

St Thomas the Apostle

Catholic Parish, Clyde North

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STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

At St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish, Clyde North, we acknowledge and understand that safety, especially that of children and vulnerable adults, is the responsibility of every person and is an integral aspect of our parish. We aim to work collaboratively with parishioners, visitors, those to whom we extend pastoral care, and other community members to ensure a safe parish environment, especially for children and vulnerable adults.

In our Parish we have zero tolerance for child abuse, or the abuse of any adult. Our commitment to the protection of all in our parish, especially children and vulnerable adults, is based on our belief that each person is made in the image of God and our ethos is to provide a safe and supportive environment. All parishioners, visitors, and those with whom we engage in pastoral ministry have the right to expect that the parish will always act to protect them from any kind of harm.

PARISH CODE OF CONDUCT

for the Safety

- of all Parishioners, especially children and vulnerable adults,
 - all who visit our Parish,
 - and all to whom our Parish ministers.

St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Parish, Clyde North:

Central to the mission of St Thomas the Apostle Parish, Clyde North is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of all people, including and especially children and young people, and vulnerable adults, and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding all parishioners, visitors to our parish, and all to whom parishioners minister, especially children and young people, and vulnerable adults at St Thomas the Apostle Parish, Clyde North, against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation and the Catholic Diocese of Sale "Code of Conduct for Caring for Children, Promoting Child Safe Parishes".

A **child** is any young person below the age of 18.

A vulnerable adult is a person: Who by reason of life circumstances, disability, age or illness, is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself, or is or may be unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This definition of a vulnerable adult covers all people of 18 years of age or older.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and Parish Pastoral and Finance Council members, and members of all parish groups at St Thomas the Apostle Parish, Clyde North, are expected to actively contribute to a parish culture that respects the dignity of its members and affirms the Gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

This Parish Statement of Commitment and Parish Code of Conduct were endorsed unanimously by the Parish Pastoral Council of St Thomas the Apostle, Clyde North, on Wednesday 28th February, 2018.

Date of review : February 2021

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members, and all members of parish groups, are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the parish Child Safe Policy and upholding the parish's Statement of Commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm
- treating everyone in the parish community with respect (modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe pastoral environment)
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child have been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance policy towards discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of adults and children with a disability (for example, by ensuring reasonable care is taken to cater for any additional needs being faced)
- ensuring as far as practicable that an adult is not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the police
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.)
- reporting any child safety concerns to the parish priest or the Vicar General if the concern relates to the parish priest (or child safety officer if the parish has appointed someone to this role)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- be positive role models by displaying appropriate behaviours
- supervise diligently
- respect personal space
- be alert to different forms of social interaction
- provide pastoral support in accord with parish guidelines eg. Ensure visibility
- physical contact is acceptable and important in appropriate situations
- be familiar and alert to signs of abuse and subsequent procedures to follow
- prearrange home visits and maintain a diary of visits including details
- report non-compliance
- reflect regularly to ensure that your work is grounded in a desire to be of service to others rather than a need for emotional attachment or fulfilment
- recognize when service relationships are becoming unsafe and/or ineffective and be prepared to terminate those relationships with appropriate referral
- limit the use of private communication channels eg private emails, private mobile phones, private social networking sites
- preview the content of any photo or film to ensure age appropriateness
- select the language used in electronic communication carefully to avoid ambiguity
- wherever possible, inform the parents of your intention to contact their child

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

Staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members **must not**:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors or being alone with a child with no good cause)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- manage disruptive or unsafe behaviour by degrading or isolating a child; corporal punishment is never acceptable. Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort or in an emergency
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal details or social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family who is/are not socially related outside of the pastoral duties reasonably associated with the role description of the person's position in the parish without the parish priest's or child safety officer's (if the parish has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and/or consent (other than accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street)
- have any online contact (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related (unless necessary e.g. by providing families with e-newsletters)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account to conduct parish communications
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume illegal drugs on parish premises or at parish events
- engage in over-familiarity and inappropriate language
- engage in ridicule and demeaning statements
- engage in sexually suggestive comments and jokes
- engage in inappropriate physical contact
- be careful about posting images on social networking sites and never post without consent
- invite children to be "friends" on private social networking sites
- display personal information such as phone numbers or email addresses of children on social networking sites

DEALING WITH BREACHES AND MATTERS OF CONCERN

The Parish of St Thomas the Apostle aims to deal with all reports fairly and appropriately and in accordance with all mandatory reporting requirements imposed under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* and the *Crimes Act 1958* as well as those included under the Diocese of Sale *Policy on the Care, Protection and Safety of Children and Vulnerable Adults 2016*. Under the provisions of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* certain professionals including doctors, nurses, teachers, school principals and police who have a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection must make a report to the Child Protection Service Unit of the Department of Human Services and the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Section 16M of the *Children Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* requires the head of an organisation (Director of Catholic Education) to initially notify the Commission for Children and Young People of a reportable allegation within three business days and update the Commission of progress within 30 calendar days. They must also investigate the reportable allegation and provide the findings of the investigation to the Commission. Any person may report to the head of an organisation.

Under the provisions of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012* and the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* **any adult** who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual or criminal offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to the police unless they have a reasonable excuse, as set out in the *Crimes Act*.

A flowchart showing the process to follow for reporting is available at the church, on the website and through contacting the Parish Office.