



Code of Conduct

Introduction

The Catholic School System in the Diocese of Broken Bay (DSS) is committed to the highest standards of conduct. This Code of Conduct gives guidance in areas where workers may need to make personal and ethical decisions where guidance is not provided in other DSS policy documents. It is a reflection of our values and beliefs of:

Discipleship: It reflects the mission of the Diocese which strives to live as a communion of disciples of Jesus whose actions always must reflect the message of the Gospel.

Respect: Consistent with the call to Discipleship to which all who work in the DSS respond, our actions towards others should always be characterised by the highest degree of respect.

Integrity: The trust of the community, one's students or colleagues is maintained and developed by all workers acting consistently and in the interests of those with whom we serve and work.

Impartiality: Actions, decisions and advice are based on consideration of all relevant factors. All workers should demonstrate fairness, justice and equity.

Purpose

The purpose of the Code is to promote a common understanding and consistency in expected standards of behaviour for workers, religious and all those working and/or volunteering in the DSS.

The Code is aimed at modelling and building a contemporary Catholic workplace that is faith-filled, collaborative, consultative and lawfully compliant. The Code is not intended to be exhaustive and does not identify every potential scenario of concern in the workplace.

The Code helps to:

- clarify the parameters of appropriate and inappropriate conduct for workers
- create a safe and supportive school environment, and
- promote Catholic values and ethics.

This Code embraces the principles and values articulated in *Integrity in the Service of the Church*, which provides guidance in relation to: relationships, boundaries, the promotion of social justice, and the professional conduct of workers.

RELATIONSHIPS

Workers should:

- exhibit justice and fairness in relationships and service and promote proper working conditions characterised by justice and fairness
- treat all people with respect, sensitivity and courtesy
- embrace diversity and difference in those they serve or with whom they work
- promote personal growth and development in those with whom they come in contact, and
- understand the problems which can occur because of the imbalance of power in a service relationship.

BOUNDARIES

Workers should:

- know, understand and respect the physical and emotional boundaries of adults, children and young people and be aware of the dangers involved when the boundaries between personal and service relationships are blurred
- understand the importance of meeting their

own personal emotional needs outside work relationships, and

- take appropriate action when a relationship is not benefitting those being served.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

Workers should:

- in word and action, cooperate in bringing about a just world and a truly human community, and
- express particular concern, care and protection for people who are vulnerable or abused and treat those who are alienated or marginalised with understanding and compassion.

PROFESSIONALISM

Workers should:

- commit to providing professional and competent service, ongoing professional development, and effective professional working relationships with colleagues, clients and all to whom they minister
- operate within the limits of their competence and qualifications, and
- exercise responsible stewardship.

Who does the Code apply to?

The Code applies to all people who are engaged to work in, or provide services to, Catholic Systemic Schools (schools) in the Diocese. For the purpose of the Code, those working in, or providing services to, Catholic Systemic Schools are referred to as 'workers'. Workers include:

- all paid employees of schools and the Catholic Schools Office, whether employed on a permanent, temporary or casual basis
- religious, volunteers, contractors, consultants and students on tertiary practicum placements working with the DSS.

Workers are required to be aware of and comply with the Code. While contractors, consultants, students on tertiary practicum placements and volunteers are not usually subject to disciplinary action, conduct that would be assessed as being a breach of the Code may result in their engagement being terminated.

Expectations of Workers

Workers are expected to:

- take responsibility for their own conduct with students, staff and the wider school community and be aware of DSS policies and procedures. If workers are uncertain about the scope or content of a policy with which they are required to comply, they should seek clarification from their principal/supervisor/manager
- be familiar with the legislation under which they are employed, as this may specify requirements for mandatory compliance
- undertake duties in a professional, competent and conscientious manner
- take up suitable opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills, including participation in relevant professional development/training
- be mindful of their duty to the safety of themselves and others
- be aware that if their conduct has the potential to damage the DSS's reputation, even if it is in a private capacity, this could lead to disciplinary action
- act in good faith by not making unfounded complaints with malicious, frivolous or vexatious intent against another person
- model effective leadership and respect in interactions with students, colleagues and others, and
- treat others with care.

