



Catholic Social Services
Australia

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL OFFICE**

CODE OF ETHICS 2006

February 2006

Foreword

Code of ethics for Catholic Social Services Australia 2006

*This is what Yahweh asks of you:
Only this, to act justly
to love tenderly
and to walk humbly with your God!*
Micah: 6:8

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) is the peak body for Catholic welfare services in Australia. It is governed by a board consisting of elected and appointed representatives and is answerable to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference through the Bishops' Committee for Justice and Service. A national office facilitates CSSA activities and implements decisions made by the CSSA Board.

Welfare services, auspiced by the church, are a part of the long tradition of Catholic communities across Australia, where witness to the gospel is carried out by meeting the emotional and physical needs of people within their local area.

This *Code of ethics* is a valuable reference for all who share in CSSA's mission and business. It articulates the ethical framework for behaviour and decision making of the CSSA Board, national office and entities formed to conduct CSSA business. The code incorporates CSSA's mission, vision, values and ethical principles, and is the recommended basis for practice by all member organisations and CSSA staff.

The CSSA Board, in approving this code, recognises the extensive work of Centacare Catholic Community Services Sydney, Centacare Catholic Family Services Broken Bay and Centacare Catholic Family Welfare Services Wollongong. These organisations were instrumental in shaping this document. The *Catholic Health Australia code of ethical standards for Catholic health and aged care services in Australia* was also a valuable reference tool in forming this document.

This code is a living document which will be regularly reviewed, debated and updated as required.

It is recognised staff are responsible for their own actions; however, directors and managers have an added responsibility to assist staff to resolve ethical dilemmas and issues. This code is to be used as a reference for this purpose and to empower staff to act ethically at all times.

I commend the principles in this booklet to you and hope you will find it useful.

Frank Quinlan
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

25 January 2006

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Code of ethics for Catholic Social Services Australia

1.0 Context and purpose

- 1.1 Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) is a multi-level, diverse and complex entity. For the sake of brevity, in this document the term 'CSSA' is intended to refer inclusively to the CSSA network as a whole or part thereof, whether that be a member organisation, a state network, the national office or a specific program. The term 'staff' should be understood to refer inclusively to all CSSA national office staff, board members and those who hold a position on a business entity.¹
- 1.2 This document describes the ethical principles, values and practices that underpin the mission of CSSA. It supersedes any code of ethics previously issued by Catholic Welfare Australia (the former name of CSSA).
- 1.3 The purpose of this *Code of ethics* is to provide staff with an ethical framework for behaviour and decision making. Because it is not possible to cover every situation staff may be confronted with during their employment, the *Code of ethics* must be read in conjunction with:
- the employing organisation's policies and procedures, which further define and clarify the principles expressed in this document
 - relevant legislation.
- 1.4 Obligations to the community, to clients, to colleagues, to the Catholic Church and to CSSA require the highest professional standards of conduct and behaviour at all times. The *Code of ethics* embodies the standards expected in employment and provides a framework for professional decisions, conduct and care, especially concerning services provided to clients.
- 1.5 Staff have a duty to read and familiarise themselves with this code and with any variations that may, from time to time, be made to the code.
- 1.6 As part of their role and responsibility, managers and directors of CSSA will assist in maintaining an awareness of standards of conduct and resolving ethical dilemmas. This does not, however, remove or lessen individual accountability for actions and decisions.
- 1.7 This *Code of ethics* is approved by, and may be varied from time to time by, the CSSA Board. Variations to this *Code of ethics* will be publicised to all staff of CSSA national office and member organisations.
- 1.8 This code has two parts. Part one identifies the basic principles that define CSSA activity and expectations of member organisations. Part two deals with specific issues relating to the operations of an organisation.

¹ Examples of business entities are advisory groups, working parties and formal networks, such as state branches or program networks.

Part one

Catholic social services: basic principles

1.0 Social services as integral to the mission of the church

1.1 Mission

CSSA is the peak body that represents the social welfare apostolate of the Catholic Church at the national level. It is a national federation of Catholic social service organisations which operate in local communities.

CSSA strives to promote and advance the ministry of Catholic social welfare as integral to the mission of the Catholic Church in Australia.

