

# Code of Conduct for all Church Workers who work with Children in the Diocese of Bunbury

As adopted Synod 2019

Excerpt from Faithfulness in Service 2016, sections 3 & 5

## 3 PUTTING THIS CODE INTO PRACTICE

### Preamble

3.1 This Code will only be effective if it is widely known and available throughout the Church, practised consistently and implemented justly. Clergy and church workers will protect the safety of others and themselves by observing its standards and following its guidelines.

3.2 The absence of any reference to particular conduct in this Code does not imply that it is acceptable for clergy and church workers.

3.3 All clergy and church workers have a responsibility to ensure that personal behaviour and practices of pastoral ministry that are inconsistent with this Code are neither tolerated nor covered up.

3.4 Failure to meet the standards of this Code will indicate an area where clergy and church workers require guidance and specialised help. Such failures may result in formal disciplinary action if the conduct infringes an applicable disciplinary rule of the Church or is a breach of an employment contract.

3.5 Clergy and church workers are encouraged to follow the guidelines of this Code. Where this is impractical, the exercise of judgement will be required to ensure the safety of those to whom they minister and themselves. Wilful disregard of the guidelines may indicate an area where clergy and church workers require guidance and specialised help.

### Standards for clergy and church workers

These standards state the Church's expectations for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry.

3.6 It is your responsibility to be aware of and meet the standards of this Code.

3.7 If you have overall authority in a church body, you are to ensure that all clergy and church workers for whom you are responsible are made aware of this Code.

3.8 You are not to penalise, discriminate or take action against other clergy or church workers because of any action taken in good faith under this Code.

### Guidelines

These guidelines explain and illustrate best practice and highlight practical ways to achieve it.

3.9 If you know or have reason to believe that another member of the clergy or another church worker has failed to meet a standard of this Code, other than for child

abuse (the reporting of child abuse is addressed in paragraphs 5.14 and 5.15) you should:

- Where you believe that a person has not suffered harm or is not at the risk of harm, approach the member of the clergy or church worker and identify the concern; or
- Where you believe that a person has suffered harm or is at the risk of harm, report this to the church authority having responsibility for the member of the clergy or church worker or the Director of Professional Standards.

If in doubt seek advice from a colleague or supervisor or the Director of Professional Standards without identifying the member of the clergy or church worker.

3.10 If you know or have reason to believe that another member of the clergy or another church worker has not followed a guideline of this Code, you should approach the member of the clergy or church worker and identify the concern. If you consider that the member of the clergy or church worker is persisting in disregarding the guideline without good reason and a person has suffered harm or is at the risk of harm, you should seriously consider reporting this to the church authority with responsibility for the member of the clergy or church worker or the Director of Professional Standards. If in doubt seek advice from a colleague or supervisor or the Director of Professional Standards without identifying the member of the clergy or church worker.

## 5 CHILDREN

### Preamble

5.1 Children are entitled to be safe and protected. They have the right to be respected, listened to and their particular needs addressed in all church activities, whether mixed aged or child specific.

5.2 Ministry where children are involved requires absolute trustworthiness.

5.3 Clergy and church workers with overall authority in a church body (e.g. incumbents and school principals) have a responsibility that cannot be delegated for the implementation and maintenance of proper systems for the safety and welfare of children participating in its pastoral ministry.

5.4 When they are exercising a pastoral ministry involving children in a church body, clergy and church workers (e.g. Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders) have responsibility for the safety and welfare of children in their care.

5.5 Clergy and church workers have authority over children because of their position and power because of their greater age, maturity, physical size and life experience. Abuse arises from the misuse of authority or power. Any form of child abuse is always wrong.

5.6 Due to the inherent imbalance of power, children are incapable of giving valid consent to abuse.

5.7 Appropriate physical contact is important for children's healthy development.

## Standards for clergy and church workers

These standards state the Church's expectations for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry.

