



Diocese of Cairns

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Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

This Code of Conduct (the “Code”) sets the standard of behaviour required of Diocesan staff who enter into specific relationships with The Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Cairns (the “Diocese”) for any period of time. This Code has been established to promote ethical behaviour, integrity and respect for others, and to assist all Diocesan staff to make appropriate decisions about our conduct. This Code is not exhaustive but provides a framework and direction about expected behavioural standards.

The Code is based on the *Integrity in the Service of the Church: A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Diocesan staff in the Catholic Church in Australia* (2011) and *Integrity in Ministry: A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy & Religious in Australia* (2004). It aims to help all of those who serve in the Diocese uphold Christian values in all relationships and actions. The key objectives and standards within this Code reflect the fundamental belief that all people are made in the image of God and are worthy of respect.

2. Scope

This Diocesan-wide Code applies to all parishes, divisions, departments and any other activities established under the authority of the Bishop of Cairns (“Division(s)”). Consistent with this Code, there are separate division-specific codes for Diocesan-operating divisions, such as Catholic Education, Centacare FNQ and Catholic Early Learning and Care.

The Code applies to Diocesan staff and officials, meaning any person who serves in any capacity on paid or voluntary basis for the Diocese, including, without limitations, employees, casual workers, contractors, interns, clergy and volunteers. Work, for the purposes of this Code, means both paid and voluntary activity undertaken by staff in their service for the Diocese.

Compliance with this Code is compulsory. It applies to all work-related activities, during and outside working hours, at or away from usual workplace, including, without limitations, interactions with third parties while serving the Diocese, at work-related events, conferences and functions, and in any Diocese-related electronic communication.

3. Objectives

The principles and standards put forward in this Code aim at maintaining the Church’s commitment to uphold justice, equity, and dignity of all people and their right to respectful and safe relationships. In serving the Church, the Diocesan staff strive for excellence in our work and reach out to those who are poor, alienated or marginalised. Service, according to these standards, is life-enriching for both providers and recipients.

This Code establishes 10 key standards of conduct that all Diocesan staff are expected to embrace:

1. **Commit to the Highest Ethical Standards**
2. **Act in a Professional and Respectful Manner**
3. **Use Diocesan Position and Resources responsibly**
4. **Avoid Conflict of Interest**
5. **Ensure Fitness for Duty**
6. **Always Safeguard Children and Vulnerable Adults**
7. **Respect Confidentiality and Privacy**
8. **Ensure Compliance with Relevant Laws and Diocesan Policies**
9. **Use Electronic Communications and Social Media respectfully**
10. **Use Intellectual Property responsibly**

Standard 1: Highest Ethical Standards

Diocesan staff are representatives of the Catholic Church and as such must ensure our workplace behaviour and personal conduct meet the highest ethical standards. Diocesan staff are expected to uphold Christian values and behave with integrity by acting in good faith, for a proper purpose and in the best interest of the Diocese.

All Diocesan staff shall:

- **Commit to justice and equity** by exhibiting the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity in their professional conduct.
- **Uphold the dignity and right to respect of all people** by conducting ourselves in a moral manner consistent with the discipline, norms and teachings of the Catholic Church.
- **Commit to safe and supportive relationships** by not taking advantage of any pastoral or authoritative role for own benefit; and by adhering to the requirements of the law of Queensland and the Commonwealth regarding reporting any suspected abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- **Respond with integrity to those who are poor, alienated or marginalised or not in a position of power or authority**, by not acting in an abusive or neglectful manner; and by sharing concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behaviour with the appropriate person in their management structure.
- **Accept responsibility for the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults** from all forms of abuse and harm by providing a professional work environment that is free from harassment; and by following relevant policies and/or procedures.
- **Maintain appropriate professional boundaries in all onsite and virtual contact settings** by demonstrating behaviour consistent with one's role and responsibilities and avoiding inappropriate emotional attachment, including without limitations:
 - Maintaining a proper distance between one's work and personal activities;
 - Acting in a reasonable, open and transparent manner in situations involving gifts, subject to division-specific provisions which may prohibit any acceptance of gifts;
 - Not disclosing personal information of a written, verbal, video and/or photographic nature in an inappropriate manner;
 - Not engaging in inappropriate relationships of an intimate or sexual nature.

