

# Code of Conduct

## FOREWORD

Welcome to Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH).

VMCH is an organisation proud of its long-combined history of caring and working with the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne to bring compassion, love and care to the Victorian community.

At VMCH we are committed to providing the highest standards of service and recognise to do this we need to ensure that you are aware of our expectations. To assist you we have developed a Code of Conduct that outlines the vision, mission and values of VMCH and how these are shown through your work practices and interactions with the people in the VMCH community.

We want to maintain a culture that makes VMCH a place where people want to come to work and feel a sense of real belonging and purpose. We want you to be part of a culture that is inviting, friendly and true to its values.

VMCH's Code of Conduct is a policy that provides specific guidelines on the standards of conduct and workplace behaviour expected of all employees, contractors/consultants, students and volunteers. If after reading the Code of Conduct you are uncertain, I would encourage you to ask your supervisor and seek support.

Together we will be able to ensure we sustain an environment where everyone's quality of life is enhanced through their involvement with VMCH.



Sonya Smart  
Chief Executive Officer

### 1. Objectives of our Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is designed to promote and encourage positive behaviour. VMCH takes the Code seriously and you are required to comply with the principles and the spirit of the Code and [Policy Management System Framework Policy](#). The Code of Conduct is designed to inform and educate VMCH employees, volunteers, students, contractors and consultants about our expectations, and provide information about what action may be taken if you engage in behaviour that is unacceptable. This Code of Conduct promotes a safe, healthy and enjoyable workplace that recognises and respects the dignity and uniqueness of each person.

### 2. Who does the Code of Conduct Apply to?

The VMCH Code of Conduct applies to all employees, contractors, consultants, students and volunteers. The term 'employee' will be used throughout this Code in its broadest sense and refers to all individuals above.

Additional requirements may apply to you if you work within the Community & Disability sector. If this applies to you it is necessary for you to also familiarise yourself with the [Code of Respect and Interaction - Community and Disability](#).

### 3. Management and Employees Responsibilities

#### Management

- Uphold and promote the behavioural standards set out within the Code of Conduct and provide employees with a positive role model;
- Take reasonable steps to prevent employees from engaging in conduct contrary to organisational policies;
- Manage complaints of unacceptable behaviour and misconduct effectively, professionally, timely and confidentially;
- Ensure that all employees are aware of internal processes for resolving complaints;
- Act in the best interests of VMCH and the employee in accordance with VMCH values;
- Seek assistance from People Services, where necessary;
- Be accountable for your own behaviour and actions;
- Treat others fairly and with respect; and
- Take reasonable steps to secure our premises, property and information.

#### Employees

- Uphold and promote the behavioural standards set out within the Code of Conduct
- Follow lawful and reasonable directives from Management
- Perform your role with professionalism, care and responsibility
- Ensure that at all times you act safely and ensure the safety of others.
- Be accountable for your own behaviour and actions;
- Familiarise yourself with, and ensure that you understand, the behavioural requirements of this Code of Conduct, policies, procedures and relevant legislation;
- Treat all members of the VMCH community with respect and with due regard to their needs, dignity and aspirations. ;
- Maintain professional relationships with those that you support or interact with and ensure you work within the boundaries of your role.
- Report to your manager, or to People Services, if you believe that you or someone else has been a victim of harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation;
- Report any concerns or possible breaches of this Code firstly to your manager, or to People Services;
- Act in a manner that supports the reputation of VMCH and promotes the interests of the individuals we support and the organisation.
- Take reasonable steps to secure our premises, property and information.

### Consequences of Breaching the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is designed to promote and encourage positive behaviours.

While VMCH is a compassionate employer, any breach or failure to comply with this Code may lead to disciplinary action. This may include termination of your employment.

In addition, if you break the law, you may also be personally liable for your own actions.

If, upon inquiry, it is found that allegation/s made, in relation to a potential breach of the Code of Conduct are untrue and were made with malicious, frivolous or mischievous intent, the allegation may constitute actual misconduct/serious misconduct. This may warrant the possible commencement of disciplinary action, which may include termination of your employment.

### How to seek further Assistance

If you require further information, or if you are unsure of VMCH's expectations or your obligations, we encourage you to speak with your immediate manager. In some instances, where there may be sensitivities, you can seek assistance directly from the Chief Human Resources Officer. Further information is available by referring to the VMCH Protected Disclosure Policy.

