional chaplaincy in government institutions, such as, in the military, hospitals and educational institutions like schools and universities. In more recent times, professional forms of chaplaincy have emerged in the industrial and corporate sector and, in our case, in community groups like sports clubs.

While ‘Sports Chaplaincy’ is professional in practice it has carved a unique style and model in the Australian sports industry over the past 25 years. In fact, many other countries are currently looking to adopt the Australian model of chaplaincy including Russia, Denmark, India, New Zealand, Canada and Pacific Islands just to name a few.

The distinguishing characteristic of chaplaincy is to provide *pastoral care* for the people of sports. We place a very high emphasis on the personhood of all people. And seek to provide this in an authentic and timely way for all our sports communities throughout Australia.

All our chaplains are authentic Christian clergy and lay-leaders respected in their local church communities who abide by the SCA Code of Conduct ([www.sportschaplaincy.com.au/codeofconduct](http://www.sportschaplaincy.com.au/codeofconduct)). They are caring, non-invasive and guests of their clubs.

## SCA Statement of Purpose

The principle role of an Australian Sport Chaplain is to provide pastoral care for athletes, coaches, staff and their families in their sporting community.

Their primary concern is the immediate and long term wellbeing of all those involved in sports.

Immediate wellbeing may include care in the sudden loss of life or injury, first response care of trauma and during critical incidents, and may also include care for the effects of poverty, youth at risk, suicide awareness etc.

Long term wellbeing may include providing counsel, assessment and ongoing care and mentoring of emotional and whole life issues.

Individual chaplains may bring in a variety of broader skills; however the significant forms of pastoral care include grief and loss counseling, critical incident debriefing and stress management, injury and sickness visitation, mentoring, life-skills guidance and family and marital support.

Our focus is the whole person. Our care transcends class, gender, people group or faith.

Sports chaplains provide behind-the-scenes complementary support to existing club personnel including corporate, medical, psychological, fitness and coaching staff.

Our chaplains are authentic Christian men and women who provide their time and services at no cost to the sports community they represent.

It is the purpose of SCA that sports chaplains perform their role with excellence; being credentialed and respected within the SCA network and sports community, professionally competent and conducting themselves with the utmost personal integrity.

## Professional Service Expectations

Listed below are the typical Professional Service Expectations of SCA chaplains and their networks.

- Pastoral Care
- Home and hospital visitations
- Bereavement care
- Marriage & relationship support
- Spiritual care and support
- Crisis care
- Grief & Loss
- Recovery services
- Poverty and distress
- Marriage preparation support
- Weddings, Baby Dedications
- Counselling
- Mentoring
- Critical Incident & Stress Management
- Suicide awareness and response
- Specialised trainers

SCA Chaplains are:

- Trained & accredited sports pastoral carers
- Abide by a Professional Code of Conduct
- Volunteers
- Guests of their clubs

## Characteristics of Australian Sports Chaplains

The following characteristics are required to be fulfilled by SCA Chaplains in their role.

**Care** - Chaplains are to genuinely love and care for the sports community as a first priority of ministry. This ministry role is not for personal gain. Service is to spring from a heartfelt concern for athletes and support staff.

**Nurture** - Chaplains are to nurture the sports community with a view to contributing to the growth and development of the whole person. Drawing from their own traditions and experiences, they are to be skilled in making spiritual matters pertinent to the needs and pressures encountered in the sports world.

**Support** - Chaplains are people-oriented, not message-oriented. They seek to build trust relationships where they can model godly character and behaviour as a desirable option in the athlete's personal holistic development.

**Service** - Chaplains are willing servants. They aim to enrich the athlete's life beyond his/her sports life. They are not to use their role as a means of self-gain. They are to operate "behind-the-scenes", avoiding publicity, and being available to the athletes and their needs as their first priority.

**Discipline** - Chaplains must be self-disciplined and motivated. They are self-starters who work long hours, seeking opportunities for service, while willingly sharing in routine responsibilities with the team. They are good time managers and follow through on commitments. They are 'team players'.

**Commitment** - A chaplain is a person who is deeply committed to maintaining quality relationships with both God and other people. The chaplain is to live a life of integrity and strive to be loyal to his/her profession of faith.

**Humility** - Chaplains are to display the virtue of true humility. They understand their role in assisting with the spiritual welfare of an athlete is only a part of a team effort in enhancing successful performance and competition. They do not put themselves "first" in a situation, but seek what is best for the athlete and team.

**Integrity** - Chaplains are people of integrity. They are open and honest about their work. They keep their word and attempt to have their actions always "match" their words. They are careful not to promise what they cannot produce. They adhere to codes of conduct imposed on the athletes they work with.

**Faithfulness** - Chaplains are faithful to the call of God on their lives and the responsibilities that accompany their role of ministry to the athlete and athletic community. They are faithful to maintain contact and availability with athletes even in the tough times.

**Trustworthiness** - Chaplains are trustworthy. They respect the athlete's need for privacy and can be depended on to maintain confidentiality.

## Example 'Club Statement' on the Chaplain's Role

### **Richmond Football Club Statement – The Chaplain**

The Richmond Football Club (RFC) and its welfare officers recognise that footballers are whole human beings.

The condition of all areas of a player's life including unplanned circumstances off the field can and do affect their performance, both on the field, and in the public arena.

Football demands can also have an impact on vocational responsibilities and relationships.

**Through the Club's Chaplain, RFC makes pastoral care available for players, partners, families and staff, offering:**

- A neutral person with whom to 'off load'; and
- Support for football staff as they facilitate and maintain positive, focused attitudes in the player

**Pastoral Care takes place through:**

- The Chaplain just 'being there' and available;
- The Chaplain's personal assessment of the individual needs of a player;
- Referral by, and in liaison with the football staff, and in particular;
- Outcomes from conversations or meetings with the RFC Player Development Manager and RFC Sports Psychologist;

Pastoral Care happens in an ad hoc, informal way at training and social events, over the telephone, in hospital, or more formally on the basis of appointments. The Chaplain [name] may be contacted on [mobile phone] during office hours or after hours on [home phone].

## **For Further Contact**

### **SCA Australia-Wide Networks**

See [www.sportschaplaincy.com.au/contact](http://www.sportschaplaincy.com.au/contact) for a list of State and Regional Coordinators

### **National Office**

Media Centre - Etihad Stadium Docklands Melbourne

**Karen Hooper** – Member Services  
[team@sportschaplaincy.com.au](mailto:team@sportschaplaincy.com.au)  
+61-3-9012-9695

**Cameron Butler** - National Director & Senior Chaplain  
[cam.butler@sportschaplaincy.com.au](mailto:cam.butler@sportschaplaincy.com.au)  
+61-4-0304-4499

## **Charity – Serving The Australian Sports Community**

Sports Chaplaincy Australia is a not-for-profit charity and welcome donations. Please contact Karen Hooper on +61-3-9012-9695 for further information on assisting us with our sports charity program.