Standard 2: Professional and Respectful Manner

- Diocesan staff are accountable for our actions and must promote a harmonious, safe and productive workplace. By behaving conscientiously and by ensuring our workplaces are respectful and collaborative, we work together to support the sacred work of the Catholic Church in the Diocese.
- Personal relationships are the starting point of Christian life, ministry and service. Dealings with any people, including parishioners and the general public, must be courteous in communication, honest in conduct and demonstrate sensitivity to others' rights. All people in the workplace must be treated fairly, with respect and in accordance with Diocesan policies.
- Diocesan staff must not make a false or misleading statement concerning their competencies. Staff must not knowingly disseminate any information that is false, misleading or incomplete concerning the Diocese.
- Diocesan staff must not engage in illegal, disreputable or scandalous activities that may impact on our personal reputation or the reputation of the Diocese. Diocesan staff are to ensure their private conduct maintains the integrity of the Catholic Church and ability to perform their duties.
- Diocesan staff must ensure our behaviour towards other Diocesan staff and persons with whom they have contact in their course of work is not derogatory, rude, aggressive, abusive, belittling, threatening or intimidating. Where there is disagreement or conflict, they should follow the Diocesan policy and procedure for managing complaints, grievances or disputes.
- Diocesan staff must ensure dress standards project a professional and respectful image that is maintaining credibility and the reputation of the Diocese.
- Diocesan staff must devote their time and attention during the Diocesan business hours exclusively to the discharge of their duties.
- Diocesan staff must exercise duty of care and due diligence in all aspects of work and strive for excellence in our service for the Diocese. All reasonable directions and instructions should be conscientiously carried out in a prompt and efficient manner.

Standard 3: Respectful Use of Diocesan Position and Resources

- Diocesan staff must not improperly use their position to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage for themselves or other people, or to cause detriment to the Diocese. Leadership staff are to provide timely and appropriate support and guidance on standards of behaviour and when necessary address conduct concerns as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Diocesan staff who purchase, use, maintain and dispose of Diocesan resources or equipment must do so with reasonable care, for legitimate work-related purposes and in accordance with the applicable law and relevant Diocesan policies. Waste and extravagance must be avoided. All property and resources must be returned to the Diocese before the staff member ceases engagement.

Standard 4: Avoiding Conflict of Interest

- Diocesan staff have a duty to avoid all conflict of interest. A conflict of interest can be actual, potential, or perceived. Personal interest relates to financial and non-financial interests, and can include the interests of family members, close friends or associates.
- Responsibility for disclosure of a conflict of interest rests with staff. All conflict of interest should be disclosed in a timely manner so that an appropriate management strategy can be applied. Staff must be familiar and compliant with the Diocesan Conflict of Interest Policy. Where doubt regarding existence or nature of the conflict exists, the Diocesan Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office should be contacted for advice.

Standard 5: Fitness for Duty

- Diocesan staff must ensure fitness for service at the Diocese and must exercise reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others in the workplace. Diocesan staff must disclose all pre-existing injuries or medical conditions of which they are aware, that could reasonably be expected to be aggravated by performing their duties for the Diocese.
- Diocesan staff must obey all laws relating to the possession or use of illegal drugs. While performing work, staff must not possess, consume or be affected by illegal drugs and alcohol. In some circumstances, Diocesan staff may consume alcohol at Diocesan event that has prior approval from the relevant Executive Director.
- Staff must ensure that consumption of legal drugs, including prescription and over-the-counter medication does not adversely affect their performance while on duty. Diocesan staff who take prescription medication which could affect their ability to undertake work should immediately advise their supervisor.
- Smoking of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) is prohibited in all workplaces within the Diocese, including all enclosed and outdoor venues and all vehicles owned or leased by the Diocese.