It carries out this mission by interacting with Catholic organisations, governments, other churches and all people of good will, to develop social welfare policies, programs and other strategic responses that enhance the human dignity of every person and work towards the economic, social and spiritual wellbeing of the Australian community.

By placing itself firmly within the social mission of the church, CSSA expects that all staff will identify themselves with the essential aspects of the social mission.

1.2 Vision

CSSA's vision is for a society in which there is full recognition of individual rights and responsibilities; a society that promotes the dignity, equality and participation of all persons.²

1.3 Values

Catholic social principles will be evident in staff life and work by:

- adherence to catholic social teaching
- respecting the dignity of each person
- protecting human dignity in the community
- actively seeking conditions that enhance the common good
- enabling clients and fellow workers to participate in the community
- providing preferential access for the most vulnerable clients
- demonstrating responsible stewardship in the quality and professionalism of our individual and collective work
- collaboration
- accountability and acting with integrity and fairness
- innovation and excellence.

1.4 Beliefs

CSSA supports:

- the sanctity and dignity of human life from the moment of its conception until death³

² *Pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world*, p. 26

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 2332

- the sanctity of marriage⁴
- the fundamental and central role of the family in society.⁵

2.0 Respect for human dignity

- 2.1** CSSA supports the individual's right to:
- live a full life without undue social control and unwarranted interference
 - participate in decision making processes affecting personal and community life.⁶
- 2.2** CSSA services will:
- respect the intrinsic value and human dignity of all persons
 - affirm that all people are equal
 - be sensitive to the potential power imbalances of worker and client in the delivery of services, especially when dealing with children.
- 2.3** Staff have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness in the workplace. Decisions taken regarding an employee's conditions of employment will be consistent with the principles of natural justice. The staff will be consulted on policies and procedures affecting their employment. Business will be conducted according to the agreed policies and procedures.
- 2.4** CSSA promotes decision making that is empowering of those involved and affected in the process.
- 2.4.1** Subsidiarity requires those responsible for making decisions ensure a process whereby decisions are either made by, or at least made in consultation with, those who will be most affected by them.
- 2.4.2** CSSA expects that those responsible for decision making will:
- follow due diligence in their deliberations prior to making decisions
 - clearly communicate decisions to relevant people once they have been taken
 - declare conflict of interest prior to, or exclude themselves from, any decision making in which they hold a vested interest
 - be vigilant to avoid oppression of one group by another. Therefore, all possible and potential decision outcomes must be assessed to identify their potential impact on other groups and areas.
- 2.4.3** CSSA services will aim at promoting the highest possible degree of autonomy and self-determination for individuals, families and communities.

3.0 Justice in social service provision

- 3.1** CSSA should be dedicated to working for justice in social service settings. Therefore, in evaluating public and social policy, CSSA will also support those policies which:
- ensure all people are treated fairly and have access to all essential goods and services, such as food, clothing, shelter, health care, education and

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 1660

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, pp. 2207, 2209

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 1894

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- transport
 - give preferential treatment for those who are disadvantageded, devalued or distressed
 - protect and uphold every person's right to live with dignity.
- 3.2** CSSA will acknowledge and comply with state and federal laws.
- 3.2.1** Where laws or proposed laws are considered to be unjust, CSSA will embark on a considered course of action to demonstrate the injustices and attempt to effect reform.
- 3.3** Confidentiality is a core principle and CSSA will establish policies and procedures within the framework of relevant legislation that assure the privacy of the relationship established with its clients and other relevant bodies.
- 3.4** Resource allocation and service delivery will be fair and just.
- 3.4.1** When deciding on the allocation of its own limited resources, CSSA will, as far as practicable, ensure such allocations result in maximum access to those resources for the disadvantageded, devalued and distressed members of society.
- 3.4.2** Race, religion, intellect, sexuality, ethnic background, beliefs or disability will not preclude people from available services.

