



# **CODE OF CONDUCT**

## **Dominican Sisters of Western Australia**

### **1. Introduction**

The Dominican Sisters of Western Australia (Dominican Sisters WA) expects personnel to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct. This includes conduct that upholds the human rights, dignity and well-being of all people and safeguards children and adults at risk from abuse and harm.

### **2. Purpose**

The Code of Conduct establishes principles for ethical conduct and provides clear information about conduct by personnel towards children and adults at risk that is not acceptable.

Personnel have a responsibility to promote the Standards embodied in the Code in addition to the teachings and values of the Catholic Church more broadly.

The Code should be read alongside Dominican Sisters WA's Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk Policy and Complaint Handling Policy. The Code also complements other documents of the Dominican Sisters WA and the Catholic Church.

### **3. Scope**

The Code of Conduct applies to all personnel of the Dominican Sisters WA, including Sisters, employees, volunteers, and contractors. Before commencing any role, personnel must sign an acknowledgement that they have reviewed the Code of Conduct, agree to comply with it, and understand the consequences of breaching the Code. Personnel are required to review and sign the Code of Conduct regularly and not less than every three years to reaffirm their understanding of their obligations. The Prioress is responsible for ensuring that this occurs and maintaining appropriate records.

### **4. Ethical conduct**

The Dominican Sisters WA promotes the following principles:

- reflecting the beliefs and gospel values of the Catholic faith;
- respecting the dignity, rights and views of others;
- acting honestly and with integrity at all times;
- being courteous, fair, sensitive and considerate to the needs of others;
- listening and seeking to understand different points of view (this does not necessarily mean agreeing with the point of view);
- acting respectfully at all times, including respecting cultural, ethnic, political and religious differences;
- taking an inclusive approach that does not discriminate against or harass any person because of their gender, sex, marital status, pregnancy, age, race, ethnic or national origin, physical or intellectual impairment or sexual orientation or gender identity. Such harassment or discrimination may constitute an offence under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*.

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## 5. Professional and personal behaviour

### 5.1 In performing their duties, personnel **must**:

- a) work towards the achievement of the aims and purposes of the organisation;
- b) maintain a high standard and quality of work;
- c) maintain a duty of care towards others involved in all activities of the Dominican Sisters WA;
- d) be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- e) treat children and adults at risk with respect and value their ideas and opinions;
- f) maintain and develop knowledge and understanding of their area of expertise;
- g) continuously seek to improve work performance and bring about improvements in the workplace;
- h) complete their duties in accordance with the directions provided by the relevant supervisor, exercising care, responsibility and sound judgement;
- i) take reasonable care of their health and safety and the health and safety of others;
- j) comply and cooperate with legislative and industrial requirements and any reasonable instruction, policy or procedure;
- k) use appropriate language;
- l) exercise caution when using social media platforms for personal purposes outside their work hours; and
- m) maintain adequate records to support any decisions made.

### 5.2 In performing their duties, personnel **must not**:

- a) act in ways that adversely affect the health and safety of others;
- b) come to work or stay at work while affected by any substance which impairs work performance or poses a safety risk to themselves or others;
- c) bring alcohol onto work premises without permission;
- d) smoke/vape in the workplace, before, during and after normal office hours;
- e) ignore work duties or waste time during working hours;
- f) take or seek to take improper advantage of any information gained in the course of employment;
- g) take improper advantage of their position to benefit themselves or others;
- h) allow personal political views/affiliations or other personal interests to influence the performance of duties or exercise of responsibilities;
- i) make disparaging or offensive comments on social media about the Dominican Sisters WA, the Catholic Church or colleagues;
- j) use information and communication technologies to engage in behaviour that could reasonably be considered to have a negative impact on another person, cause them harm, or make them feel unsafe;
- k) make unfounded, malicious, frivolous or vexatious complaints against other personnel; or
- l) divulge, either during employment or after, the confidential information of the Dominican Sisters WA.

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## 6. Conduct Towards Children and Adults at Risk

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

6.2 'Adult at Risk' means any individual aged 18 years and over at increased risk of abuse.<sup>1</sup>

6.3 Personnel **must not** engage in the following conduct:

- a) any form of physical or sexual abuse;
- b) any form of financial abuse or exploitation;
- c) grooming for sexual abuse;
- d) using sexually suggestive or explicit language or gestures;
- e) engaging in conversations about sexual experiences or sharing sexual images;
- f) being alone with a child away from the presence of other adults, without express permission from either the child's parent/guardian or the Prioress;
- g) being alone with an adult at risk unless in an open or visible space, or within the clear line of sight of another adult.<sup>2</sup>
- h) showering/using the toilet with an open door in the presence of others;
- i) helping with intimate care if the person is capable of doing it on their own;
- j) not respecting privacy;
- k) using any form of physical discipline with a child or adult at risk;
- l) making excessive and/or degrading demands of another person;
- m) any misuse of authority or power that coerces a person to engage in any activity, or which disrespects their human rights and dignity;
- n) making any kind of drug, alcohol or cigarettes/vapes available to children or adults at risk;
- o) engaging in private electronic or online contact with a child;
- p) engaging with a person in a way that is overly intimate or could be seen as involving favouritism or any form of special treatment; and
- q) taking or publishing photos of a child or adult at risk who is in the care of the organisation outside of official duties and without the consent of a parent/guardian **and** the Prioress.