## 4. How the Code of Conduct Relates to our Values

At VMCH we celebrate the life of individuals and their communities as expressed by their physical, social and spiritual wellbeing. Our leadership in the community and the way that we manage teams and individuals must be consistent with our values. Each of us has a responsibility to demonstrate appropriate behaviours and standards in all circumstances. When undertaking your role please ensure you demonstrate the following:

### BRINGING LOVE

We foster connections and show compassion for one another with kindness and respect.

### CREATING JOY

We create a culture of happiness and positivity, celebrating life and the uniqueness of all.

### EMBRACING HOSPITALITY

We welcome all to our community, bringing comfort and a sense of belonging.

### SHOWING COURAGE

We do what is right, regardless of our fears, the challenges or consequences.

## 5. Code of Conduct Guidelines

At VMCH we value diversity, recognising that this is key to creating a workplace that is inclusive, respectful and compassionate and will help ensure we deliver quality care and service to our community. Our policies are inclusive, and decisions are taken on merit. We do all we can to keep information secure. This includes not sharing private or confidential information with other employees unless they need it to perform their roles at VMCH.

### 5.1. Achieving our Strategic Objectives / Creating a Community

At VMCH 'how' we conduct ourselves as an organisation is just as important as 'what' we achieve. Our Values underpin all that we do and how we view our achievements. Our stakeholders are critical to us achieving our Mission. (Our stakeholders include but are not limited to: Archdiocese; residents/clients and customers; families; communities in which we serve; governments; statutory authorities and bodies; employees; and suppliers). They are also critical to the success of our business. We all need to demonstrate high standards of service and care. Listen carefully to stakeholder's needs. Record and collect information accurately. Only access and share personal and confidential information with other parties if you are authorised to do so, and if the information is required for them to perform their role with VMCH as per [VMCH policy](#). Behave in a way that considers our impact on the broader community and the environment in both the short and long term. Use all VMCH's systems and equipment appropriately and for proper purposes. This includes email, messaging and access to the internet. You are encouraged to seek assistance from your manager if or when difficulties with stakeholders arise.

### 5.2. Our Commitment to Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The safety, security, physical and mental health of all employees is important. We respect the rights of all individuals to work in a safe work environment that promotes wellbeing. At VMCH we are committed to supporting our employees to achieve optimal physical, mental and social wellbeing. We promote healthy life choices and provide safe workplaces for all employees and members of the community. We develop, maintain and monitor management systems to support the provisions of a safe working environment. Some of the key elements of our safety systems include:

- Compliance with relevant work health and safety legislation;
- Operate to appropriate safety standards;
- Communicate policies and procedures;
- Consult with employees on health and safety issues;
- Train and provide information, instruction and supervision to promote safe work practices;
- Implement a risk management framework to manage and identify risks; and
- Provide appropriate safety equipment to be utilised by employees.

As an employee, you also have a responsibility to ensure your workplace is safe and to take reasonable care of your own health and safety and where your actions impact others. You must cooperate with management on any action taken by VMCH to comply with any requirements implemented. Deliberate breaches of safe work systems and policies or disregard for the safety of others will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include the termination of your employment.

### 5.3. Drug and Alcohol Use

The health and safety of all employees and the people we provide services to, is important to us. It is not acceptable for you to be under the influence of any drugs. Equally, any possession or distribution of drugs or being intoxicated in the workplace is not acceptable. Behaviour of this manner will be subject to disciplinary action, which may include the termination of your employment. Occasionally we have social activities, on or off site, where alcohol is provided. Both VMCH and you have a responsibility to ensure that alcohol is consumed in a reasonable manner that does not affect the health, safety and enjoyment of others.

### 5.4. Our Dress Code

As an ambassador of VMCH, you are required to dress professionally during work. You are required to present a professional image always whilst working. This includes dressing appropriately and wearing clothing that reflects the function of the work activity being undertaken. If you are required to wear a uniform, you need to ensure that you comply with the relevant uniform guidelines. VMCH respects the diversity of employees and the range of cultures, religions and abilities. These will be recognised and considered within the selection of appropriate uniform options for you. However,

priority will always be given to health, safety and security. Where a casual day is customary, VMCH Values need to be observed. For example; slogans on a T-shirt must not be offensive to anyone. It is important we maintain appropriate standards of professional attire. Disciplinary action may be taken against you if you do not meet the standards of dress and appearance.