4.0 Collegiality, collaboration and partnership

- 4.1** CSSA will seek to act in collaboration or partnership with organisations and groups within the Catholic Church.
- 4.1.1** Relationships will be shaped in line with the principles of Catholic social teaching and in the interests of the common good.
- 4.2** CSSA will work with individuals, groups and social agencies outside the church on issues, policies and programs that are compatible with CSSA's mission and vision.⁷
- 4.3** CSSA will respect the diversity of the network and the differing opinions of colleagues, with the assurance that critical comment will be made on the issues raised, not on the individual(s) raising them.
- 4.4** CSSA will seek to be caring and just in its relationships with staff, network colleagues, stakeholders, other groups or organisations, and people in the wider community.
- 4.5** CSSA expects that the spirit of collegiality will prevail, with:
- resources being shared, where practicable
 - mentoring opportunities being encouraged and supported
 - agreed actions being carried through
 - genuine effort being made to meet deadlines established by prior agreement
 - positive and concerted effort being made to find common ground by participating in open and transparent processes
 - decisions made as a network being honoured

⁷ Pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world, p. 1

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- support being provided to those experiencing crisis or catastrophe
- equal respect and consideration being given to all CSSA individuals and organisations.

4.6 CSSA rejects all forms of intimidation, illegal or unethical behaviour, bullying, discrimination, and harassment

5.0 Integrity of reputation

5.1 In the face of competing demands, CSSA strives to accompany those in need. CSSA should be known by a spiritual and material solidarity with all people, especially those who are marginalised, vulnerable or distressed. Priority is given to those in greatest need.

5.2 CSSA aspires to provide excellence in service and honesty in advocacy.

5.3 In a media-dominated society, identification with CSSA confers an apolitical reputation of charity and compassion which is to be protected. Therefore, it is important that:

- actions and voice not only conform to the *Code of ethics* but are perceived by others as conforming
- when scandal or transgressions occur, those in leadership roles take steps to transparently handle the situation according to processes of natural justice for all involved.

6.0 Transparent accountability

6.1 General

CSSA will hold itself fully, consistently and publicly accountable for its programs and fiscal operations. CSSA will seek objective certification that it meets the standards of quality in performance, which have been established in the field of social welfare, through relevant accreditation and licensing.

6.2 Policies and procedures

In formulating policies, establishing programs and implementing procedures, CSSA will:

- be faithful to gospel values and to the social teaching of the church
- recognise that the dignity of each individual human person is inviolable and brings with it natural rights and duties.

6.3 Business entities

Collectives engaged in CSSA business (for example, advisory groups, working parties, and formal networks, such as state branches or program networks) will have defined terms of reference and accountability and reporting pathways.

7.0 Governance and leadership

7.1 General

Those in governance roles will demonstrate leadership by:

- upholding the vision of the organisation and supporting its primary purpose
- being custodians of the organisation's values
- focusing on the external changing context within which the organisation operates
- enabling outcome-driven organising systems
- practicing forward thinking
- encouraging productivity
- facilitating unity and diversity
- balancing control
- defining the board's role and relationships.

7.2 Conflict of interest

7.2.1 Real or perceived clashes of interests may occur from time to time. It is essential that all conflicts of interest are always declared and minuted at the appropriate meeting. Directors declaring the conflicts of interest will demonstrate fairness by absenting themselves from board meetings when relevant discussions or votes are held.

7.3 Leadership

7.3.1 The task of leadership is entrusted to selected staff. These leaders are expected to fulfill their leadership duties by:

- adhering to the principles of Catholic social teaching
- creating opportunities for staff to express their opinions and be heard
- identifying the talents of staff and inviting them to use and extend these gifts
- putting great effort into ensuring best practice
- openly recognising and appreciating the contribution of others
- having mechanisms available to resolve dilemmas when conflict arises
- encouraging prudent use of resources
- trusting in others' ability, demonstrated by appropriate delegations of roles and responsibilities
- identifying ethical dilemmas and debating them in appropriate forums
- ensuring accountability by allocating the appropriate authority and power to make decisions to those charged with completing a task
- affirming excellence
- encouraging and organising practices that use individual and collective talents and promote empowerment, self-determination, and healthy relationships and levels of reliance.

8.0 Member organisations

8.1 General

8.1.1 All member organisations of CSSA are required to have policies and procedures that are consistent with part one and part two of this document.

8.1.2 Member organisations are diverse communities, each with their own identity,

mission and conscience.

8.1.3 At times, a member organisation, as a Catholic institution, may be faced with difficult dilemmas when Catholic beliefs differ from those of other stakeholders. This code and Catholic social teachings give guidance to solutions.

