



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SALE

CODE OF CONDUCT

23 July 2025



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SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENT

The Catholic Diocese of Sale holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk as a central and fundamental responsibility in all that we do.

This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

We exercise zero tolerance for all forms of abuse.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Diocese of Sale's Code of Conduct helps to create a positive, respectful and safe environment by setting expectations in relation to the appropriate behaviour of all Church personnel in their interactions with children and adults at risk.

This Code is underpinned by the **National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS)** and the Church's Code of Conduct, **Integrity in Our Common Mission**. These frameworks express our shared commitment to act with integrity, respect, and accountability in the service of others, especially those who are vulnerable.

This Code reflects our acceptance that each child or adult at risk 'has a unique worth created in the image and likeness of God' and deserves protection (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, 2016).

All Church personnel, means a cleric, religious or employee, contractor, subcontractor, voluntary or unpaid worker are required to act in a manner that safeguards children and adults at risk from abuse and harm at all times. Each person has a responsibility to understand the important role they play individually and collectively to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all children and adults at risk.

If any person believes a child or young person is at immediate risk of child abuse or harm, telephone 000.



2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this code is to:

- safeguard children and adults at risk from abuse and harm so that children are safe and feel safe in all Diocesan environments
- remove or mitigate risks of harm to children and adults at risk
- set clear standards for all Church personnel about their behaviour towards and in the presence of children and adults at risk
- create a safe culture that encourages genuine engagement and empowerment of children and adults at risk
- provide a clear statement to Church personnel forbidding child abuse and harm
- comply with all relevant legislation including the Child Safe Standards.

For a full list of definitions used throughout this code, please refer to *Glossary for Safeguarding Practices*.

3. SCOPE

This code applies to all Church personnel engaged by the Catholic Diocese of Sale and its parishes, when acting in the role or representing the Diocese of Sale. The application of this code extends to all Diocesan environments and all interactions with children and adults at risk, including:

- physical and face-to-face contact
- contact by post or other written communication
- contact by telephone or other oral communication
- contact by email or other electronic communication, including online messenger services, social media, or online seminars, ministry, prayer groups or liturgies.

This code applies regardless of:

- the location or time of an interaction, whether within or outside the Catholic Diocese of Sale environment, or during or outside Diocesan operating hours
- a child or young person's age
- a child or young person's consent
- the consent of a parent, carer and/or family member
- circumstances in which a child or young person initiates an interaction or conduct with Church personnel.

4. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK CODE OF CONDUCT DECLARATION

The Code of Conduct Declaration ("the declaration") is annexed to the code and is required to be signed by all Church personnel to state that they have read and understood the behaviours and conduct expected of them, and agree to comply with this code.



The declaration will be signed as follows:

- The declaration will be signed by all Church personnel upon their commencement.
- Clergy and employees are required to re-sign the declaration annually from the date that the declaration was originally signed.
- Volunteers are required to re-sign the declaration every three years from the date that the declaration was originally signed.

In addition, all clergy and employees will undertake child safety training annually, which includes training on this code, while volunteers are required to undertake training every three years.

All signed Code of Conduct Declarations are held at each Parish Office and entered into PACEM (Parish Administration, Communications and Engagement Management) against each individual.

5. REQUIRED AND PROHIBITED BEHAVIOURS

The safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk is everyone's responsibility. Church personnel must be committed to upholding a duty of care to all children and adults at risk and taking all reasonable steps to protect children and adults at risk from all forms of abuse and harm. The Catholic Diocese of Sale requires all Church personnel to safeguard the health and wellbeing of children and adults at risk.

6. NEVER ALONE RULE

Clergy, religious, employees and volunteers must avoid one-to-one, unsupervised situations with children and adults at risk. Activities and/or discussions with children and adults at risk are to be conducted in view of others.

