



**Our Lady Help of Christians Parish**

ABN 19 938 523 734

## **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

**Our Lady Help of Christians Parish Narre Warren**

**1<sup>st</sup> December 2016**

*“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (Mark 10:14)*

Central to the mission of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Our Lady Help of Christians Parish is a diverse multi-cultural faith community and it respects cultural differences and variations in child rearing practices due to a family’s personal, cultural or religious beliefs whilst recognising that these differences do not reduce a child’s right to be safe or this parish’s responsibility to protect the child from any harm due to unacceptable conduct within this faith community.

*‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me’ (Mark 9.37)*

### **Purpose**

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at *Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church* 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”.

This Code of Conduct is for all those who work or volunteer to work with children within Our Lady Help of Christians Parish of the Diocese of Sale. All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members at *Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church* 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.

### **Acceptable behaviours**

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members 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 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 (Fr. Peter Slater, Sion House, Warragul) if the concern relates to the parish priest.
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

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## 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 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
- the provision of tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs to a child is unacceptable and use of these substances by a child in the context of a parish activity is unacceptable and cannot be condoned, nor can the misuse of other medication. No person who is caring for children or involved in any activity with children should consume or be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs or have misused other behaviour altering medication. It is not appropriate to smoke tobacco while in the presence of children or work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs

### Review of this Code of Conduct

Our Lady Help of Christians Parish is committed to ensuring that this Code of Conduct is intended to be a living, working document. The parish will review this document annually or more frequently as required. The Parish welcomes any comments or suggestions for improvement of this code of conduct and these may be directed to the Parish Priest currently Fr. Brendan Hogan. The parish will conduct a compliance audit as determined by and consistent with diocesan policy.

### Definitions: The following definitions apply to this Code of Conduct:

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years. Throughout this Code of Conduct, any reference to either 'child' or 'children' is a reference to a person or persons under the age of 18.

Parent/guardian: has its ordinary meaning – that is, a person who has the authority and responsibility for the day-to-day care of a child.

Cultural diversity refers to people who identify with particular groups based on their birthplace, ethnicity, language, values, beliefs or views.

Parish activities involving children: includes any activity involving children that is conducted or organised by, or under the auspices of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish and any activity conducted by other persons or groups using parish or property.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, confirm that I have been provided with a copy of the above Code of Conduct and am aware that any breach of this code may affect my employment or opportunities to volunteer within Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Narre Warren.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

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