



Our Code of Conduct

Working with integrity



ABOUT OUR CODE

Who we are

We are the international aid and development agency of the Catholic Church in Australia, guided by Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching.

Our mission is the quest for the full realisation of human dignity and enhancing wellbeing through ending poverty, promoting justice and upholding dignity.

We believe that every person is created in God's image and that all life is sacred.

Caritas Australia is committed to developing fullness of life.

We work collaboratively to create a culture that promotes the common good.

Why we have a Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct provides a shared understanding of the way we behave as individuals, towards each other and those we serve. This Code of Conduct helps us stay true to our values.

What a Code of Conduct is

Our Code of Conduct explains our expectations of you. It is an agreement between you and Caritas Australia.

While other documents (such as your role description or contract) outline what you need to do, our Code of Conduct outlines how you need to do it.



Who it applies to

Our Code of Conduct is not specific to any role or country – it applies across the whole organisation. This includes all people who work with, or work for, Caritas Australia: our Board of Directors, Leadership Team, employees, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, partners, and others.

People who are associated with Caritas Australia – including you – hold a privileged position of power and trust in the communities that we serve, both in Australia and overseas. When carrying out our work, it is important to understand this position of power and trust, and not abuse it in any way.

When it applies

Our Code of Conduct applies when you're in your normal work environment (such as at the office) and when:

- working from home
- representing Caritas Australia at an event off-site, such as a conference or meeting
- travelling for work

It also applies in social or non-work situations, such as:

- at an event even if it's "outside work hours" (such as a post-conference dinner)
- on social media (even if you're using your personal social media account to post or make comments, if someone can make the connection that you work for Caritas Australia, this Code of Conduct may still apply)
- for public behaviours that might cause harm to anyone, or damage our reputation.

How to use our Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct does not attempt to list in detail every aspect or possible scenario. Instead it outlines some important values and standards. If you're unsure how it applies in certain circumstances, please ask.



CODE OF CONDUCT COMMITMENTS

1. I commit to treating others with respect and dignity.
2. I commit to keeping everyone safe.
3. I commit to protecting the rights of everyone, especially children and vulnerable adults.
4. I commit to using Caritas Australia's money, resources and information responsibly.
5. I commit to acting with integrity, knowing that I'm always a representative of Caritas Australia.



1. I treat others with respect and dignity.

- I listen and speak respectfully when interacting with others. I accept that, although we may have differences, we also have similarities. I try to find common ground.
- I practise subsidiarity. Where possible, I help to empower others to make decisions that affect them. Where this is not possible or ideal, I actively involve others in consultation before making a decision. I take different ideas into consideration. Once a decision is made, I provide feedback.
- I am aware of unequal power relationships (such as between manager and employee, partner and program participant, or adult and child). I do not take advantage of my position.
- I will seek to act in the best interests of the most vulnerable, listening to their voices and respecting their will and preferences.
- I strive to be inclusive, being mindful to include our in-country staff, Diocesan Directors, volunteers and others wherever practical. I respect the diversity of our people by ensuring our meetings and communications are accessible.
- I will speak appropriately and professionally about other people and organisations, even when they're not present.
- I work collaboratively with others towards the common good. If I need support, I will ask an appropriate person, such as my manager, People & Culture or an external support agency (such as our employee assistance program).



2. I help keep everyone safe.

- Safety is everyone's responsibility. I speak up and take action if I see something that could harm myself or others.
- I help create a culture that promotes health, safety, security and wellbeing of all Caritas Australia staff, volunteers, contractors, partners and visitors.
- I do not tolerate language or behaviour that involves harassment, discrimination, bullying, abuse, neglect, exploitation or disrespect, particularly in relation to race, culture, age, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, religion, sexuality or political views.
- I will not work while under the influence of alcohol or drug related substances that affect my ability to perform my duties.



3. I protect the rights of everyone, especially children and vulnerable adults.

- I help create a culture that empowers and protects children and vulnerable adults.
- I prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults.
- I prevent all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.
- I use technology appropriately and responsibly.
- I act responsibly if I need to take or use photos or videos.
- I act within the law. I disclose investigations and offences.
- I report immediately, even if I am just concerned, suspicious or unsure.
- I understand the consequences of not following these Professional Behaviours Standards for Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults.
- I understand my commitments under related Caritas Australia policies.

Please refer to Professional Behaviour Standards for Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults (pages 10-13) for more details of these commitments. These form a part of the Code of Conduct.