7. KEEPING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK SAFE FROM ABUSE AND HARM

Church personnel **will**:

- uphold the Catholic Diocese of Sale's commitment to the safety of children and adults at risk at all times
- comply with the Catholic Diocese of Sale's safeguarding documents at all times
- keep children and adults at risk safe from abuse and harm, and promote the safety and wellbeing of all children and adults at risk
- demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries
- use respectful behaviours, language and tone when communicating or interacting with children and adults at risk
- promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk
- respect and consider the diverse backgrounds and needs of all children and adults at risk, including vulnerable children and adults at risk
- create an environment that promotes the rights and participation of children and adults at risk, and is welcoming and inclusive for all children and adults at risk



- promote child safety, and actively encourage and support the participation and empowerment of all children and adults at risk, including vulnerable children and adults at risk
- listen and respond to the concerns of children and adults at risk, especially if they disclose that they or another child has been abused or harmed, or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or young person
- use appropriate language and tone in communicating with children and adults at risk, which can affirm, support and encourage children and adults at risk and build their self-confidence
- provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all children and adults at risk to interact and socialise, where the importance of friendship is recognised and valued
- respond swiftly and in a child-focused manner to concerns, complaints, disclosures, reports or risks of abuse and harm to children and adults at risk in accordance with the Safeguarding Complaint Handling and Reporting Process
- call the Police on 000 if they have immediate concerns for a child or young person.

Church personnel **will not** engage in:

- any form of child abuse towards or in the presence of any child or young person that could constitute physical, emotional or psychological harm or neglect
- any form of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct towards, with or in the presence of a child or adult at risk. Sexual misconduct encompasses the entire range of actions that would reasonably be considered to be sexual in nature, including, but not limited to:
 - contact behaviours such as inappropriate physical interactions, exploitation through coercive or manipulative conduct, or involvement in the creation or distribution of exploitative material
 - non-contact behaviours including inappropriate conversations, suggestive or personal remarks, the sharing or viewing of inappropriate visual content, and communication that is unprofessional or violates boundaries
 - behaviour intended to build inappropriate relationships (grooming), such as undue attention, gift-giving, secretive communications, or seeking one-on-one contact outside appropriate settings
 - inappropriate commentary or humour of a personal, suggestive, or boundary-crossing nature, in person or via digital communication
 - conversations of an adult or mature nature that are unsuitable for children or adults at risk to be exposed to
 - unprofessional communication, including messaging or online interactions that cross appropriate boundaries
 - meeting with a child or young person outside approved or supervised environments within the Diocese
 - any form of physical discipline, or behaviour that is degrading, frightening, humiliating or harmful
 - racist, discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour towards or in the presence of children or adults at risk
 - use of negative, belittling or disrespectful language, including name-calling or hurtful commentary
 - inappropriate remarks about a child or adult at risk, including those related to personal characteristics such as appearance, abilities, family circumstances, or identity



- use of profanity or harmful language, whether deliberate or unintentional, that may cause fear, distress, or discomfort. The tone and intent of communication by adults can significantly affect a child or vulnerable person's wellbeing
- engaging in or facilitating criminal acts involving children or adults at risk, including, but not limited to offences of a sexual nature
- possessing, accessing, or distributing illegal or exploitative material involving children.

8. PHYSICAL CONTACT

Creating a child safe environment does not mean having no physical contact with children and adults at risk. When working with children and adults at risk, appropriate and non-intrusive physical contact may occur (e.g. while playing sport, holding a baby at playgroup, providing first aid, or holding hands in a prayer activity). While it is impossible to describe all possible instances of appropriate and inappropriate physical contact, the following principles may help to define contact that is appropriate.

Church personnel **will**:

- ensure that physical contact is appropriate, non-intrusive and not sexual in nature and is in accordance with this code. Church personnel may engage in physical contact that is non-intrusive and that would be deemed appropriate in the context by a reasonable person (e.g. a high five or pat on the shoulder, or holding a young child's hand to cross the road)
- initiate contact in response to the needs of the child or young person consistent with the boundaries of the activity or program (e.g. picking up a child who has fallen over, providing first aid when a child is hurt, comforting a distressed child, adjusting sporting equipment with the child's permission)
- explain to the child or young person what they intend to do when engaging in physical contact and seek their permission prior to any contact occurring. Consent from a child or young person may be withdrawn at any stage of the physical contact
- respect signs that a child is uncomfortable with physical contact or has withdrawn consent from physical contact (e.g. a child moving away, averting their eyes or showing distress)
- respect cultural sensitivities specific to physical contact with children and adults at risk from diverse cultures. Cultural practices and norms in relation to physical contact vary significantly and require exploration (e.g. in some cultures, it may be appropriate for a child to hold hands with an adult, whereas in other cultural groups, physical contact with an unrelated adult or an adult of a different gender is not permitted)
- respect the capabilities of children and adults at risk with a disability (e.g. respect the independence of a young person who has a disability by asking whether they would like assistance and/or enquiring with a relevant caregiver).