8.1.4 CSSA requires all member organisations to adopt a quality framework that ensures consistency and high standards of service delivery in all organisational operations.

8.1.4.1 Member organisations are required to provide users of their services with a copy of documented rights and responsibilities, which should include the procedure for handling complaints.

8.2 Governance in member organisations

8.2.1 Those in senior leadership positions and board members should exemplify Catholic social teaching and diligently meet the obligations of their positions.

8.2.2 As Catholic organisations, CSSA expects that ethical consideration will be given to all matters pertaining to the organisation's operations.

8.2.3 As employers, member organisations will act with fairness, justice and respect in all dealings with staff and ensure the provision of a safe working environment.

8.2.4 CSSA recognises that staff may be drawn from many religious traditions. It is the responsibility of leadership to ensure Catholic values are understood, applied and demonstrated, while at the same time respecting and valuing other faith traditions.

8.3 Financial administration

8.3.1. CSSA national office is required to administer receipt of public funds prudently, responsibly, effectively, accountably and transparently.

8.3.2 All business dealings should be conducted justly and should be consistent with the mission and values of CSSA and with the organisation's documented business plan.

8.4 Research

8.4.1 General

8.4.1.1 CSSA encourages quality practice and evidence-driven public policy. Therefore, it encourages and promotes research that will assist in achieving these goals.

8.4.1.2 CSSA expects that research undertaken in its name will meet rigorous academic, scientific, ethical and legal standards and requirements.

8.4.2 Consent

8.4.2.1 Researchers must take particular care to obtain consent from all participants and participating organisations. In the case of minors, researchers must meet policy requirements of seeking parental consent.

8.4.4.2 It is an obligation on researchers to adequately inform all participants of the purpose, process, design and use of results of any project in which they are involved.

8.4.3 Research design and outcomes

8.4.3.1 At no time should research design endanger participants.

8.4.3.2 CSSA expects that research design will meet ethical standards and the principles of Catholic social teaching.

8.4.3.3 Consistent with the principle of common good, knowledge gained through research should be available and accessible.

9.0 Breaches of the *Code of ethics*

9.1 Non-compliance

Where non-compliance is found and proven, appropriate remedial action will be taken. Action taken will be appropriate to the seriousness of intentional or unintentional breaches of the code.

9.2 Responsibility for dealing with breaches

Responsibility for dealing with breaches of the *Code of ethics* rests with the Executive Director of CSSA in the first instance and may proceed to the Board. All allegations of breaches must be investigated.

Part two

Specific issues

1.0 Conduct and behaviour of staff

1.1 General conduct and behaviour

1.1.1 All staff are required to adhere to this *Code of ethics* and, if applicable, to any code of ethics for the professional association relevant to their clinical or professional discipline.

1.1.2 All staff:

- must be inclusive in relation to people who, for whatever reason, are subject to prejudice or discrimination
- must uphold the rights of people to evaluate, complain and/or question any service they may receive from CSSA or any other agency, institution or instrumentality and assist them in making complaints through the appropriate channels
- must respect the rights of Indigenous people and all people from a culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- must use and maintain property and resources responsibly and accept accountability for the use of the resources
- will work collaboratively with individuals, groups and social agencies on issues, policies and programmes that are compatible with the CSSA mission
- will evaluate professional behaviour and decision making practices in the light of gospel values and not merely economic terms
- must ensure professional relationships are not exploited for personal, material or financial advantage
- must avoid any form of physical contact with other persons that may violate professional boundaries, result in intentional or unintentional emotional or psychological harm, or damage the professional relationship
- must disclose to a manager any real or apparent conflict between personal or family interest and official duty that has arisen or has the potential to arise
- must not give out the home telephone number, private mobile telephone number or personal contact details of staff unless approved in writing by their manager
- must ensure their physical and mental readiness for carrying out the duties consistent with their role
- must carry out reasonable directions given by a manager or director⁸ and follow the organisational policies and procedures at all times.

1.2 Appropriate use and security of information

1.2.1 CSSA is covered by the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (Cwlth). Staff are obliged to comply with the terms of the Act when handling information.

⁸ For the sake of brevity, the term 'director' is used to refer to executive directors, program directors and/or organisational directors on the board.