A principal/supervisor/manager, in addition to the above responsibilities, is expected to:

- promote collaborative and collegial workplaces
- exercise leadership by working with workers to implement performance and development processes that are consistent with the worker's conditions of engagement
- provide ongoing support, guidance, training, supervision and feedback to workers
- establish systems within their area of responsibility which support effective communication
- consult with and involve their workers in appropriate decision-making
- identify risks and develop strategies for their management
- inform workers of the Code and all relevant policies and make the documents accessible to them, and
- take appropriate action if a breach of the Code may have occurred.

Relationships

In the performance of duties, workers are required to comply with this Code and maintain professional and ethical behaviour at all times. All workers should respect the dignity, rights and views of others by:

- being courteous, sensitive, and considerate to the needs of others
- respecting cultural, ethnic and religious differences
- listening to and seeking to understand different points of view
- being honest in communications
- expressing constructive feedback that is considerate and moderate in its tone
- acknowledging the contributions that others contribute towards the mission of the DSS, and
- working cooperatively and collaboratively with others to achieve common goals and a harmonious work environment.

Decision Making

Workers should perform their duties diligently, impartially and conscientiously. When making decisions, workers should act:

- on the basis of factual information
- in accordance with established procedures
- fairly and without bias
- with honesty and integrity, and
- in conformity with the principles of procedural fairness, including the right to be heard and the right to an impartial decision.

When faced with a difficult question, questions to consider could include:

- Who should be consulted?
- Is the decision lawful?
- Is the decision in line with the DSS's policies, including this Code of Conduct?
- What will be the outcome for workers, the DSS and the Diocese?
- Would this decision lead to undue private gain at DSS expense?
- Is the decision justified in terms of the interests of the DSS or students?
- Will the decision withstand public scrutiny?

Conflicts of Interest

Workers are required to avoid conflicts of interest if possible, avoid creating conflicts for others and disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest as soon as they become aware of the conflict. Some situations may give rise to a conflict of interest affecting:

- financial interests (or other material benefit)
- personal beliefs
- personal relationships, or
- private employment.

Real or perceived conflicts of interest exist when it is likely that a worker could be influenced or could be perceived to be influenced by a personal interest when performing their official function. Conflicts of interest may lead to biased decision making. Workers have an obligation to ensure that there is no actual or perceived conflict between their personal interests and professional duties. In general, if any personal advantage is obtained or may be perceived to be obtained, there is potential to bring the actions into question. A good test to apply to difficult situations would be to ask how someone would react if all staff were informed of your conduct or behaviour. If you would feel uncomfortable then you should seek advice prior to proceeding.

Such a conflict may not be only in relation to a worker's own interests. A conflict of interest could include the interests of:

- members of the worker's immediate family or relatives
- the worker's own business partners or associates, or those in their workplace, or
- a worker's friends.

To resolve or manage a conflict of interest, a range of options is available depending on the significance of the conflict. These include:

- declaring the conflict of interest to the worker's principal/manager/supervisor
- referring the decision to a senior worker who is expert and independent
- removing the worker from the activity or decision
- transferring the worker
- checking and endorsing (if appropriate) all actions with respect to the matter
- the worker divesting themselves of the personal interest, or
- taking no further action.

Maintaining integrity and personal or private views

Personal views or private interests can influence, or have the potential to influence, a worker's capacity to perform their duties with integrity, and in turn, may compromise the integrity of the DSS. Workers need to be mindful of the requirement to act with integrity, and consistently strive to do what is right and just. It is expected that workers will not be influenced by improper pressure that may affect, or may be perceived to adversely affect, their ability to fulfil their obligations and to act in accordance with Catholic values and ethics.