Church personnel **will not** engage in any physical contact:

- intended to cause distress, discomfort, or harm to a child or adult at risk, including and not limited to, contact with sensitive areas of the body, except where such contact is necessary in a medical emergency (e.g. administering first aid or using a defibrillator)
- that is initiated by the Church personnel to fulfil their own emotional needs (e.g. frequently hugging children or encouraging them to sit on their lap)
- could reasonably be perceived by an impartial observer as inappropriate or suggestive
- involves physical play such as rough play, wrestling, tickling or pushing



- occurs against the expressed wishes or without the consent of the child, or adult at risk
- relates to personal care tasks (e.g. toileting, dressing, bathing) that the individual is capable of performing independently
- takes place in a private or secluded setting without appropriate supervision or transparency.

9. CREATING A PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Church personnel **will**:

- ensure that children and adults at risk are never alone with Church personnel, in accordance with this code. Activities, discussions, transportation and all interactions with children and adults at risk will be conducted in view of others or with another adult present. This includes face-to-face and online interactions with children and adults at risk
- ensure that children and adults at risk are appropriately supervised at all times. Additional supervision may be required for:
 - vulnerable children
 - younger children
 - children who engage or may engage in behaviour that puts themselves or another person at risk of harm
 - children who may have experienced harm in the past
- use fair, respectful and developmentally appropriate strategies to guide the behaviour of children and adults at risk in a positive manner
- provide children and adults at risk with clear directions and offer the opportunity to redirect their behaviour in a positive manner
- communicate and collaborate with parents or carers if a child or young person continues to behave in a challenging manner and/or is putting themselves or another person at risk
- act to remove and/or minimise any physical or environmental risks that could adversely impact children and adults at risk
- provide a healthy, smoke-free environment for children and adults at risk (including free of vapes or e-cigarettes)
- immediately notify the Professional Standards Officer (if an employee or a volunteer) if they:
 - are charged with or convicted of a criminal offence relevant to their ministry or work within the Catholic Diocese of Sale
 - are charged with or convicted of a criminal offence related to children or family violence
 - become the subject of any investigation in relation to their conduct towards children, including investigations by police, a government regulator or other independent investigator
 - are named as a respondent in a family violence or personal safety intervention order.
- foster a safe and respectful environment where individuals feel able to report such matters without fear of unfair judgment. Any disclosures will be handled with fairness, confidentiality, and in accordance with established safeguarding procedures.
- self-reporting is encouraged to the Professional Standards Officer or Diocesan Safeguarding Officer in the first instance. *Refer Process for Managing Disclosure or Self-Reporting by Church Personnel.*



Church personnel **will not**:

- be alone with a child or young person, either face to face or online
- use social media and digital communication in a manner that exploits children and adults at risk or places them at risk
- consume alcohol or illicit drugs before or while engaging in the care of children and adults at risk or be adversely affected by prescription medication
- supply alcohol or drugs to children and adults at risk. Supplying alcohol or illegal drugs to children and adults at risk is illegal and strictly prohibited.

10. PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEOS AND RECORDINGS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

Photographs, videos, or recordings of children or adults at risk must only be taken for a valid parish purpose. As part of the consent process, parents or carers must be informed about how these images or recordings will be used (e.g. parish website, noticeboard, newsletter) and where they may be published. Consent must be obtained from parents or carers before any photographs or videos are taken.