#### **5.5. Working in Areas of Infection Control and Food Preparation**

You must comply with all Infection Control and Food Preparation Standards regarding cleanliness and maintenance of clothing, hair and jewellery. You are required to wear appropriate protective clothing and footwear whilst carrying out these duties. Managers and employees are responsible to ensure their employees/colleagues follow the standards and report any variances.

#### **5.6. Safeguarding Those We Provide Services to, or Those Within our Care**

At VMCH we pride ourselves on the services and care we provide to our residents, children, families and the community. Some of our clients are the most disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable in the community. Safeguarding their wellbeing and protecting them from injury and harm is our priority. Our goal is to provide care and services that enables everyone to reach their full potential. As a result, you are required to complete a series of pre-employment checks and maintain accreditations, qualifications, training and registrations required for you to perform your duties. VMCH has a range of policies and procedures in place that safeguard those we provide services to, or those within our care as detailed in the [Employee Screening Check Policy](#) including but not limited to NDIS Worker Screening Check, Working with Children Check, Criminal Records Check, and Professional Registration for Employee's.

#### **5.7. Complying with The Law**

VMCH is committed to operating honestly, efficiently and fairly and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Any breach will be taken seriously, and you are expected to report any corrupt practices or breaches of the law that are detrimental to VMCH's reputation. All reports of illegal or unethical behaviour will be taken seriously and managed promptly and in accordance with relevant VMCH policies and procedures and with VMCH's Protected Disclosure Policy. Key legislation applicable to the primary services we provide is:

- [Aged Care Act 1997](#)
- [National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013](#)
- [NDIS Practice Standards & Quality Indicators](#)

#### **5.8. Our Commitment to Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination**

VMCH is committed to providing a workplace that promotes equal opportunity and discourages discrimination, harassment and bullying. We are responsible to provide a workplace that is inclusive, whereby all people are treated with dignity and respect.

#### **5.9. Harassment**

Harassment is defined as unwelcome, unwanted or uninvited behaviour that can be considered offensive, humiliating or intimidating and is linked to one of the personal characteristics protected by law. Harassment can undermine confidence, performance and a person's health and wellbeing and can take many forms. It may be verbal, physical, written or pictorial. VMCH will not tolerate any form of harassment within its community. You are responsible to act if you believe any form of harassment is taking place and inform your manager/supervisor or contact the Chief Human Resources Officer. Any behaviour deemed to constitute harassment will be subject to disciplinary action which may result in the termination of your employment.

### 5.10. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a specific and serious form of harassment. It may be physical, spoken or written. It can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature such as touching, brushing up on someone, staring and leering. It may also include verbal comments, jokes or propositions or the display or sending of offensive material.

### 5.11. Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as treating or proposing to treat one person or a group of people unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by that law. Unlawful discrimination includes (but is not limited to) discrimination based on:

- Age;
- Carer and parental status;
- Disability (including physical, sensory and intellectual disability, work related injury, medical conditions, and mental, psychological and learning disabilities);
- Employment activity;
- Gender;
- Gender identity, lawful sexual activity and sexual orientation;
- Marital status;
- Physical features;
- Political belief or activity;
- Pregnancy and breastfeeding;
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity and ethnic origin);
- Religious belief or activity; and
- Personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, one of these personal characteristics.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination is when a person treats or proposes to treat someone unfavourably because of a personal attribute protected by law. Indirect discrimination occurs if a person imposes, or proposes to impose, a requirement, practice or condition that has, or is likely to disadvantage people with an attribute that is protected by law and that is not reasonable. Any behaviour deemed to constitute discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action which may result in the termination of your employment. It is also against the law to sexually harass or victimise someone, or to vilify someone because of their race or religion.

### 5.12. Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an individual or group of individuals that is offensive, intimidating, humiliating or degrading. The term 'repeated' does not mean it needs to be the same behaviour more than once – it could be a pattern of behaviour by one or more people that undermines the safety and welfare of that person or people. Reasonable management action carried out in a reasonable manner is not bullying. This includes actions relating to directing performance, performance management, disciplinary action or implementing organisational change. When repeated, or occurring as a pattern of behaviour, the following types of behaviours may be considered as bullying (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Constant criticism, verbal or physical abuse (such as shouting);
- Deliberately impeding work performance including too much or too little work, or withholding information to enable someone to perform their role, or changing work rosters to inconvenience staff;
- Displaying offensive material, or any material that undermines a person or a group of people. This includes the use of social media;



- Exclusion or isolating individuals (such as not greeting a person when others are greeted);
- Gossip and spreading rumours;
- Manipulation or intimidation;
- Physical or psychological harassment;
- Teasing, practical jokes;
- Verbal abuse – belittling, teasing or humiliating comments;
- Isolated/one-off incidents of bullying behaviour are inappropriate and may constitute misconduct, depending on the situation.