1.2.2 Staff will:

- maintain the integrity and security of all official information and/or documents for which they are responsible or to which they have access
- ensure premises are secure and suitable arrangements are in place to maintain security of confidential and sensitive documents
- only collect and disclose information they are authorised to collect and disclose in the course of their duties.

1.2.3 Access to or disclosure of internal CSSA documents can only be granted when legitimately required in the course of professional duties or by law or order of a court or tribunal. Before disclosure of information to a court or tribunal, approval of a director must be obtained.

1.3 External activities and public comment

1.3.1 Staff are free to engage in political, professional, charitable and interest groups provided the participation does not give rise to a conflict of CSSA's values or impede the performance of a staff member's duties.

1.3.2 Although staff have a right to express personal views through public comment or the media, they are not to give the impression they are speaking on behalf of or representing the views of CSSA, unless they have prior authorisation from the Executive Director. Public comment includes public speaking engagements, media comments, and letters to newspapers or online services.

1.3.3 Public comment related to CSSA and its member organisations' activities is the responsibility of the CSSA Executive Director or someone expressly appointed by the Executive Director.

1.4 Receipt of gifts or benefits

1.4.1 CSSA staff must not accept from members, suppliers, donors, sponsors or other external persons with whom they come in to contact in the course of their employment with CSSA, any private fees, gratuities or any other remuneration unless the relevant director has provided written authorisation to do so.

1.4.2 CSSA staff must ensure they and members of their families are not, through their employment with CSSA, the recipients of benefits or gifts that could be seen to have directly influenced staff in the course of their employment with CSSA.

1.4.3 From time to time, stakeholders may wish to express their gratitude to CSSA for the excellent work or services provided by CSSA staff. Any gifts or benefits of significant financial value must be recorded in the organisation's gifts register.

1.5 Alcohol and prohibited substances

1.5.1 The consumption of alcohol in quantities that could impair the standard of staff work performance or endanger others is not permitted prior to commencement of duty, while on duty, or on CSSA premises.⁹

⁹ At no time should any staff be engaged in work activities or be on work premises if they register above the state legal alcohol limit. A no alcohol policy applies when dealing with clients.

- 1.5.2** Staff are not permitted to carry out duties while under the influence of prohibited substances that may affect the performance of their duties. Substance abuse while on duty is considered a gross misconduct and disciplinary action will be taken.
- 1.5.3** The consumption of medicinal drugs prior to commencing duty and while on duty is not permitted where work performance and/or safety of the staff member or others could be adversely affected.
- 1.5.4** The usage, storage or sale of illegal drugs by staff members will always be considered unacceptable and will result in disciplinary action or dismissal. Staff found to be under the influence of illegal drugs in work-related time will face dismissal.
- 1.5.5** Staff must be within the legal blood alcohol limit for driving when using a private vehicle on work-related matters and when driving a work vehicle at all times.

1.6 Secondary employment

- 1.6.1** Staff who undertake paid outside work have a commitment to the duties of their appointment and position at CSSA. CSSA expects that any outside work, paid or unpaid, shall not conflict with the values of CSSA.
- 1.6.2** Full-time staff must have approval in writing from their director prior to engaging in any secondary employment or business activity, including a family company.
- 1.6.3** Part-time staff are entitled to work in a secondary capacity outside CSSA, provided their manager or director is informed if there is any possibility of a conflict of interest which could adversely impact on CSSA's financial position, services, clients or standing in the community.
- 1.6.4** Where there is any doubt regarding a possible conflict of interest, staff members must immediately inform their manager and seek approval to proceed.
- 1.6.5** Any use of CSSA facilities in connection with outside work may only occur where prior approval has been obtained and CSSA must be recompensed for the full cost of such use.
- 1.6.6** Any outside employment is to be performed in the staff member's private time.

1.7 Use of computers, email, Internet and other communications equipment

- 1.7.1** CSSA's communications equipment is to be used only in an appropriate manner and for work-related purposes.
- 1.7.2** Unacceptable use of CSSA communication devices includes using the devices to breach intellectual property laws, for commercial gain, for illegal activity or for the storage or transmission of unacceptable material, including material of a sexual, racist or other offensive nature.
- 1.7.3** The use of CSSA facilities and equipment by staff is subject to the following. Staff will:

- safeguard all resources (materials, funds, personnel information systems, plant, facilities and so on) and use them in an efficient, careful and honest manner
- not tamper or interfere with organisational information and/or communication systems
- use each item of CSSA equipment only for the purpose(s) for which it was designed
- not use CSSA resources for private purposes, unless a manager has granted express permission
- adhere to all financial procedures and systems to ensure CSSA can discharge its accountabilities for expenditure of monies entrusted to it. Fraud or theft by a staff member may result in dismissal and, where appropriate, legal action being taken.