Church personnel **will**:

- respect the parent or carer's decision for the child or adult at risk not to participate. There are valid and compelling reasons why permission may not be granted (e.g. child custody, family violence and/or child protection matters may prevent a child or adult at risk from being photographed to preserve their safety)
- give children and adults at risk an opportunity to consent to participating in the photography or video
- take any photographs or video in the presence of others
- ensure that children and adults at risk are appropriately dressed and posed
- ensure that the content of the photograph or video is appropriate and not offensive (e.g. not sexual, racist, violent or threatening)
- download and transfer the photograph, video or recording to the appropriate parish storage device or computer drive as soon as practicable and delete from personal equipment.

Church personnel **will not**:

- take photographs, videos or recordings of children or adults at risk when they are alone or in secret
- keep photographs, videos or recordings on their personal devices or for personal use
- take photographs, videos or recordings of children without the consent of the child or young person and their parent or carer
- publish a photograph, video or recording of a child if there is a risk that the child or young person may be stigmatised through public association. For example, posting a photograph of a child who is experiencing disadvantage collecting a food parcel may potentially lead to teasing or bullying
- publish information about the child or young person that may identify them, such as their full name, age, email address, telephone number, residence, school, parish or details of a club or group they may attend.



11. USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, INCLUDING ONLINE COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Church personnel will not use any private communication channels (e.g. a personal email or social media account) to communicate with children or adults at risk for parish purposes.

Church personnel **will**:

- communicate using parish devices, if available (e.g. work mobile phone)
- set up or utilise parish email accounts (e.g. nameofparish@cam.org.au) or secure WhatsApp accounts
- copy in parents, carers and other relevant parties (e.g. a program coordinator) in emails
- communicate with the group rather than an individual
- communicate through specific group pages set up in social media platforms (and include parents and carers in this group)
- restrict communication to issues directly associated with delivering the activity or program
- convey the service-related message in a polite and friendly manner, limiting personal content
- avoid any communication, including texts, photographs, video, website links or jokes, that a reasonable observer could view as being derogatory, discriminatory, racist, threatening, illegal or obscene
- save and keep a record of communication
- make a clear distinction between social communication where a pre-existing social relationship exists (e.g. relative, friend) and communication for the purposes of parish programs, activities or events.

Church personnel **will not**:

- under any circumstances request that a child or young person keep any communication secret
- use communication to arrange secret contact with a child or young person outside the boundaries of the program or activity
- encourage children and adults at risk to communicate in private online settings (e.g. chat rooms, game sites or via any other channel) that is not authorised by the parish
- include information that could reasonably be used by a third party to identify or contact a child or adult at risk (e.g. by adding a young person's mobile phone number to a post).

It is important to note that perpetrators of child sexual abuse may use their role to befriend children and adults at risk via electronic communication and to facilitate contact outside of the supervisory structures of the parish program, activity or event. Such behaviour may constitute grooming and be a criminal offence.

12. SUPPORTING CULTURAL SAFETY AND INCLUSION

Church personnel **will**:

- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children and adults at risk
- support the inclusion of children and adults at risk with a disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those who are of diverse sexuality, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults at risk.



Church personnel **will not**:

- engage in prejudicial, oppressive, discriminatory, or inappropriate behaviour or language towards, in the presence of, or in relation to children or adults at risk
- treat any child or young person unfairly or unequally based on protected attributes, including, but not limited to race, culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, disability, living circumstances, or sexual orientation.

13. PROMOTING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Church personnel will:

- engage in positive and respectful interactions with children and adults at risk that uphold their rights and dignity
- listen to and respect the views of children and adults at risk.

Church personnel **will not**:

- engage in any behaviour that may be seen as favouritism
- become friends with, connect with, follow or add any children or adults at risk on any social media platform or have contact with any child or young person through social media
- drive a child or young person in their car unless they have prior written consent of a parent or carer, and another adult is present during transportation
- exchange personal contact details with a child or young person with the purpose of facilitating later contact unrelated to their role at the Catholic Diocese of Sale or parish.