### 5.13. Racial and Religious Vilification

Vilification is behaviour that encourages others to hate, disrespect, or abuse a person or group of people, because of their race or religious belief or activity. Examples of vilification include gossip, or distributing and displaying racist posters, jokes or comments. It is also against the law to sexually harass or victimise someone or to vilify them because of their race or religion.

### 5.14. Victimisation

Victimisation is subjecting, or threatening to subject, someone to a detriment because they have asserted their rights under equal opportunity law, by making a complaint, helping someone else to make a complaint, been a witness, been accused of a breach of policy, or refused to act in a way that they feel would result in discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation.

### 5.15. Reporting

Any incident or concern of inappropriate behaviour should, in the first instance, be reported to your manager. If this is not appropriate, you are required to report incidents to the People Services team. All reporting will be treated confidentially. Vexatious, malicious or false complaints will not be tolerated. Disciplinary action may also be taken against individuals found to have made such complaints.

### 5.16. Privacy Protection

VMCH is bound by the Australian Privacy Principles set out in the Privacy Act 1988 that are the benchmark for how personal and sensitive information should be handled. Daily, you may have access to personal and sensitive information that our residents, clients, employees, partners and stakeholders entrust you with. VMCH may, from time to time, disclose some of this personal information to the Commonwealth and State Governments or their agencies. This will be in accordance with the provisions of all relevant legislation and regulations that apply to VMCH. You must comply with all the relevant laws and the VMCH Privacy Policy. If you are asked to disclose personal or sensitive information and you are unclear if this is acceptable, please contact your manager in the first instance, or the VMCH Privacy Officer for clarification.

### 5.17. Confidentiality

The protection of confidential information is critical. Unless authorised, you are required to maintain absolute confidentiality relating to any material or information you have access to. Precaution to protect confidential information rests with you and this is also a requirement after you leave VMCH. Confidential information includes (but is not limited to):

- Business transactions, supply deeds and third-party agreements;
- Employment records (date of birth, salary, personal details, bank account details);
- Financial information (including organisational and business plans);
- Marketing information;
- Research;

- Resident/client information; and
- Technical information.

Information that is available in the public domain such as annual reports, press releases or websites does not constitute confidential information.

#### **5.18. Conflict of Interest and VMCH Resources**

To ensure the highest level of integrity in VMCH activities, you must be free from any business or other relationship that might conflict with the best interests of the organisation. VMCH does respect the right of all employees to engage in personal activities outside of work. However, at times there may be instances where the activity may constitute a conflict of interest or appear to be a conflict of interest with your job responsibilities or the interests of VMCH. It is not commercially or ethically acceptable for you to financially benefit from information obtained through your position at VMCH. Decisions must be in the best interest of VMCH. Where you may perceive there may be a conflict of interest, you must declare it by reporting it to your manager.

#### **5.19. Ownership of Intellectual Property**

At VMCH we encourage innovation, and we endeavour to attract employees to the organisation who are committed to the development and creation of intellectual property. VMCH is the owner of all intellectual property that is generated by employees during your employment. You must comply with the VMCH Intellectual Property Policy.

#### **5.20. Outside Employment**

VMCH expects that you will devote your time and attention to the diligent and professional performance of your duties while you are at work. We recognise that you may engage in both paid and unpaid outside employment. It is expected that this will not adversely impact your ability to fulfil your obligations to us, nor reflect unfavourably on VMCH. It is expected that the organisation's name, resources and reputation will not be used in association with any outside work. You must avoid having other concerns or interests, directly or indirectly in any other industry or business, which may be in competition with VMCH. It is expected that you will maintain safe and reasonable hours between your commitment to VMCH and outside employment, and other commitments. You are also responsible for complying with legal requirements, such as visa restrictions, when working with more than one employer. Working part-time at VMCH and part-time at another service provider is not usually viewed as a conflict of interest. At the commencement of additional work outside of VMCH, it is recommended that a conversation with your manager is had, to ensure there is no conflict of interest and that it is safe and legal to do so.

