

# ST. JOHN'S, TRAFALGAR & ST. JARLATH'S, YARRAGON

## CREATING CHILD SAFE PARISHES

### CULTURE OF CHILD SAFETY

**CHILD ABUSE ENCOMPASSES ... PHYSICAL VIOLENCE / INTIMIDATION / SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS / NEGLECT / GROOMING**

### STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

At St. John's and St. Jarlath's parishes we are committed to ensuring that our local church community protect and promote the inherent dignity of all children and vulnerable adults and their right to be respected and nurtured in a safe, abuse-free environment.

With zero tolerance for child abuse, we hold the care and wellbeing of all children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility. This commitment is based in faith on the heart of the Gospel message and teachings of Jesus the Christ and his love for everyone.

### CODE OF CONDUCT

Central to the mission of St. John's Parish, Trafalgar and St. Jarlath's Parish, Yarragon is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of all children, 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 children at St. John's and St. Jarlath's Parishes 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 the Care, Protection and Safety of Children and Vulnerable Adults" (Caring for Children, Promoting Child Safe Parishes").

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish group members at St. John's, Trafalgar and St. Jarlath's, Yarragon 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, ministers, volunteers, contractors, parishioners and clergy are responsible for (supporting) protecting and caring for the safety of all children by:

- adhering to the parish Child Safe (Policy) Code of Conduct 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
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they speak of themselves or other child being abused, or express worry about their or another's safety
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability ... ensuring reasonable care is taken to cater for special needs
- ensuring as far as practicable that an adult is not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations / concerns of child abuse to the police, and also informing the parish

- priest, or Vicar General if the allegation / concern relates to the priest
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.)
- in case of an abuse concern / allegation, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

## **UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS**

All staff, ministers, volunteers, contractors, parishioners and clergy 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, giving gifts or preferential treatment for certain children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (e.g. inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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
- use inappropriate language or engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in front of children (e.g. personal details or social activities)
- 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
- make deliberate contact with a child or their family – not socially related outside of the reasonable pastoral duties of one's parish role or position without the parish priest's knowledge and consent
- have any online contact (e.g. social media, email, instant messaging etc.) with a child or their family – not family or socially related (unless necessary e.g. by providing individuals or families with rosters or e-newsletters)
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking site or email address with a child or their family – 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 drugs on parish premises or at parish events.

## **GENERAL DIRECTIVES**

- Be positive role models by displaying proper behaviours
- Wherever possible, inform the parents, school principal or another responsible adult of your intention to contact their child if necessary
- Supervise diligently (e.g. Catechist having a parent present when preparing 'out of school' children for the Sacraments)
- Respect personal space
- Physical contact is acceptable and important in appropriate situations (e.g. helping an injured child or consoling a frightened or distraught child)
- Report non-compliance (e.g. tell priest of any breaches of this Code of Conduct)
- 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
- Recognise when service relationships are becoming unsafe and / or ineffective and be prepared to terminate those relationships with appropriate referral.

Follow the procedure outlined in the 'Diocese of Sale Child Safe Reporting Process' when filing a report.