



## Augustinian Sisters, Servants of Jesus and Mary (ASJM) Australia

### Safeguarding Children and Adults Code of Conduct

#### Introduction

The Congregation of Augustinian Sisters, Servants of Jesus and Mary (ASJM) Australia, is actively committed to recognising, safeguarding and upholding the dignity and rights of all children and adults. Every person who shares in the life and work of the Congregation has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they have in fostering positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains safe and inclusive pastoral environments.

This Code of Conduct establishes clear expectations of all Sisters and personnel<sup>1</sup> engaged in any activity of, or under the authority of, the Congregation. All Sisters and personnel have a responsibility to uphold these expectations and, more broadly, to respect the values of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church that inspire and support their enactment.

The Code should be read alongside the Congregation's *Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy* and related documents, including our *Safeguarding Children and Adults Commitment Statement, Risk Management Framework and Complaints Handling Policy*.

Where a Sister is engaged in a ministry of an external entity, she will be expected to also comply with the relevant Code of Conduct of that entity. Similarly, where a Sister from the Australian region resides for a period in a country other than where ASJMs are located, this Code of Conduct applies, as do the relevant policies of the diocese in which she lives and ministers.

#### Conduct Towards Children

NOTE: 'Child' means any individual under the age of 18 years.

##### **Sisters and personnel must:**

- Model positive and respectful behaviours;
- Take reasonable steps to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm;
- Maintain an awareness of and responsiveness to behaviours that may indicate that a child has been or is at risk of abuse;

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<sup>1</sup> In context of this policy, the term 'personnel' refers to and includes staff, contractors, co-workers and volunteers who work with or for the Congregation, either onsite or in outreach activities.

- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are disclosing that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another;
- Immediately respond to ensure the protection and safety of a child if concerns exist about the child's safety;
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries around children – this includes avoiding unmonitored communications and being left alone with a child;
- Consider the risks of proposed activities and tasks and develop strategies to manage these risks (refer the Congregation's *Risk Management Framework*);
- Report to the appropriate authorities, internal and external, any child safety concerns, observations of misconduct against children, allegations of child abuse and/or any serious complaints made by a child or their parent/guardian (refer the Congregation's *Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy*).

**Sisters and personnel must not:**

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- Develop any 'special' relationships with a child that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children);
- Develop with a child a relationship of dependency;
- Initiate or engage in unnecessary physical contact with a child;
- Be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
- Exhibit behaviours with children that could be reasonably construed as unnecessary or inappropriate;
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children, such as language that is harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, culturally inappropriate and/or could be construed as offensive;
- Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Have contact/communication with a child, including online contact/communication, that could be reasonably construed as inappropriate or unprofessional.

## Conduct Towards Adults

This Code is applicable to all adults but has a particular focus on 'at risk adults'. Whilst taking care to not make assumptions or generalisations about individuals, the Congregation recognises that aspects of a person's identity, life experiences and health may increase their risk of vulnerability to abuse or harm. At risk adults in the context of this Code include people who are elderly, have a disability, have a mental illness, have diminished capacity, are experiencing transient risks (e.g. bereavement, relationship breakdown, domestic or family violence, homelessness), or have any other impairment that makes it difficult to protect themselves from abuse or harm. Other cohorts of at risk adults, sometimes referred to as 'vulnerable adults', include those who are surviving sexual abuse or child abuse, who

identify as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, who are of diverse gender or sexuality, and/or who are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

**Sisters and personnel must:**

- Act in a manner that sustains safe and inclusive environments which celebrate diversity and difference;
- Promote the participation and empowerment of adults in understanding and maintaining their personal safety and wellbeing;
- Take reasonable steps to protect adults from foreseeable risk of harm;
- Ensure that physical contact with adults is reasonable for the purpose of their care, and is appropriate given their age, health, disability or other characteristics;
- Immediately respond to ensure the protection and safety of an adult if concerns exist about their safety;
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of any person who reports safety concerns, except where legislative or statutory requirements override this (refer the Congregation's *Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy*);
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries around adults. Generally, one-to-one interactions with an adult at risk should not take place unless in an open or visible space, or within the clear line of sight of another adult. This includes ministries and/or services such as counselling, one-to-one tuition, coaching, spiritual direction and mentoring. However, this will depend on the individual's circumstances, preferences and right to privacy. Prudent judgement is required on a case-by-case basis;
- Consider the risks of proposed activities and tasks and develop strategies to manage these risks (refer the Congregation's *Risk Management Framework*);
- Report to the appropriate authorities, internal and external, any safety concerns, observations of misconduct, allegations of abuse and/or any serious complaints made by an adult (refer the Congregation's *Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy*);

**Sisters and personnel must not:**

- Exercise authority or power that exploits, manipulates or coerces a person to engage in any activity which disrespects their human rights, dignity and privacy;
- Exploit an individual's vulnerability to form an intimate relationship;
- Discriminate against any adult, including because of faith, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability;
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed abuse;
- Use information and communication technologies that could reasonably be considered to have a negative impact on another person, cause them harm, or make them feel unsafe;
- Work with adults while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

## Compliance and Code Breaches

Sisters and personnel are required to review and sign this Code of Conduct regularly and not less than every two years to reaffirm their understanding of their obligations.

The ASJM Delegate, Australia, is responsible for ensuring that this occurs and for maintaining appropriate records.

Breaches of this Code of Conduct may constitute misconduct and result in disciplinary proceedings, up to and including dismissal and/or being removed from ministry. Breaches may also constitute civil or criminal offences and may result in civil or criminal prosecution.

## Related Internal Policies and Documents

- Safeguarding Statement of Commitment
- Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Risk Management Framework
- Complaints Handling Policy

## Code History and Review

Approval Authority	ASJM Leadership Team
Policy Owner	ASJM Delegate, Australia
Policy Review/Revision Date(s)	October 2021
Next Policy Review	October 2023

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## Code of Conduct Agreement

I acknowledge that I have received, read and understood this Code of Conduct and I agree to adhere to its standards and expectations. I understand that any violation of the Code shall result in my being subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Name: Sr Lorraine Testa

Program Area: .....

Signature: *Lorraine Testa* Date: 12/10/2021