1.8 Bullying and harassment

1.8.1 Bullying implies an imbalance of power and is often demonstrated by the repeated less favourable treatment of a person by another person in the workplace. Examples of bullying are verbal abuse, sarcasm, criticism in front of peers, and creating work overload or underload. Proven situations will result in disciplinary action being taken against the perpetrator, including possible dismissal.

1.8.2 CSSA does not condone any form of bullying; harassment; discrimination; any form of unfair or improper treatment of colleagues or clients; or any improper behaviour as set out in anti-discrimination legislation or in the other relevant statutes.

1.8.3 The use of offensive language or the display of offensive material of a sexual or racist nature in the workplace will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the perpetrator.

1.8.4 Staff should not have to deal with bullying, harassing or stalking behaviour. Should an employee find themselves the focus of such attention, it is essential that management is informed as soon as possible.

1.9 Discrimination

Staff are expected to treat all persons equally, irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, medical condition, marital status, cultural background, socioeconomic status, religion, age or political conviction.

1.10 Appropriate language and communications

1.10.1 Staff must not swear or use inappropriate words that could, in the opinion of a reasonable person, offend or distress. This includes words said in respect to a person's race, gender, sexual preference, age, and physical or intellectual disability.

1.10.2 Staff must not use inappropriate gestures or actions that could, in the opinion of a reasonable person, offend or distress. Such actions include intimidation, spitting, and sexually explicit body language.

1.11 Duty of care

Staff are to exercise due care in undertaking their activities, particularly where others rely on advice or information offered. Staff have a duty to take reasonable care to avoid causing harm (including physical harm) to anyone. Staff are to promote safe working practices and environments for everyone using CSSA services and facilities.

1.12 Appropriate relationships

1.12.2 Staff are encouraged to be aware of professional boundaries in their dealings with other staff members while on duty.

1.13 Reporting of improper conduct

1.13.1 Staff have a responsibility to immediately report to a relevant senior staff person any suspected cases of fraud; misuse of organisational resources; inadequate administration or accountability; and corrupt or improper conduct. Improper conduct is conduct which may involve a criminal offence, illegal conduct or breach of this code in a matter serious enough to warrant disciplinary action¹⁰. In doing so, staff are entitled to seek support and protection when making such disclosures and to be notified of the action taken or proposed in relation to the disclosure.

1.13.2 Staff are not entitled to protection for disclosures which, on investigation, are found to be vexatious or malicious allegations, and may be liable for disciplinary action as a result of making such disclosures.

1.14 Respect for the law and organisational systems

1.14.1 Staff, along with all citizens, have an obligation to respect and abide by the law.

1.14.2 Staff are expected to abide by the policies and procedures of the organisation.

1.14.3 When staff detect inadequacies, they are supported and entitled to challenge policy and procedures by using the appropriate systems outlined in the policy manual.

1.15 Respect for all persons

1.15.1 Recognising that good workplace relationships are often very significant in the personal lives of people, staff will encourage an organisational culture that is open, supportive, caring and sensitive to the needs of all.

1.15.2 Staff will respect the rights, dignity and views of others by:

- treating stakeholders, members of the public and colleagues with dignity and respect
- being tolerant of views held by others, which are different from their own
- making efforts to develop and maintain cross-cultural awareness and skills, especially in relation to Indigenous culture.

1.15.3 In working with colleagues, staff will:

- be honest and sensitive when dealing with co-workers

¹⁰ Behaviour that flagrantly contradicts or ignores Catholic social teaching and the mission and values of CSSA

- promote policies and working conditions that are non-discriminatory and that foster competence, wellbeing and positive self-esteem
- comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* (Cwlth), the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2001, and agency policy and procedures on workplace health and safety
- be aware of their obligation not to wilfully place at risk or injure themselves and others in the workplace.