5.8 If you have overall authority in a church body, you are to ensure that:

- proper systems for the safety and welfare of children participating in the church's pastoral ministry are implemented and maintained;
- all applicable requirements of the civil authorities, the church authority and the church body are complied with; and
- all clergy and church workers for whom you have responsibility and who work with children:
  - comply with all civil and Church screening and selection requirements;
  - receive regular training in child protection; and
  - are aware of the provisions of this Code relating to children.

5.9 If you are exercising a pastoral ministry involving children in a church body you are to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and welfare of the children in your care.

5.10 You are to not abuse children.

5.11 When engaged in pastoral ministry you are not to administer corporal punishment to children in your care.

5.12 You are not to make available to children any prohibited material, except wine in the context of a Holy Communion service.

5.13 Before you allow a person who is currently charged with or convicted of an offence against a child to participate in activities involving children, you are to:

- consult the Director of Professional Standards;
- ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken; and
- be satisfied that no child will be at an increased risk of harm.

5.14 If you know or reasonably suspect that a child is at risk of harm from child abuse, you are to report this to the appropriate civil authorities.

5.15 If you know or reasonably suspect that another member of the clergy or a church worker has abused a child, you are to report this to the appropriate civil authorities and the Director of Professional Standards.

## Guidelines

These guidelines explain and illustrate best practice and highlight practical ways to achieve it.

### Recognising the characteristics and effects of child abuse

5.16 You need to be aware of the signs, symptoms and characteristics of child abuse and its impact on children.

### Characteristics and effects of child abuse

Abuse of a child can be categorised as emotional, physical, sexual, or spiritual. It can also arise from neglect, bullying or harassment. The signs and symptoms can include:

- emotional abuse—low self esteem, apathy, an over readiness to relate to anyone even strangers, unduly aggressive behaviour, withdrawn behaviour;
- physical abuse—bruises, bites, burns and scalds, fractures;
- sexual abuse—a level of sexual knowledge or desire for either contact or distance inappropriate to the child’s age, self-harm, social isolation, and a sudden onset of soiling, wetting or other behavioural changes;
- spiritual abuse—low self esteem, high levels of anxiety and fear, excessive deference to a leader and isolation from former friends and family members;
- neglect—failure of a child to grow within the normally accepted pattern, failure of a parent or guardian to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care and supervision;

Grooming actions are designed to establish an emotional connection to lower the child’s inhibitions through the development of a relationship with the child, and increased opportunity to see the child. Grooming involves psychological manipulation that is usually very subtle, drawn out, calculated, controlling and premeditated. Typically, grooming occurs incrementally: accessing the victim, initiating and maintaining the abuse, and concealing the abuse.<sup>1</sup>

All Australian jurisdictions have grooming offences, which vary in scope and application. Grooming offences may target online or other electronic communications, subjecting children to child exploitation material, and/or using intoxicating substances to engage children for the purpose of sexual activity.<sup>2</sup>

Characteristics and effects of child abuse

- bullying or harassment—low self-esteem, loss of trust in others, apathy, an over readiness to relate to anyone even strangers, unduly aggressive behaviour, withdrawn behaviour.

Sexual abuse of a child is often preceded by grooming.

The sexual abuse of a child commonly has the following characteristics:

- it usually starts with something minor and gradually builds up to more involved behaviours through a process of grooming;
- it is secretive and generally known only to the abuser and victim making it extremely difficult to detect;
- it is perpetrated by someone known to the child and/or held in a position of trust by the child or their parents or guardians; and
- it is rarely a self-contained or one-off incident but rather part of an ongoing relationship that is corrupting and distorting.

The abuse of a child commonly causes psychological and spiritual harm and is likely to lead to the impairment of their social, emotional, cognitive, spiritual and intellectual development and/or disturbed behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by Standing Committee, November 2016 – SC2016/2/29

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The effects of child abuse extend well beyond the abuser and their primary victims. The families of the victim and abusers as well as their communities can also experience a high degree of distress when revelations of abuse emerge. Often they can deny the disclosure and so reject the victim rather than face reality. Once the reality is confronted, the community will commonly experience profound shock, guilt about failing to protect the primary victim, deep hurt and disillusionment.

