

Western District Catholic Communities

Incorporating the Catholic Communities of Apsley, Balmoral, Coleraine, Casterton, Dunkeld, Edenhope, Glenthompson, Hamilton, Harrow, Macarthur, Penshurst and Tarrayoukyan.



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Central to the mission of the Western District Catholic Communities, 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.

PURPOSE

This *Child Safe Code of Conduct* has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people within the Western District Catholic Communities against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation and the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat's *Code of Conduct for Caring for Children*.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members within the Western District Catholic Community 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 *Child Safe Statement of Commitment* 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 children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance policy towards discrimination);

CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

- 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 Safeguarding Officer or the priest in charge — or the Vicar General if the concern relates to a priest;
- ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe, if an allegation of child abuse is made.

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 knowledge and consent of the priest in charge or Parish Safeguarding Officer (exempt from this is 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 digital communication channels/device to relay sensitive or confidential information;
- 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 illicit drugs;
- consume illicit drugs on parish premises or at parish events.