4. I use Caritas Australia's money, resources and information responsibly.

- I believe in working towards the common good. I look beyond my own personal interest.
- I look after our environmental sustainability, remembering that the earth is our common home.
- I responsibly use Caritas Australia's money, equipment or resources.
- I use my time responsibly, and am respectful of others' time.
- I remember that the money we spend, and the salary I receive, comes from the generous donations of our supporters and from government funding. Any money we save can help Caritas Australia be more financially sustainable and can help the communities we serve.
- While I understand that I can occasionally use office resources (such as telephone or photocopier) for personal use, I am careful not to over-use this privilege. If in doubt, I ask my manager. I never take equipment out of the office without first obtaining permission.
- I am honest. I am transparent in my actions. I do not alter, hide or exaggerate the facts. I do not engage in fraud or corruption.
- I keep information confidential. I do not share non-public information about partners, supporters, employees or Caritas Australia's work without first obtaining permission.
- I respect privacy laws and copyright laws.
- I will not use Caritas Australia's computers or other equipment to view, download, create or distribute inappropriate material, including discriminatory, harassing or pornographic material.
- I will not take photos, record conversations, or use audio/visual recording equipment without first obtaining permission from everyone involved. Before taking a photo or video, I let people know what it will be used for and give them the option to not be involved.



5. I act with integrity, knowing that I'm always a representative of Caritas Australia.

- I conduct myself in alignment with our Code of Conduct. I know that my public behaviour may reflect on Caritas Australia's reputation.
- As a representative of Caritas Australia, I am careful what I share publicly, including on social media. I do not publicly criticise our work or our people.
- I speak up if I identify any financial, reputational or other risks.
- I follow both the law of the country I am in and our Code of Conduct. In situations where there may be a conflict between local laws and our Code of Conduct, the higher standard will apply.
- I take every reasonable step to avoid any conflict of interest. It is important to be perceived as being objective and fair. Where a conflict of interest exists (whether real or apparent) I will disclose it.
- If I have another job or volunteer role, I will let my manager know. This is to make sure that it won't affect my ability to do my role with Caritas Australia, or be perceived as having a conflict of interest (whether real, potential or perceived).
- When offered a gift, I discern the motive and how the gift may be perceived by others. If the gift is of substantial value, I will either let the giver know that Caritas Australia cannot accept gifts, or declare it in the Workplace Gifts Register.
- If I make a mistake or misjudgement, I will admit the truth and make amends. If I'm unsure how to do this, I seek guidance from an appropriate person, such as my manager, People & Culture or an external organisation (such as a counselling service or an employee assistance program).



PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR STANDARDS FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Professional Behaviour Standards for Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults reflect our commitment to protecting the safety and wellbeing of everyone, especially children and vulnerable adults, and preventing all forms of abuse, exploitation and harassment.

The standards below capture the essence of professional behaviour expected by Caritas Australia but may not cover all potential situations.



I commit to protecting the rights of everyone, especially children and vulnerable adults.

- I treat everyone, especially children and vulnerable adults, with respect.
- I am aware that I have a privileged position being associated with Caritas Australia. I am aware of unequal power relationships (such as between adult and child, or partner and program participant) and will not take advantage of my position.

I help create a culture that empowers.

- I create an environment which prevents all forms of exploitation, abuse and harassment (including sexual, physical and emotional).
- I develop strategies for listening to the needs and interests of children and vulnerable adults.
- If I am a manager at any level, I am responsible for supporting and developing the culture and systems that maintain a safe environment.

I prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults.

- I am aware of situations and behaviours that may be perceived as exploitative or abusive (such as giving gifts, paying extra attention or developing 'special' friendships). I will avoid these situations or take extra measures to keep everyone safe.
- I will not use physical punishment, or threats of physical punishment.
- I will not do things for children that they can do for themselves.
- I will not give alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to children.
- I will not speak or act in a way that is inappropriate, exploitative, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- I will not hire children for domestic or other work that is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage; which interferes with their time available for education and recreation; or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- Wherever possible, I ensure that another adult is present when I'm having contact with children.
- I will not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary; if it is unavoidable, I will have my supervisor's permission, and have another adult present if possible.
- I will not invite unaccompanied people into my home or vehicle, unless they are at immediate risk of danger.

These behaviours are not intended to interfere with normal family interactions.



I prevent all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

- In line with international standards, I will not have sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 (regardless of local law). I understand that not knowing a person's age is not a defence or excuse.
- I will not engage in any sexual activity or relationship with those who are benefiting from our work. I will not improperly use my position or power for sexual purposes. Such relationships put the integrity of our work at risk.
- I will also make sure that no harm (including sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment) occurs during delivery of our programs or activities.
- I will not exchange money, employment, goods, assistance or services for sex including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to our program participants.
- I will not engage in the trafficking of human beings, in any form.

I use technology appropriately and responsibly.