Recognising the characteristics of sexual offenders

5.17 You need to be aware of the characteristics of sexual offenders. A sexual offender may be a friend, a family member, a neighbour, a peer, or a person in authority.

Characteristics of sexual offenders

Sexual offenders generally:

- do not stop unless there is some intervening factor;
- believe or assert that the victim is complicit or a willing participant;
- attempt to deny, justify, minimise or excuse their behaviour by:
  - claiming their behaviour was an expression of love for the victim;
  - claiming their behaviour was a result of their childhood abuse;
  - claiming their behaviour was influenced by stress, the use of alcohol or other substances; and blaming the victim;
- enjoy the activity, despite claims to the contrary; and
- are repeat offenders.

Sexual offenders who target vulnerable adults and children will often undertake a grooming process as a precursor to abusive behaviour.

Ensuring the safety of children

5.18 Taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and welfare of children for whom you have overall responsibility or are in your care requires you prepare a risk management plan which considers the following issues:

- screening and selection of personnel;
- your role and capacity to perform it;
- use of external service providers;
- supervision ;
- planning and conduct of activities;
- venue;
- health and safety;
- transport;
- disciplinary arrangements;
- physical contact;
- photographs and images; and
- record keeping.

These issues are considered in paragraphs 5.19 and 5.47.

Screening and selection of personnel

5.19 If you have responsibility for compliance with civil and Church screening and selection requirements, you should exercise care with the selection of leaders involved in mixed age or children's activities. You should ensure that any parents or guardians assisting with these activities are screened.

5.20 Consult the Director of Professional Standards as to whether a risk assessment is required before you appoint someone who has:

- been acquitted of a charge of an offence against a child;
- had a charge of an offence against a child not proceed;
- had a prohibited status under applicable child protection legislation lifted; or
- been the subject of Church disciplinary proceedings involving child abuse.

Your role and capacity to perform it

5.21 You need to recognise your own limits and not undertake any ministry that is beyond your competence or certification or that is not part of the role for which you have been or are being trained. Arrange for any such ministry to be provided by an experienced person or specialist agency. This applies particularly to outdoor or adventure activities such as canoeing, abseiling and hiking. Refer any child who requires specialised help (e.g. counselling for depression, abuse or addiction) to an appropriately qualified person or agency.

5.22 While children should be able to trust and confide in clergy and church workers—and you should expect to develop relationships of this character with children—avoid fostering inappropriate dependence on the part of a child.

5.23 Encourage children to develop leadership skills and undertake leadership roles that are appropriate for people of their age.

Use of external service providers

5.24 When you engage or use an external service provider for an activity (e.g. when you engage a specialist in outdoor education or a speaker for a camp), you should:

- make reasonable enquiries as to whether they have been screened and selected in accordance with civil and any Church requirements;
- ensure that they are only used in a supplemental capacity; and
- wherever practicable, ensure that they are not left alone with any child.

Supervision

5.25 The degree of supervision required will vary according to the nature and environment of the activity, the age and maturity of the children and the size of the group. Having multiple leaders to ensure that supervision and accountability standards are maintained is vitally important. You should:

- clearly distinguish the different levels of responsibility between you and any other supervisor and ensure that these differences are understood;
- consider the extent of supervision required taking into account:
  - the age, number, ability and gender mix of the children; and
  - the venue, time, duration and nature of the activity;

- have a register of all children with contact details and parents' or guardians' names for emergencies; and
- monitor and periodically review the application of Church child protection procedures.

## Activities

5.26 You should identify and minimise all potential hazards before embarking on any activity with children. This would include:

- being aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures;
- ensuring that emergency exits on church premises are clearly marked and never obstructed or internally locked;
- not permitting smoking in any church premises where the activity is held; and
- not knowingly permitting children with serious contagious diseases to attend the activity.

5.27 Games or activities that emphasise gender, physical, intellectual or ethnic differences should be assessed for their appropriateness. Think about what message children may learn from the way events are organised and conducted.