1.16 Reporting and recording

1.16.1 CSSA will ensure there are appropriate mechanisms and procedures for reporting and recording. These include:

- disciplinary process
- notification process
- investigation process for reportable conduct
- investigation process for non-reportable conduct.

1.16.2 There is a statutory obligation to keep a record of all workplace incidents (work injuries, work-caused illnesses and dangerous events) that arise from work-related activities.

1.17 Standards of performance

Staff will make every effort to:

- maintain and develop their knowledge of the organisation, its purpose and strategic plan
- improve their own performance and contribute to the ongoing quality improvement of the organisation
- maintain and improve the skills, knowledge and competencies required for their position
- keep up to date with advances and changes in the body of knowledge and the professional and ethical standards relevant to their area of expertise
- exercise care, responsibility and sound judgement when carrying out their duties and conform to the principles of natural justice
- ensure procedural fairness is followed in all processes
- follow organisational procedures and protocols
- seek feedback on their work performance.

1.18 Carrying out official policies and decisions

1.18.1 Staff have an obligation to carry out decisions and policies faithfully and impartially.

1.18.2 Staff are expected to use the defined channels to seek changes to policies and procedures when they detect an inadequacy.

1.18.3 Managers should be open to positive and constructive questions about their instructions and prompt to respond.

2.0 Working with special needs groups

2.1 Working with people with a disability

CSSA recognises that people with a disability may need appropriate assistance to meet their needs and this will at times require additional application of resources. All staff are expected to show tolerance, respect and understanding .

2.2 Working with Indigenous people

The strong cultural tradition of Indigenous Australians must be valued and respected in all engagements with these people. CSSA, recognising the mistakes of the past and the impact of the imposition of non-Indigenous culture on these traditions, aspires, in the spirit of reconciliation, to ensure all interactions are inclusive, positive, respectful and culturally appropriate.

2.3 Working with culturally and linguistically diverse groups

Respecting and remaining in solidarity with people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds means every attempt is made to understand these cultures and to develop appropriate frameworks that care for the dignity and wellbeing of each person involved.

3.0 Work ethic

3.1 Professionalism

3.1.1 High quality performance, consistent with the principles of Catholic social teaching and professional standards, should be provided by suitably qualified and competent staff.

3.1.2 Staff are required to fully meet the obligations of their positions and always act in a professional and dignified manner during all work-related activities.

3.2 Confidentiality

CSSA staff recognise confidentiality as a living principle; therefore, organisations must establish policy, practices and relationships that ensure privacy and confidentiality within the framework of federal and state legislation.

3.2.1 Staff must adhere to the principles of confidentiality outlined in their organisation's privacy policy and have a duty to maintain the confidentiality and security of any personal information for which they are responsible, including computerised data.

3.2.2 No staff shall have access to information about any individual without that individual's consent, unless the relevant manager is satisfied that the staff member is acting in the course of his or her duties and that the information is relevant to the purpose for which it is sought.

3.2.3 No computerised data about any individual should be accessed for reason other than work purposes without the full written authority of that person. Access to staff records without a specific job-related purpose constitutes a breach of the privacy policy.

- 3.2.4** Personal information about staff will generally not be released to a third party, unless the subject is informed of the reason for its collection and the named person provides full written approval.
- 3.2.4.1** The exception is special circumstances where the disclosure may prevent a serious and imminent threat to the life or health of the individual concerned or of another person.
- 3.2.4.2** CSSA is legally obliged to respond to any request for information in the form of a police warrant, subpoena, summons or other court order, according to organisational policy.
- 3.2.5** Staff must not divulge, either during employment with or after leaving CSSA, any confidential information gained during employment that could adversely affect CSSA services, business operations, stakeholders or standing in the community. The *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1989* (Cwlth) provides for the protection of personal information and for the protection of the privacy of individuals generally.

4.0 Conclusion

CSSA strives to promote and advance the ministry of Catholic social welfare as integral to the mission of the Catholic Church in Australia. This *Code of ethics* has been developed to guide workplace practice in meeting this mission and to assist those who strive to develop social welfare policies, programs and other strategic responses that enhance the human dignity of every person and work towards the economic, social and spiritual wellbeing of the Australian community.