



SYRO MALABAR EPARCHY
OF ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE, MELBOURNE

Policy Statement

Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking and Vaping

Enquiries & Contact

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ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY ON ALCOHOL, DRUGS, SMOKING AND VAPING

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Functional sub-groups:	<i>The Eparchy:</i> Governance
	<i>Apex Board:</i> Monitoring compliance
	<i>Parishes and Missions:</i> Implementation
	<i>Individuals:</i> Compliance with this policy
Summary:	This policy statement stipulates a Zero Tolerance on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking, and Vaping. This policy strictly prohibits the possession, consumption, or distribution of alcohol, other drugs, nicotine products, and vaping devices within any parishes, church-related community settings and during church events.
Author:	Policy Division, Professional Standards Division, Syro-Malabar Eparchy
Approved by:	Bishop John Panamthottathil CMI
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This policy applies to:	The Syro-Malabar Eparchy, Melbourne-Parishes and Missions
This policy is distributed to:	Parishes and 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. Australia and New Zealand 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 the Bishop Bosco Puthur as its first Eparchial Bishop. The formal inauguration was on 25 March 2014 in Melbourne.

The Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese is a member of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC).

Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking and Vaping

Syro-Malabar Eparchy is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and spiritually focused environment within our church community. To uphold our values and promote the well-being of all individuals, we have implemented a Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking, and Vaping. This policy strictly prohibits the possession, consumption, or distribution of alcohol, other drugs, nicotine products, and vaping devices within any parishes, church-related community settings and during church events.

The Eparchy and parish leaders are responsible for ensuring consistent enforcement to maintain a safe and spiritually focused environment.

Aim of the Policy:

By adopting the Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking, and Vaping, the Syro-Malabar Eparchy reaffirms our commitment to creating a safe, supportive, and spiritually-focused environment for all members of our church community.

Policy Statement:

Prohibition of Alcohol and Other Drugs and Nicotine Products

The possession, consumption, or distribution of alcohol, other drugs, and nicotine products is strictly prohibited within all church facilities, including church buildings, grounds, parking lots, and any other areas under the church's jurisdiction. This prohibition also applies to all church-sponsored events, gatherings, meetings, and activities, whether held on or off church premises. These events include, but are not limited to, Christmas Carol programs, Perunnal, Feasts, Parish Day, Sports and Arts events, First Holy Communion, as well as other church-related gatherings such as Family Meetings, Ward Prayers, and Ward Meetings.

Volunteer Compliance:

All volunteers, including staff, leaders, and anyone serving in any capacity within the church, are expected to fully comply with the Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking, and Vaping. This includes refraining from the possession, consumption, or distribution of alcohol, other drugs, and nicotine products, including vapes, while engaged in any church-related duties or activities.

Volunteers are also expected to refrain from consuming alcohol or other drugs before, during, or immediately after their volunteer duties within any church setting. This applies to all activities related to worship services, community outreach programs, and other church-sponsored events.

Smoking and vaping of tobacco or nicotine products are strictly prohibited within all church facilities, including the church compound and any church-hired premises.

Community Member Accountability:

All individuals associated with the Syro-Malabar Eparchy, including parishes, missions, communities, members, attendees, and visitors, must comply with the Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking, and Vaping while attending any Syro-Malabar Church events or activities, whether on or off church premises.

Pastoral Leadership:

Our pastoral leaders and staff are expected to uphold and model the Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking, and Vaping. They should serve as role models by abstaining from these substances in all church-related contexts and promoting healthy lifestyles and spiritual well-being.

Support and Pastoral Care:

The Syro-Malabar Church recognizes that individuals within our community may struggle with issues related to alcohol, other drugs, and nicotine. Our church is committed to providing compassionate support, guidance, and pastoral care to those in need. The Eparchy encourages individuals to seek assistance, and we will strive to connect them with appropriate resources and support networks.

Accountability and Disciplinary Measures:

Any breach of the Zero Tolerance Policy on Alcohol, Drugs, Smoking, and Vaping shall be regarded as a serious violation. Immediate action may include reporting to the appropriate authorities (e.g., 000) as the church has a responsibility to safeguard children and the broader church community from potential harm. Such violations may also result in warnings, disciplinary measures, referral to counselling, or suspension/termination of volunteer duties. These measures are implemented proactively to protect the well-being and spiritual environment of our church community.

Education and Awareness:

The Syro-Malabar Eparchy, along with its parishes and missions, is committed to providing education and support for individuals and families who may be affected by issues related to alcohol, other drugs, and nicotine. The Eparchy encourages open discussions, awareness programs, and resources that promote healthy lifestyles, personal well-being, and community support.

The Eparchy recognizes that this policy may differ from individual beliefs or practices outside the church community; however, it is implemented to maintain a safe, inclusive, and spiritually focused environment that aligns with our mission and values.

If you are struggling with alcohol or other drug addiction, please contact the appropriate support service at the number(s) listed below.

Alcohol & Other Drugs Support Helplines by State

New South Wales (NSW): 1800 250 015

Queensland (QLD): 1800 177 833

South Australia (SA): 1300 131 340

Northern Territory (NT): 1800 131 350

Tasmania (TAS): 1800 811 994

Victoria (VIC): 1800 888 236

1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

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