5.28 You should review in their entirety aural and visual materials, such as videos, films, computer games, graphics, photographs and lyrics, to ensure that any elements containing violence, sexual activity or lifestyle are appropriate for the intended audience. Exercise care if a film or computer game has been recommended by the Office of Film and Literature Classification as unsuitable for viewing or playing by children of a particular age (e.g. MA, M and PG classifications). In assessing whether something is suitable you should take into account the age of the youngest child present. If in doubt, seek the advice of a supervisor or colleague.

5.29 To minimise the possibility of children being harmed, give careful consideration to any activities or games that require children to act alone or in pairs independent of leaders.

5.30 Ensure that no children's activity includes:

- secret initiation rites and ceremonies;
- nudity or engagement in sexual conduct;
- the use or availability of prohibited materials, except wine in the context of a Holy Communion service.

5.31 When taking children away from church premises, obtain the written consent of a parent or guardian and keep them informed of the place and timing of the event. If you can, include parents or guardians in a leadership team of mixed gender.

5.32 When meeting a child privately, you should:

- have parental or guardian consent, where practicable;
- ensure where appropriate that a parent, guardian or suitable adult is present;
- inform another member of the clergy, an adult church worker or another adult of the time, location and duration of the meeting; and
- not invite or have children to your home or visit children in their home when no other adult is present; and

- make a record of the time, location, duration and circumstances of any meeting where it is impracticable to follow these guidelines.

## Venue

5.33 Avoid working alone or in isolation with children. You should ensure that:

- all activities have defined boundaries that are easily observed or patrolled;
- all aspects of children's activities are open to observation;
- children are not permitted to leave church premises unsupervised; and
- where individual or small group ministry is needed, it occurs in the presence of adults, a public place or a location with high visibility.

5.34 When events require children to sleep over, you should ensure that where possible:

- parents or guardians are involved in the events and their supervision;
- sleeping accommodation is segregated between males and females;
- sleeping accommodation is supervised by more than one person, preferably including a parent or guardian or another adult of each gender; and
- supervisors do not sleep in close personal proximity to a child, unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

5.35 Venues should allow for the privacy of all parties to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting. If you need to wash or toilet a child, tell another adult what you are doing.

## Health and safety

5.36 Ensure that the risk management plan includes relevant contact details (e.g. emergency services and specialised help) and that a first aid kit appropriate to the activity is available. In the case of camps and similar activities, ensure that at least one adult present has first aid training.

5.37 Do not administer prescription medications to a child without the written consent of a parent or guardian.

5.38 Obtain information from parents or guardians about the particular physical and mental health or safety needs of children in your care (e.g. allergies, depression).

## Transport

5.39 When making transport arrangements, take reasonable steps to ensure that:

- all drivers or operators are licensed, responsible, experienced and are not impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance; and
- all motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, insured, safe and fitted with appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g. seat belts, life jackets).

5.40 To the extent practicable, avoid being alone with a child in a motor vehicle or driving a child home unaccompanied. If such a situation is unavoidable, inform another adult of the trip and the reason for it.

## Discipline

5.41 If you have overall responsibility in a Church body, you should ensure that:

- there is a strategy to prevent child abuse from occurring during church activities. This includes giving age-appropriate warnings to children about their own behaviour; and
- parents or guardians are advised that abuse of any child during children's activities will not be tolerated

5.42 If you have overall authority for children's ministry in a Church body you should ensure that a disciplinary strategy is developed, made known and implemented.

### Disciplining children

When a child's behaviour requires correction, either for the safety and welfare of themselves or the group, it is important that:

- a warning precedes any discipline, where the situation permits;
- the discipline is explained to the child;
- the child is given an opportunity to explain;
- the discipline is appropriate to the occasion and age of the child;
- the form of discipline is not corporal punishment, does not ridicule or humiliate, or is not otherwise abusive;
- very young children are not isolated as a form of discipline;
- physical restraint is only used to protect children from harm or to avoid an accident;
- when physical restraint is used, a record is kept that identifies the restraint used, the member of the clergy or church worker and child involved and any witnesses, and sets out the incident's circumstances; and
- the child's parents or guardians are informed of the circumstances of the incident and discipline; and
- you make a record of the circumstances of the incident and discipline;

### Physical Contact

5.43 In general—excluding circumstances such as immediate physical danger or medical emergency—physical contact should be initiated by the child or occur with their permission. When you make physical contact with a child, be very careful that you respect the child's feelings and privacy.