Standard 6: Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

- A core principle of this Code is that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount. All Diocesan staff must always ensure the protection and safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults (refer to [Diocese of Cairns Safeguarding Handbook](#)). Particular care is required in direct contact with children or vulnerable adults. All staff must strictly abide by current safeguarding policies.
- Suspected wrongdoing must be reported in accordance with mandatory reporting requirements.

Standard 7: Confidentiality and Privacy

- Diocesan staff may have access to confidential information of the Diocese in the course of our engagement. Where confidential information is accessed, staff must treat the information as confidential and only disclose it for the work purpose in accordance with the Diocese's instructions or as required by compulsion of law, and must not improperly use the information to gain advantage for themselves or someone else.
- When engagement ceases, staff must return any confidential information accessed in the course of our service. Staff obligations to maintain the confidentiality continues beyond their service at the Diocese.
- Diocesan staff must comply with the Australian Privacy Principles in the collection, use, storage, disclosure, and access of personal information. Diocesan staff must treat information covered by privacy legislation as private and confidential and use that information only for the purpose for which it was collected or authorised. Personal data should be stored securely with access limited to Diocesan staff requiring the information for legitimate purposes or to those persons entitled to access by law.

Standard 8: Compliance with Relevant Laws and Diocesan Policies

- All Diocesan staff must comply with applicable Queensland and Commonwealth laws and regulations.
- Diocesan staff must understand and comply with all Diocesan policies and procedures. Approved policies are available on the staff intranet or may be requested from supervisors or to the Human Resources Department.
- Any staff member who believes that anyone in the workplace is being bullied, sexually harassed or discriminated, should report the behaviour to the supervisor in the first instance or the Human Resource Department. Appropriate action will be taken if a staff member is found to have bullied, sexually harassed or unlawfully discriminated against any person.
- If a staff member's criminal history has the potential to impact on their ability to perform the role and/or impact their Blue Card status or relevant accreditation status, they must immediately inform their supervisor.

- Staff whose roles require membership of a professional body, must comply with the standards of the relevant professional body.

Standard 9: Respectful Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media

- Diocesan staff must exercise sound judgment in personal communication and are personally responsible for the content published digitally. Staff must recognise the potential for negative consequences for the Diocese when using social media, electronic communications and phones.
- Diocesan staff must respect appropriate professional boundaries with digital interactions, in particular with children and vulnerable adults.
- Diocesan staff will not use electronic devices in a manner that is disrespectful, uncourteous, or that would compromise or destroy the trust and confidence in their employment relationship or service at the Diocese.

Standard 10: Responsible Use of Intellectual Property

- Intellectual property created by a staff member, alone or with others, in the course of work belongs to the Diocese. It must only be used for work-related purposes.
- Diocesan staff must not infringe the intellectual property rights of any other person in the course of their engagement except where there is an express licence, or it is otherwise lawful to do so.
- After engagement ceases, an employee must return all intellectual property to the Diocese. Diocesan staff may be asked to certify to the Diocese that they have returned all such intellectual property.
- The protections of the Diocese’s intellectual property survive the termination of staff’s engagement.

4. Breaches of this Code

All misconduct will be investigated. Depending on the nature of the alleged breach, investigation may be conducted internally, or may be referred to an independent investigator. Where it is determined that a breach has occurred, further action may include termination of engagement. Some forms of inappropriate behaviour may also constitute a criminal offence that may be reported to external regulatory authorities.

Vexatious complaints, where there is a demonstrable absence of reasonable grounds for suspecting the misconduct and the report is made to cause distress, will be considered a breach of this Code.

5. Enquiries

Diocesan staff may ask for confidential advice, or raise a conduct concern with their Line Manager or if necessary, with Human Resource Department, Executive Director or Diocesan Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office, depending on the nature and severity of the concern.

6. Approval



Most Rev. James Foley
Bishop
Diocese of Cairns
5 November 2021