

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT – Maffra/Heyfield/Cowwarr

In the Parishes in Partnership of Maffra/Heyfield/Cowwarr we are firmly committed to creating a culture to ensure that children and vulnerable people are protected and nurtured. Every person has an inherent dignity and a right to feel and be safe and respected and to have the opportunity to reach their full potential in line with Christian teaching. Any action which would use somebody for personal gratification, treat them as collateral damage, stifle their development and wholeness as persons is totally unacceptable. We are called to be like Jesus Christ who came so that all people may have life and have it to the full therefore all forms of abuse are intolerable.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE CARE PROTECTION AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS.

Central to the mission of the Parishes in Partnership of Maffra/Heyfield/Cowwarr is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children, young people, the disabled, and indeed any frail or vulnerable individual, 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 children and young people in the Parishes in Partnership of Maffra/Heyfield/Cowwarr against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation and the Catholic Diocese of Sale's "Code of Conduct for Caring for Children, *Promoting Child Safe Parishes*". We are mindful of the needs of people from varying cultures some being linguistically diverse, and those physically and/or emotionally challenged.

This applies to all parishioners, staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and visitors in the Parishes in Partnership of Maffra/Heyfield/Cowwarr. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behavior as noted below.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

- 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 and 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 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.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

- 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 newsletters.
- Exchange personal contact details such as phone numbers, 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 their consent of the parent or guardian
- Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Consume illegal drugs on parish premises or events.

I, _____, confirm that I have been provided with a copy of the Parish Code of Conduct and am aware that any breach of this code will result in a consequence which may affect my involvement within the Parishes in Partnership of Maffra/Heyfield/Cowwarr.

Signed: _____ Dated: _____