5.44 Ensure that any physical contact you have with children is of a non-sexual nature and appropriate to the situation. Avoid any physical contact that is sexually stimulating, or that may be construed as sexually stimulating. Children may or may not be aware of creating such situations. It is your responsibility to be alert for such situations and to cease any inappropriate physical contact immediately.

### Children and physical contact

You need to be very careful when making physical contact with children.

Appropriate contact includes:

- bending down to the child's eye level, speaking kindly and listening attentively;
- gaining permission before hugging a child and respecting their right to refuse;

- taking a child's hand and leading them to an activity;
- comforting a child by placing an arm around their shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side;
- praising or welcoming a child by holding the child's two hands in yours;
- patting the child on the head, hand, back or shoulder in affirmation; and
- holding a preschool child who is crying, provided that they want to be held.

Inappropriate contact includes:

- kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you;
- extended hugging or tickling;
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume, specifically the buttocks, thighs, breasts or groin areas; and
- carrying older children, sitting them on your lap or having them rub up next to you.

Communication

5.45 If you have overall responsibility in a Church body, you should ensure there is a policy for clergy and church workers which deals with the use of technology to communicate with children in pastoral ministry.

5.46 When considering using technology for communication, you should apply the same principles as you would in any other form of communication with children.

You should take care that:

- it is an appropriate way to communicate with a child;
- it is an appropriate way to communicate about the matter;
- you are sensitive to the impact of your words, images and actions on the child and any other person who may access it;
- you do not use sexually suggestive, explicit or offensive language or images; and
- the circumstances of the communication, including the language and images used, do not suggest your relationship with the child is inappropriate.

Risks associated with using technology in communication with children

Clergy, church workers and other participants in church activities – including children – may communicate using:

- texting and picture messaging;
- email;
- instant messenger services and chat rooms;
- video conferencing;
- blogs and internet forums;
- websites; and
- group social networking sites.

Remember information posted online is tracked and can be retrieved. Dangers associated with the use of communication technology with children are not always appreciated by clergy and church workers. These dangers include:

- ignoring personal security settings on social networking sites;
- disclosing contact details or images of the child in the communication;
- being unable to determine if people are who they say they are;
- exposing the child to unwanted or inappropriate information;
- the child becoming a victim of cyberbullying; and
- sexual predators gaining access to the child.

Clergy and church workers can assist children to stay safe when using technology to communicate with others by:

- educating children and their parents or guardians about the risks associated with the use of this technology;
- encouraging children to exercise care in disclosing personal information about themselves and others such as their contact details;
- encouraging children to talk about anything that worries them with their parents or guardians, older siblings, friends, and clergy and church workers with whom they have a pastoral relationship instead of posting their problems in a chat room or blog; and
- encouraging children to talk about anything they see or experience online that worries them.

#### Photographs and images

5.47 If you have overall authority in a church body, you should ensure that there is a policy requiring clergy and church workers to obtain the permission of relevant parents and guardians before making or using images (including photographs and videos) of children who are engaged in children's activities. The form of permission should clearly indicate the intended use of the images.

#### Record keeping

5.48 If you have overall authority in a church body, you should ensure that any Church screening documents:

- are treated with confidentiality and never left where they can be accessed by unauthorised persons;
- where kept on computer, are password protected and stored for an indefinite period of time with access limited to authorised persons; and
- where kept in paper form, are stored separately from any other documents and locked in secure place for an indefinite period of time, with access limited to authorised persons.

5.49 If you have overall authority in a church body, you should:

- ensure that a register of attendance of children and leaders and their emergency contact details is kept for each pastoral ministry involving children;
- consider including such registers in the church archives; and
- keep and store in a secure place all permission forms and records relating to discipline and private meetings.

5.50 If you are exercising a pastoral ministry involving children in a church body, you should keep a register of attendance of the children for whom you are responsible.