



**SYRO MALABAR EPARCHY**  
OF ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE, MELBOURNE

# Code of Conduct

## Safeguarding Children, Young People, and Adults at Risk

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## FOREWORD

The Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle, Melbourne, reaffirms its commitment to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk. This second edition of our policy aligns with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Edition 2 and reflects our dedication to promoting Safe Church initiatives in Australia, in collaboration with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC). This Code of Conduct sets a framework for ethical conduct within the Eparchy. Every member must demonstrate professionalism and respect when interacting with children, young people, adults at risk and those in need.

Our policies emphasise our commitment to safeguarding children in our ministries, activities, and organizations. They uphold Catholic values by promoting care, compassion, and unconditional love for the vulnerable.

Leaders and members are expected to adhere to these safeguarding policies in daily Church life. Communities should collaborate with the Eparchial Professional Standards Division to establish and maintain robust safeguarding practices in our parishes and missions.

May the gracious Father watch over us and all those under our care as we carry on this vital mission.

Yours in Jesus Christ,

Bishop John Panamthottathil CMI

03 July 2024, Feast of St Thomas the Apostle

# Code of Conduct

## For anyone involved in ministry with children, young people, and adults at risk

<b>Document number:</b>	<b>SMEST_PS2024_SCV04</b>
<b>Functional sub-groups:</b>	<i>The Eparchy:</i> Governance
	<i>Apex Board:</i> Monitoring compliance
	<i>Professional Standards Division:</i> Implementation
	<i>Individuals:</i> Compliance with the Code
<b>Summary:</b>	The Code of Conduct stipulates the ethical behaviour required of anyone involved in ministry with children in the Eparchy to safeguard children, young people, and adults at risk who are in the care of or in contact with its parishes/ missions.
<b>Author:</b>	Policy Division, Professional Standards Division, Syro-Malabar Eparchy
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<b>This policy applies to:</b>	Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St Thomas the Apostle Melbourne
<b>This policy is distributed to:</b>	Parishes/Missions

**Note:** The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is a Major Archiepiscopal Church in full communion with the Apostolic See of Rome. The Syro-Malabar Catholic Church is one of 23 Eastern Catholic Churches in the Catholic Communion. It is the second largest Eastern Catholic Church that follows the East-Syrian liturgy which dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Australia has had a large presence of Syro-Malabar followers since the widespread migration of Catholics from the Indian subcontinent.

Holy Father, Pope Francis, established the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle of Melbourne (Australia) in December 2013 with Bishop Bosco Puthur as its first Eparchial Bishop. The formal inauguration was on 25 March 2014 in Melbourne.

The Syro-Malabar eparchy of Melbourne is a member of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC). Compliance to the legislative requirements for safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk as stipulated by Australian States and Territories are mandatory.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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The **Code of Conduct (SMEST\_PS2024\_SCV04)** offers a guide for expected behaviour in everyday practice by anyone involved in ministry with children, with safeguarding responsibilities to children, young people and adults at risk who are in the care of or in contact with the Eparchy and its parishes/ missions.

The Eparchy demonstrated its commitment by providing its parishes/ missions a Policy Statement **(SMEST\_PS2024\_SCV02)** and Practice Guidelines for **(SMEST\_PS2024\_SCV03)** for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk. The Professional Code ensures the appropriate use of the above policy statements and a cultural change in church setting by its members adapting professional and ethical behaviours.

The Eparchy leaders, staff, volunteers, contractors and all involved in ministry with children, young people and adults at risk are required to abide by this code.

## 2 PURPOSE OF THE CODE

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The aim of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that anyone involved in parishes/missions apply appropriate behaviours whilst in the presence of children, young people, and adults at risk .

In addition, it offers a warning for all involved in ministry with children in parishes/ missions about unacceptable behaviours and consequences for breaches.

Furthermore, it indicates the parameters for the Apex Board and parishes/missions in implementing and monitoring the Code.

## 3 ROLE OF THE EPARCHY

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Under the Eparchy Apex Board, the Professional Standards Division will:

- Be responsible for overall welfare and wellbeing of all involved in ministry with children, young people and adults at risk .
- Be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff and volunteers.
- Nominate safeguarding officers to provide information and support to all volunteers, children, young people and their carers and adults at risk on safeguarding practices.
- Ensure all (the Eparchy Leaders, Clergy, catechists, youth leaders, kaikarans, parish council members, choir members, mathruvedi, pithruvedi, sacramental coordinators, youth ministry leaders, altar servers, choir leaders, retreat organisers, pastoral council members, communion to the sick members, mission

members, staff, visitors, contractors ,volunteers and all members who associates with children, young people and adults at risk in the church community) members understands the code of conduct and its importance for safeguarding.

## 4 ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

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The below listed behaviours are applicable to the Eparchy Leaders, Clergy, catechists, youth leaders, kaikarans, parish council members, choir members, mathruvedi, pithruvedi, sacramental coordinators, youth ministry leaders, altar servers, choir leaders, retreat organisers, pastoral council members, communion to the sick members, mission members, staff, visitors, contractors ,volunteers and all members who associates with children, young people and adults at risk in the church community.

Whilst adhering to the Eparchy's Policy Statement (**SMEST\_PS2024\_SCV02**) and Practice Guidelines for (**SMEST\_PS2024\_SCV03**) safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk , all members are expected to follow the below code.