Confidentiality

Sharing of confidential and personal information with external persons or agencies may only occur within the established Code for such communication, or in accordance with any relevant legislation relating to the provision of such information. In addition to the obligations imposed by the CSO's Privacy Policy it is expected that workers will:

- not divulge, either during employment or after leaving, any confidential information gained as an employee that could adversely affect the DSS
- treat confidential and personal information about students, their families or other workers respectfully
- exercise caution and sound judgment in discussing other people's confidential and personal information
- only use such information for work-related purposes, and
- only communicate such information to those who need to know in order to perform their role.

Public Comment

In the course of their official duties some workers may be called on to make public comment. Workers, as parents of students or as members of the community, have the right to make public comment and enter into public debate on political and social issues. However, workers must not use, release or refer to information confidential to the DSS. Additionally, workers must observe the restrictions on the release of private information obtained in the course of their employment, and which is not otherwise in the public domain, consistent the Privacy Policy. Workers must make it clear that their comments are made in a private capacity and do not represent the official view of the DSS.

Gifts

Workers should not accept gifts or benefits either for themselves or for another person which might in any way, either directly or indirectly, compromise or influence workers in their professional capacities. Gifts of a nominal value generally used for promotional purposes or moderate acts of hospitality offered as a genuine “thank you” may be accepted as long as they have not been solicited. Gifts or hospitality offered as an inducement to purchase, provide information or treat favourably are not acceptable regardless of their monetary value. Workers may be offered a gift or benefit as an act of gratitude. The DSS has a culture of providing hospitality and there may be circumstances when to refuse a gift would be perceived as rude, insulting or hurtful. However, acceptance of gifts is a matter of judgment for the worker.

Management of Resources

In using resources, workers should act with economy and efficiency. DSS facilities and equipment generally should not be used for private employment or for private financial gain by workers, unless prior formal approval has been given by their supervisor. Limited private use of DSS technologies while workers are in the workplace is acceptable, provided the use is infrequent, brief, involves minimal cost and does not interfere with the performance of work. Such use must be kept to a minimum during working hours. Such use must not involve activities that might be controversial, offensive or in conflict with the values of the Catholic Church.

Breach

Workers hold a position of trust and are accountable for their actions. If a worker's actions are inappropriate or appear to breach the standards of the Code, the principal/supervisor/manager has a responsibility to address any possible breach as soon as they become aware of it. An alleged breach of the Code may require a report to be made internally and may need to be referred to external

authorities under relevant legislation. An alleged breach of the Code may be investigated. In investigating an alleged breach of the Code, procedural fairness will apply. Each case will be determined on the facts and circumstances when deciding on the appropriate action to be taken. Appropriate action is determined by considering the nature and seriousness of the breach, any prior breaches, and an assessment of risk.

Appropriate actions may include:

- *informal counselling*
- *performance management*
- *professional development/ training*
- *increased supervision or monitoring*
- *coaching or mentoring*
- *specialist assessment*
- *informal or formal disciplinary action*
- *demotion*
- *termination*
- *notification to an external agency, or*
- *referral to police for investigation.*

Workers who are concerned about an alleged breach of the Code by their principal/supervisor/manager should report this to the next in-line of leadership. If a worker becomes aware that a serious breach of the Code is not being addressed, they should report their concern to the Manager of the Office of the Director. Workers must not take detrimental action against the complainant or person who reported the information. This includes any action that could reasonably be perceived to be detrimental action in reprisal. To take such action may be regarded as serious misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

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Review

This Code will be reviewed and updated from time to time, in order to ensure its relevance to current teaching and administrative practices. Workers are encouraged to submit suggestions for improvement of this Code to their supervisor, or if appropriate, in writing to the Director of Schools.

Source documents

- Towards Healing Integrity in Ministry
- Integrity in the Service of the Church
- NSW Ombudsman 2013 Practice Update

Related Policies

This code is to be read in conjunction with existing policies and procedures. It is expected that workers will understand and regularly review the current policies accessible at:

<https://curianet.dbb.org.au/CatholicSchoolsoffice/dssresources/Pages/default.aspx>