- I will not use any technology (such as computers, mobile phones, cameras or social media) to exploit or harass children or vulnerable adults.
- I will not access exploitative material, such as child pornography, in any way.

I act responsibly when I work with photos or videos.

- I respect local traditions or restrictions when taking photos or videos of children and vulnerable adults.
- I get informed prior consent. This means I obtain permission before taking a photo or video. I will explain how the photo or video will be used. I will keep written records of the permission obtained.
- I make sure they do not appear submissive.
- I make sure they do not appear submissive or vulnerable. They should be adequately clothed and not appear in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- I make sure that images are honest representations of the context and the facts. I do not exaggerate the truth to make the story more compelling.
- I make sure that photo data (such as file labels, meta data or text descriptions) do not reveal information about a child or vulnerable adult that could identify them, such as their name or location. I take steps, such as turning off GPS tracking, before taking photos. I double-check that photos and videos are de-identified before sharing.



I act within the law. I disclose investigations and offences.

- I immediately disclose any investigations or offences (including charges, convictions, allegations and other outcomes) that relate to exploitation and abuse of children or vulnerable adults including those, under traditional law. I will disclose them whether they occurred before, or during, my association with Caritas Australia.
- I comply with all relevant legislation (both Australian and local) including child labour laws.

I report immediately, even if I'm just concerned, suspicious or unsure.

- I immediately inform my direct manager if I become involved in a personal relationship which may be perceived as inappropriate or exploitative, or where unequal power dynamics (real or perceived) exist. If I am unsure if my relationship falls into this category, I will discuss the situation with my direct manager and/or People & Culture.
- I must immediately report if I have concerns, suspicions or allegations of:
 - sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or another
 - a sexual relationship that involves a power imbalance (for example, between a staff member from Caritas Australia or another agency and a program participant or community member)
 - a child or vulnerable adult being abused, exploited or at risk of harm
 - breaches of Caritas Australia's policies and Code of Conduct, including these Professional Behaviour Standards for Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults
- I understand that I can make a report:
 - by speaking to my manager
 - via email to the Complaints Focal Point confidential@caritas.org.au
 - by contacting Stopline via phone 1300 30 45 50 (in Australia) or +61 3 9811 3275 (outside Australia)
 - by reporting online <https://caritas.stoplinereport.com/>
- I understand that Caritas Australia will take all reports seriously, escalate issues quickly and respond appropriately. Caritas Australia will take a 'do no harm' approach and prioritise the rights of the victim/survivor while ensuring procedural fairness to all parties.
- I take responsibility for reporting. I must not assume that someone else will report a situation relating to the safety of children or people experiencing sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The acknowledgements below apply to the entire Code of Conduct, including the Professional Behaviour Standards for Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults on pages 10-13.

I understand how to apply our Code of Conduct:

If I am faced with situations that are not specifically addressed in our Code of Conduct, I can ask myself these questions:

- Is it legal?
- Is it the right thing to do?
- Is it consistent with our Code of Conduct and our policies?
- Do my actions put anyone's wellbeing or health at risk?

If I am still unsure, I will ask my manager or People & Culture to clarify.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand my commitments under the following Caritas Australia policies:

- [Child Protection Policy](#)
- [Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Speaking Up Policy](#)
- [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Staff Handbook](#) (for employees only)

I know my responsibilities: I have familiarised myself with our Code of Conduct. I commit to attend training or information sessions if offered. I have asked questions if I am unsure.

I will speak up: If I see something which I believe is not right, I will tell my manager, Leadership Team member, the People & Culture team, the Complaints Focal Point confidential@caritas.org.au or Stoline <https://caritas.stoplinereport.com/> or 1300 30 45 50 (in Australia) +61 3 9811 3275 (outside Australia).

I understand the potential consequences if I do not follow our Code of Conduct. There will be disciplinary action which may include termination of my contract. This will apply for any breach including if I:

- do not follow this Code of Conduct
- fail to keep people safe from harm or abuse
- fail to report incidents (whether suspected, alleged or witnessed)
- fail to report any form of sexual exploitation or abuse by others.

I may be reported to the police or other authorities if my conduct constitutes an offence or is reportable conduct.

I acknowledge that I have carefully read this Code of Conduct.

If I was unsure of anything, I have asked for clarification, and am satisfied with the response.

I understand that I am responsible for my actions, and for acting with integrity, in line with our Code of Conduct.

Information about this Code of Conduct

Can be accessed by	Anyone (via internet)
Can be shared	Internally or externally
Distributed to	Board of Directors, Leadership Team, employees, volunteers, contractors, partners
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How this policy has changed over time

Version	Approval Date	Summary of change
v1.0	22 Jun 2020	Original document
v1.1	8 Dec 2020	Fixed typos. Added new photographs.

Photo Credits

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