6.4 Personnel **must**:

- a) report to the Prioress any concerning conduct that is brought to your attention or of which you become aware, and any circumstance where you suspect that a child or adult at risk is currently at risk of harm (see Complaint Handling Policy);
- b) take reasonable steps to protect children and adults at risk from foreseeable risk of injury;
- c) ensure that physical contact with children and adults at risk is reasonable for the purpose of their management or care, and is appropriate given their age, maturity, health or other characteristics; and

<sup>1</sup> Please see Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy for further details about 'adults at risk.'

<sup>2</sup> This includes ministries and/or services such as counselling, one-to-one tuition, the sacrament of reconciliation, 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.

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- d) respect the privacy and confidentiality of any person who reports safety concerns about a child or adult at risk except where legislative or statutory requirements override this as outlined in the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy

## 7. Reporting Requirements

The Dominican Sisters WA will comply with all requirements to report concerns about the safety of children or adults at risk to police and other relevant regulatory authorities, as required by legislation. To ensure the Dominican Sisters WA can fulfil these reporting requirements, personnel must report any concerns about the safety of children or adults at risk to the Prioress as soon as practical, as detailed in the Complaint Handling Policy.

## 8. Equity and Inclusion

Personnel are expected to create a fair, inclusive and safe working environment, where diversity is valued and where unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation in any form are unacceptable. Personnel must not discriminate against any person on the basis of cultural or linguistic diversity, disability, gender identity or sexuality, or any other aspect of their identity.

## 9. Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

Personnel have a responsibility to behave with integrity and impartiality. Personnel must not solicit gifts, benefits or hospitality that might in any way compromise or influence them directly or indirectly in their capacity as personnel. Personnel must declare any gifts, benefits or hospitality valued at \$100 or more.

## 10. Conflicts of Interest

10.1 Personnel have an obligation to ensure that conflicts of interest (whether financial or otherwise) are managed in a fair, ethical and transparent manner. The potential for a conflict of interest arises when personnel have private interests that could influence or appear to influence judgements made during the course of their professional duties. They also arise when there is a reasonable expectation of a personal benefit, direct or indirect, that could influence the performance of personnel's duties. This benefit may be financial or non-financial.

10.2 Personnel **must**:

- a) conduct themselves in a manner which is consistent with Catholic values;
- b) be objective, open and honest, making recommendations or decisions with integrity and accountability and in a way that best serves the interests of the Dominican Sisters WA;
- c) declare all private interests (including pecuniary and non-pecuniary) that conflict or may conflict with the discharge of the responsibilities of their role;
- d) use their own judgement in determining the appropriateness of non-cash gifts and hospitality;
- e) ensure all decisions are free of bias or apparent bias;
- f) behave with integrity and impartiality; and
- g) ensure all processes are transparent and documented.

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## 11. Consequences of Breaching the Code

Breaching the Code of Conduct may constitute misconduct and result in disciplinary proceedings up to and including dismissal (with or without notice) and possible criminal proceedings. This may impact on the individual's ability to work with children and/or adults at risk in the future.

In relation to Sisters, breaching the Code of Conduct may lead to them being removed from ministry and dispensed from her vows.

**Note:** Where a complaint about the sexual abuse of a child or adult religious is substantiated under a civil standard, the Dominican Sisters WA will undertake a risk management process to determine the appropriate action, in keeping with Church protocols. Where a religious is convicted of a canonical offence relating to sexual abuse, they will be prohibited from exercising ministry until the process for imposing a penalty is completed by the relevant dicastery.

## 12. Reviewing the Code

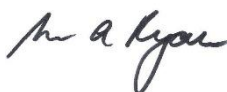
The content of the Code of Conduct will be reviewed whenever a breach is identified and at least every three years. The Prioress is responsible for ensuring the review is completed.

## 13. Authorisation

Sr Mary Ryan OP

Prioress

Date: 09/05/2024



### Personnel Agreement

I have read and agree to follow this Code of Conduct at all times while employed at Dominican Sisters of Western Australia

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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