



# St Agatha's Code of Ethical Behaviour

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

2015

## St Agatha's Parish Code of Ethical Behaviour

St Agatha's Parish is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse.

This Code of Ethical Behaviour clarifies and affirms the standards of behaviour that are required by all clergy, members of religious orders, employees and volunteers within St Agatha's Parish, to preserve and ensure the health and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults in the Parish.

This Code of Ethical Behaviour is to be read with, and is consistent with the requirements of:

- the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*;
- the *Child Protection Act 1999*;
- the *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2014*; and
- the Archdiocese of Brisbane *Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Prevention and Protection Policy July 2014* (Prevention and Protection Policy).

## **Definitions**

For the purposes of this Code of Ethical Behaviour:

A 'child' is any person under 18 years of age.

A 'vulnerable adult' is any person aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability, or who may be unable to take care of themselves and/or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

A 'relevant person' is any member of the clergy or a religious order, an employee, or a volunteer within the St Agatha's Parish.

'Harm' is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a person's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing, which may be caused by a single act, omission or circumstance, or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.

'Abuse' includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, domestic violence, and sexual abuse.

## **St Agatha's Parish Commitment**

We, as the Parish, promote and are committed to:

- providing an environment that is safe and free from harassment, harm and abuse;
- complying with the requirements and recommendations of the Prevention and Protection Policy, which applies to everyone who works (whether in a paid or volunteer capacity) in the pastoral structure of the Archdiocese of Brisbane;
- ensuring that all relevant persons exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity in their conduct;
- upholding the safety, dignity and respect of all people within the Parish, by conducting ourselves at all times in a moral manner consistent with the discipline, norms and teachings of the Catholic Church;
- fostering safe and supportive relationships within the Parish, by not taking advantage of any pastoral or authoritative role for our own benefit, and by complying with the requirements of the laws in force in Queensland regarding the reporting of any actual or suspected abuse of children and/or vulnerable adults;
- responding with integrity to those who are poor, alienated or marginalised, by not acting in an abusive or neglectful manner, and by sharing concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behaviour confidentially with the Parish's Local Safeguarding Children Representative; and

- maintaining appropriate boundaries in all contact settings (including virtual settings), including by:
  - demonstrating behaviour consistent with our designated roles and responsibilities within the Parish;
  - avoiding inappropriate emotional and/or physical attachment and/or contact;
  - not forming or engaging in relationships of a sexual nature;
  - not accepting gifts or entering into financial relationships or transactions; and,
  - not disclosing inappropriate personal information.

## **Two Adult Rule**

We, as the Parish, have adopted the recommendation in the Prevention and Protection Policy, that as far as is reasonably practicable, no fewer than two adults should be present during any Parish event or ministry involving children and/or vulnerable adults.

By adopting this recommendation, the Parish:

- minimises, as far as is reasonably possible, the risk of an incident of harm or abuse occurring; and therefore
- best ensures that the safety and wellbeing of children, vulnerable adults and volunteers within the Parish is preserved.

The Parish's adoption of this recommendation also:

- protects relevant persons against false allegations of harm and abuse; and
- sends a clear statement that children and vulnerable adults are important and valued.

## **Reporting of concerns and/or allegations of actual or suspected harm and abuse**

All reporting of allegations and/or concerns of actual or suspected harm and abuse in relation to children and/or vulnerable adults is:

- taken seriously; and
- highly sensitive, and must be treated in a sensitive and confidential manner with respect for the privacy of the reporting person(s) and the persons the subject of the allegations and/or concerns.

Reasonable grounds to suspect the commission of harm and abuse in relation to a child and/or vulnerable adult include:

- a child and/or vulnerable adult disclosing that they have been, or may have been, harmed;
- a person disclosing that harm has occurred or is likely to occur;
- significant changes in the behaviour of a child or vulnerable adult, or the presence of new unexplained and suspicious injuries; and/or
- direct witnessing of the commission of harm and abuse.

We, as the Parish, have adopted the procedure prescribed in the Prevention and Protection Policy for the reporting of allegations of actual or suspected harm and abuse of children and/or vulnerable adults. This procedure specifies the action that must be taken if any concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure is made, whether current or historical, that indicates a relevant person has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child and/or vulnerable adult, or may have harmed a child and/or vulnerable adult;

- committed a criminal offence against a child and/or vulnerable adult, or related to a child and/or vulnerable adult; and/or
- behaved towards a child and/or vulnerable adult in a manner indicating they are unsuitable to work with children and/or vulnerable adults.

If any person within St Agatha's Parish becomes aware of the actual or suspected commission of harm and abuse of a child and/or vulnerable adult, they must immediately report their concern and/or allegation to the Parish's Local Safeguarding Children Representative or, alternatively, to the Parish Priest.

### **Positive Notice to Work with Children Check (Blue Card)**

St Agatha's Parish complies with the legislative requirements of the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*, for the development and implementation of an annual risk management strategy prescribing screening requirements for volunteers and employees, including those who:

- have begun employment pending the outcome of a Positive Notice to Work with Children Check (Blue Card);
- hold a Blue Card;
- are not required to hold a Blue Card; and/or
- are having their Blue Card reassessed.

The Positive Notice to Work with Children Check is a national check of a person's criminal history. Volunteers working with or in relation to children within St Agatha's Parish must apply for and obtain a Blue Card, if their work is of a type prescribed in the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to ensure that their Blue Card is maintained and current.