#### **5.21. Accepting Gifts and Hospitality**

The giving and receiving of gifts or accepting hospitality is often part of normal business. A gift or benefit that may appear to influence any aspect of work undertaken by VMCH must not be solicited nor accepted. On occasion, there may be a situation whereby refusing a gift may offend or upset the giver. If this is the case you should accept the gift/benefit on behalf of VMCH, and then report the gift to your manager to determine how to make use of the gift. If you are approached by any organisation that has a current or a potential business relationship with VMCH, you should not accept any hospitality or gifts. If an offer is made, prior to accepting an invitation, approval must be provided by a Chief Officer. You should not accept any gift or hospitality that could be interpreted as benefitting you personally or influencing organisational decision making. If you have been issued with a Corporate Credit Card, you must comply with the Corporate Credit Card Policy.

#### **5.22. Using VMCH Services and Resources**

If you have access and control of VMCH funds, assets, equipment, property and/or goods, you are personally accountable for them and you must safeguard them whilst in your possession. VMCH assets should only be used to benefit the organisation in the conduct of business. You are required



to take appropriate precautions to prevent unauthorised access, theft or usage of systems or assets. If you have access to resources that allow for reasonable personal use, such as phones or vehicles, you will need to ensure that the benefit is not abused. We recognise that you have personal commitments and responsibilities, however, it is your responsibility to ensure the benefit is not abused and personal usage kept to a minimum. At the commencement of employment, you are provided with an email account and internet access. This is provided to improve performance, ensure effective communication across the organisation and to enable you to fulfil the requirements of your position responsibilities. VMCH email cannot be used for commercial purposes other than those of the organisation. Email should not be used to broadcast personal views about the organisation, management or individuals. Occasional and reasonable personal use of VMCH internet, phones, email and vehicles is permitted, if this does not interfere with work performance. You should have no expectation of privacy while using organisation-owned or leased equipment. Information passing through or stored on VMCH equipment can be monitored. You should familiarise yourselves and comply with the policies relating to the acceptable use of information technology and communications, motor vehicles and privacy.

### 5.23. Public and Social Commentary

As a not-for-profit organisation of the Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese, our reputation is important to us. We must be vigilant and mindful of the impact of any public activity to external stakeholders. Public comment on issues directly affecting the business can only be made by the Chair of the Board or the Chief Executive Officer. Any request for information or interviews must be approved by the CEO. Providing accurate and consistent information to the public is important, as it reflects on the image of VMCH and its employees. You should take care when participating in activities outside work or making casual comment on social media where information or actions may be perceived to conflict with VMCH and its perspectives. Please seek advice from your manager or the Marketing team if you require additional guidance.

### 5.24. Employee Assistance Program

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) enables you and your immediate family to access a professional, free and confidential counselling service. This service can assist with:

- Alcohol and other substance abuse;
- Financial issues;
- Personal issues (i.e. stress, anxiety or depression);
- Relationship problems and domestic violence; and
- Work related issues (i.e. conflict, organisational change, harassment).

Resources and Equipment Items that may be helpful or required when following this procedure (if applicable)

## 6. Closing Statement

VMCH is committed to creating a community of care where the quality of lives for those who need our services is enriched. To do this we must all work together, assisting and supporting each other in our various workplaces. VMCH places great importance on honesty, integrity, quality and trust. It's difficult to define every possible ethical scenario we might encounter. We rely on one another's sound judgment to uphold a high standard of integrity for ourselves and our organisation. If you require guidance on any matter relating to the Code of Conduct, you are advised to discuss the issue with your manager in the first instance and if required, approach the People Services team. All enquiries will be treated in strict confidence.

## 7. For More Information

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. Disciplinary action will be managed in accordance with the Discipline and Performance Management Procedure.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

- [Discipline and Performance Management Procedure](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response](#)
- [Bullying and Discrimination Prevention and Management Policy](#)
- [Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)

### Address

Level 3, 486 Albert Street, East Melbourne VIC 3101

### Post

PO Box 134, East Melbourne VIC 8002

T: 03 9926 2091

E: [peopleservices@vmch.com.au](mailto:peopleservices@vmch.com.au)

*Category* 04 People (Employees, Contractors & Volunteers)  
*Set* Code of Conduct  
*Owner* Chief Human Resources Officer

*Approved By* Board of Directors  
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