14. TAKING ACTION TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

Church personnel **will**:

- listen to and respond supportively to the concerns of children and adults at risk in relation to their safety
- swiftly report any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns in accordance with the Diocese Reporting Procedure and ensure that all legal obligations for external reporting are met (including external reports to police, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the Commission for Children and Adults at risk)
- cooperate with any child safety investigation by the Catholic Diocese of Sale or any other government or regulatory authority as required
- respect the confidentiality and privacy of children and adults at risk and act in accordance with the Catholic Diocese of Sale Privacy Policy.

Church personnel **will not**:

- breach this code or the Catholic Diocese of Sale safeguarding documents
- tell or encourage another person to breach this code or the safeguarding documents
- ignore or disregard any suspect or disclosed reports of child abuse or harm
- discourage any person from reporting a complaint, concern or risk relating to child safety or wellbeing, including reports of child abuse and harm.

It is essential that Church personnel engage in appropriate conduct at all times to ensure that children and adults at risk are protected from child abuse and harm.



15. GIVING GIFTS AND/OR MONEY

Gift giving from an adult to an individual child or adult at risk can be construed as favouritism or grooming for the purposes of sexual abuse.

- It is permissible to give gifts, of equal value, to a group of children and adults at risk who participate in parish activities (e.g. giving a chocolate egg to each child attending the children's liturgy during Easter).
- It is permissible to give a child or young person an individual gift only if it is part of a parish activity (e.g. a celebration of a milestone or a festive occasion) and only with prior approval from the Parish Priest.

16. MANAGING REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL OR MATERIAL AID

Providing financial or material aid is not the responsibility of an individual member of Church personnel. Providing money or buying gifts can be construed as grooming behaviour.

If a child or adult at risk requires financial or material aid, Church personnel are to discuss this request with relevant persons within the parish (or an immediate supervisor) and provide an appropriate parish response.

17. BREACHES OF THE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

Breaches of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including the termination of a person's engagement or employment within the Catholic Diocese of Sale. Allegations of misconduct involving children will be managed in accordance with any relevant Reportable Conduct Scheme and may be the subject of a referral to police or other government authority.

18. REFERENCES

- Archdiocese of Melbourne Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
- Consent Form for Photographs and Filming
- Diocesan Policy on Social Media and Websites
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Glossary for Safeguarding Practices
- Integrity in Our Common Mission
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS)
- Privacy Policy
- Procedure for Managing Disclosure or Self-Reporting by Church Personnel
- Safeguarding Complaint Handling and Reporting Process
- Safeguarding Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy



19. POLICY ADMINISTRATION SCHEDULE

Policy Owner	Professional Standards Unit
Approval Authority	Bishop Greg Bennet The Catholic Diocese of Sale
Approval/Reviewed Date	23 July 2025
Version Number	Version 2.0 Supersedes updated version dated November 2024 (not approved by Professional Standards) and Version 1.0 September 2021.
Modifications made this version	Simplify and replace the previous undated version.
Next review date by policy owner	July 2027 A review of this policy will be conducted every two years and may be subject to amendment prior to the review date as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ relevant feedback from stakeholders, including children, adults at risk, parents, carers and the community▪ legislative changes▪ a review of critical incidents▪ a commitment to promote continuous improvement.



20. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK CODE OF CONDUCT DECLARATION

The completion of the Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk Code of Conduct Declaration is a requirement of a person's engagement by a Diocese of Sale parish.

Failure to submit this declaration is a serious matter and may incur disciplinary action, pursuant to the Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Policy and any other relevant policies, procedures, canons and industrial instruments.

Refer to Attachment A for the Code of Conduct Declaration.



ATTACHMENT A

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK CODE OF CONDUCT DECLARATION

The completion of the Safeguarding Children and Adults at risk Code of Conduct Declaration is a requirement of a person's engagement by the Catholic Diocese of Sale. Completion of this document is required for employment and for continuing to volunteer and participate in ministry.

Submitting this declaration is a vital step in upholding our shared commitment to safeguarding. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action, in accordance with the Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Policy and other applicable policies, procedures, canons, or industrial instruments.

I have read, understand and agree to abide by the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Code of Conduct.

Name (please print):	
Signature:	
Date:	
Working With Children Check No./VIT No.:	
Working With Children Check Expiry Date /VIT Expiry Date:	
Parish:	