### I will:

- Make all efforts to prevent child abuse and protect children, young people, and adults at risk
- Act in the best interest of children, young people, and adults at risk always and especially when they are presented as a victim.
- Respect all members of the church community equally.
- Report or appropriately escalate allegations or disclosures of child physical abuse, child sexual abuse, child emotional abuse, and child neglect.
- Make appropriate decisions that are in the best interest of the child.
- Keep all information regarding child protection concerns confidential, only discussing information with relevant and appropriate people according to the reporting procedures.
- Work in partnership with Government departments to address any significant risk of harm presented.
- Protect welfare of all children while promoting a culture of safeguarding in church community.
- Listen to children and young people and treat them as individuals.
- Respect the special needs of children with disability.
- Identify situations that may cause harm to a child , young person or adults at risk and be proactive in preventing further harm.
- Empower children and encourage their participation in decision making.
- Be aware of boundaries when dealing with children.

- Keep children and young people away from substances and ensure that you are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs while providing care or support.
- Always ensure appropriate written approvals are sought before transporting children in a third party's vehicle. A signed consent should be sought for transporting children to events or for activities outside of routine.
- Be aware of "stranger danger" and provide age appropriate safety planning for children and young people.
- Maintain an ethical and professional everyday conduct.
- Ensure two adults accompany children and young people when interacting with them in parishes and missions.
- Always have allocated volunteers for providing adult supervision for safeguarding children in social gathering, fete, church events, and parish sponsored programs.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries in all settings including virtual settings such as Facebook, Instagram ,WhatsApp, and other social media.
- Ensure behaviour management of children should be a positive and fun experience. Ensure it is not an aggressive, ridiculing, or naming and shaming experience for the child.
- Obtain knowledge of age appropriate behaviour patterns and refrain from being critical of young people.
- Ensure medicine should not be administered to child without written parental consent. Should medicine be required in an emergency where parental consent has not been received, child health and wellbeing will be prioritised. Such cases will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Eparchy.
- Ensure children are to be photographed with written parental consent only. All photos should be taken in public setting if parents have consented.
- Ensure parish seeks consent and signed approval from parents if it wishes to publish child photos in parishes, internet site and social media.
- Demonstrate care and compassion to adults at risk e.g. persons affected by recent separation and divorce, family breakdown, pregnant women, bereavement, mental health issues, family violence, and an addiction to substances.

#### **4.1 BREACHING CODE OF CONDUCT**

Breaches include failure to adhere to any of the above.

#### **I will not:**

**Name:** SMEST\_PS2024\_SCV04: Code of Conduct: For anyone involved in ministry with children, young people, and adults at risk :  
**Professional Code, Safeguarding Children, Young People, and Adults**  
**Owner:** Policy Division, Professional Standards Syro-Malabar Eparchy  
**Version:** 03 July 2024; **Review Date:** July 2029  
 Please refer to [www.syromalabar.org.au](http://www.syromalabar.org.au) for the latest version of this policy. Hardcopy versions of this document may be outdated.

- Fail to maintain full confidentiality regarding any matter related to children, young people, and adults at risk .
- Ignore risk of harm and failing to report child abuse.
- Work against the Eparchy’s policies, guidelines and the code of conduct.
- Try to cover up issues and not following practice guidelines.
- Engage in any kind of physical punishment (smacking, hitting, grabbing, shaking, etc). In fact, this type of punishment may be treated as criminal assault.
- Be punishing, isolating, emotionally abusing or hurting the feelings of a child.
- Treat a child “special” and spending excessive time with a child or young person in isolation.
- Engage in inappropriate conversations or belittling a child.
- Target a child or young person using inappropriate language.
- Work with children ,young people and adults at risk under the influence of substances.
- Touch a child unless it is warranted for the safeguarding of the child.
- Try to investigate child abuse matters and following inquisitive questioning of the victim. The investigation of child abuse is the role of the Government agencies who deals with child abuse matters in your State or Territory.
- Confront offenders.

## 5 CONSEQUENCES OF BREACHES

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If you breach this Code of Conduct you will face disciplinary action. All breaches will be documented and investigated. Furthermore, persons involved in breaches will be removed from the role in support of the investigation.

Mandatory reporting or police involvement will be requested as necessary.

## 6 REFERENCES

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Archdiocese of Brisbane. (2017). *Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults prevention and protection policy support document*. Queensland: Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Our Community Pty. Ltd. & Moores. (2016). *Child Protection Toolkit: what every not for profit organisation must do now*. Melbourne: Our Community Pty Ltd.

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## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Eparchy acknowledges that we have reviewed and used information and themes from various child protection sites of the State Government and various Dioceses in Australia to assist the compilation of this Code of Conduct. The Eparchy would like to thank these organisations and individuals for their work.

### Code of Conduct

#### Declaration:

- 1 I am responsible for my own actions and utilise the Eparchy's Safeguarding policies and practice guidelines to avoid actions and behaviours that could be in breach of this Code of Conduct and the Child Safe policies of the Eparchy.
- 2 I have read the Eparchy's Child Safe Policy, Guidelines and Code of Conduct and discussed its contents with Parish safeguarding officer.
- 3 I am aware that the Eparchy expects me to uphold at all times the standards of behaviour described in the Code of Conduct above.
- 4 I also understand that disciplinary measures and legal steps will be taken if I am found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.
- 5 I understand that in making that report, the Eparchy may have to inform other authorities, in a confidential manner to meet obligations under Australian law.

Name:

Witness Name:

Signature:

Witness Signature:

Date:

Witness Date: