



St Vincent de Paul Society
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc. *good works*

WORKING TOGETHER

GUIDELINES





ESSENTIAL VINCENTIAN VIRTUES

Vincentians seek to emulate St Vincent in the five virtues essential for promoting love and respect for the poor:

- Simplicity, frankness, integrity, genuineness.
- Humility, accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents and charisms, yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others, and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without His grace.
- Gentleness, friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, sweetness and patience in our relationship with others.
- Selflessness, dying to their ego with a life of self-sacrifice; Members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity.
- Zeal, a passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.

The Rule, Part I, Article 2.5.1

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PREAMBLE

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia Inc. (National Council) Strategic Plan 2023-2027 includes initiatives that encourage Society Members, board directors, volunteers and employees across the Society in Australia to work together.

The Strategic Goal 'Our Work Together' builds on the success of previous cross-jurisdictional initiatives which have seen an increase in Members, employees and committee/Council members from national and state/territory Councils coming into contact with each other when they work together.

National Council is committed to the principle that everyone has a right to feel safe and not be harassed or bullied.

OUR VALUES

Commitment

Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values.

Compassion

Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement.

Respect

Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions.

Integrity

Promoting, maintaining and adhering to our mission, vision and values.

Empathy

Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship and perception.

Advocacy

Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice.

Courage

Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future.

SCOPE

This is an internal document for the Society in Australia.

The intent behind these guidelines is to provide a reference for interactions when the Society's Members, volunteers and employees work together. It acknowledges that State and Territory Councils have policies and procedures in place to address instances when interactions involving a Member, a volunteer and/or an employee working together are not respectful.

These guidelines do not cover interactions between Society Members, volunteers and employees on the one hand and Companions, customers or other members of the general public, including children on the other hand.

Given National Council's commitment to safeguarding of children and adults at risk, this document is to be read in conjunction with National Council's Safeguarding Policy.

The guidelines acknowledge that the Society's State and Territory Councils have detailed policies and procedures that provide guidance on behaviours involving these external parties/groups.

National Council, as the superior Council of the Society in Australia and acting in conjunction with the State and Territory Councils, advocates a culture within the Society in Australia that reflects the essential Vincentian Virtues and the Society's Values at all times. These guidelines seek to encourage collegiality and professional and courteous manners as the foundations of working together within the Society.

National Council encourages State and Territory Councils and other subsidiary councils in Australia to promote and to follow the "Working Together" general principles.

These guidelines apply to persons who are:

- Members of National Council who are also directors of National Council's legal entity;
- Persons who are members of a National Council Standing Committee, Advisory Committee or working group (i.e national networks convened by National Council);
- National Council volunteers, employees and contractors; and
- Persons who are Members of other State and Territory Councils and volunteers and employees engaged by a State or a Territory Council with whom National Council's Representatives have contact.

The guidelines provide a point of reference for State and Territory Councils with regard to supporting meeting places and workplaces that encourage a 'working together' culture across the Society in Australia.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

National Council has a duty of care to provide safe meeting places and workplaces, and to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all people who have contact with National Council and who work or volunteer for National Council are not exposed to risks to their wellbeing, health or safety.

National Council as the superior Council of the Society in Australia expects all Society Members, volunteers and employees to observe acceptable standards of behaviour when working together and when representing the Society.

National Council calls on all people to whom these guidelines apply to observe acceptable standards of behaviour when working together with National Council's representatives.

WORKING TOGETHER – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Consistent with 'Our Values' as expressed above, the Society in Australia seeks to adopt a preventative and responsive approach to unreasonable behaviour.

In particular, National Council promotes the following Working Together general principles:

- promote appropriate standards of behaviour consistent with the Society's values at all times;
- prevent unreasonable behaviours through education, training and performance management;
- ensure all Society Members, volunteers and employees understand their rights and responsibilities;
- encourage Society Members, volunteers and employees to "call out" unreasonable behaviours they experience towards themselves or observe against others;
- take all reports of unreasonable behaviour seriously;
- respond to reports of unreasonable behaviour in a fair, objective and unbiased manner;
- respond promptly and impartially when unreasonable behaviours are reported;
- respect and protect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties who are involved in a report of unreasonable behaviour; and
- not tolerate adverse treatment of, or discrimination against, those who report or complain of unreasonable behaviour.

DEFINITIONS

EMPLOYER means any legal entity that falls under the auspice of the Society in Australia that employs persons to carry out good works and other activities.

MEETING PLACE means a location or a place where meetings of Vincentian Members take place or where Members gather in the name of the Society, including wherever the Society in Australia conducts its good works and where Members, volunteers and employees carry out governance or administrative activities or any other activity conducted in the name of the Society. A meeting place can also include virtual meetings or conferences or telephone calls.

MEMBER means a Member of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia and National Councils twinned with Australia.

NATIONAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE means the members of National Council and National Council volunteers, employees and contractors and, those persons who act as a representative of National Council (i.e. they are a person who is a member of a National Council Standing Committee, Advisory Committee or working group [including national networks convened by National Council]).

NATIONAL COUNCIL RESPONSIBLE OFFICER means the National Council President or the National Council Chief Executive Officer.

SUPERVISOR means the person to whom a Society Member, volunteer or employee reports.

UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR is a behaviour that a reasonable person, having considered the circumstances, would see as not acceptable. Examples of unreasonable behaviours include, but are not limited to, the following situations:

- use of abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments towards a person;
- discrimination that is unlawful;
- victimisation;
- sexual harassment;
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours about a person;
- workplace bullying, which includes a variety of unreasonable behaviours against another person(s), including the following examples:
 - unjustified criticism or complaints;
 - deliberately excluding a person from activities;
 - withholding information that is vital for effective work performance;
 - setting unreasonable timelines, constantly changing deadlines or setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level;
 - denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of the worker;
 - repeated threats of dismissal; and
 - changing work arrangements such as rosters or denying reasonable requests for recreation or other leave to deliberately inconvenience a worker or workers.

DEFINITIONS

Fair Work Australia provides information about bullying in the workplace – refer to www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/bullying-and-harassment

Unsubstantiated complaints about work performance, personal behaviours or personal attributes intended to cause harm or annoyance.

Repeated displays of unreasonable behaviour towards a person or group of people, whether intentional or unintentional, create a risk to an individual's physical or emotional wellbeing, health or safety.

Behaviours such as those illustrated above do not encourage a working together environment.

WORKING TOGETHER means how we reach our potential and how we advance the mission of the Society. Working together can include how we communicate with each other (listening and responding), how we achieve consensus, how we manage change, and how we meet the needs of individuals when meeting the needs of the group.

WORKPLACE means a location or place where a person works for an employer where 'place' can range from a home office or a large office complex, a Special Work (such as a supported accommodation service), a service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, a Vinnies shop or any other locations where the Society in Australia offers good works or manages the affairs of the Society.

REPORTING OF UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR

As a general principle, a Member, volunteer, employee or contractor who experiences unreasonable behaviour within the Society should report the behaviour to their immediate supervisor/President.¹

Where the unreasonable behaviour involves the person's supervisor/President or the person does not feel comfortable to make a report to their supervisor/President, they should make a report to their supervisor's supervisor or to the President above their President.

Where a person is acting as a National Council representative, and they experience unreasonable behaviour in a meeting place or in a workplace in which National Council is participating, they may choose to report an instance or an allegation of unreasonable behaviour to National Council's Responsible Officer in accordance with National Council's Complaints Management Policy.

A Society Member, volunteer or employee who experiences unreasonable behaviour in a meeting place or in a workplace in which National Council is participating may choose to either report an instance or an allegation of unreasonable behaviour to the National Council in accordance with these guidelines or to their State or Territory Council in accordance with their State or Territory Council procedure.

A Society Member, volunteer or employee who experiences unreasonable behaviour in any meeting place or in any workplace within the Society may choose to report the instance or the allegation of unreasonable behaviour in accordance with the relevant State or Territory Council procedure.

National Council

Procedures for reporting instances or allegations of unacceptable behaviour are outlined in the National Council Complaints Management Policy.

State and Territory Councils

State and Territory Councils have in place procedures to report instances or allegations of unreasonable behaviour and to address such instances or allegations.

Instances or allegations that involve more than one employer

Where there is an instance or an allegation of unreasonable behaviour that involves two, or more, Members, volunteers or employees from different employers, cooperation between the relevant councils will be encouraged to effectively address the matter.

¹ A Society Member who is registered as a Member in the jurisdiction of a State or a Territory Council is accountable to and reports to the Council President in that jurisdiction.
An employee and a volunteer engaged by a State or Territory Council are accountable to, and report to, the Council's (or the related company's) Chief Executive Officer. Where a Society Member is acting as a volunteer, they are accountable to, and report to, the Council's/company's Chief Executive Officer

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility to guard against unreasonable behaviour in Society meeting places and workplaces is shared by all Society Members, volunteers and employees. Some individuals have specific responsibility for addressing an instance or an allegation of unreasonable behaviour.

National Council and State and Territory Councils and **Council Presidents** have a duty to ensure that all Members, volunteers and employees who interact with National Council or its representatives are aware of the Working Together Guidelines.

Chief Executive Officers as the authorised officer of an employer (National/State/Territory Council or other entity) are responsible for:

- acknowledging these guidelines and being cognisant of the related policy and procedures adopted by their National/State/Territory Council;
- ensuring instances of behaviours that are impediments to working together, and which involve an employee or a volunteer are addressed in line with the National/State/Territory Council's policy and procedures;
- ensuring a Conference or a State or Territory Council President is notified in instances of behaviours that are impediments to working together that involve a Member, in line with the State or Territory Council's policy and procedures; and
- ensuring the Council meets legislative obligations under the **Fair Work Act (2009)** and the respective occupational health and safety act applicable within a jurisdiction.

RELATED NATIONAL COUNCIL DOCUMENTS



Complaints Management Policy



Safeguarding Policy



The Vincentian Way Framework



Whistleblower Policy

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Title	Working Together
Document Type	Guidelines
Document Number	POL_23
Audience	Society in Australia
Application	Directors, Members, employees and volunteers of National Council, persons who conduct activities on behalf of National Council and, persons who are involved in activities that operate under National Council
Category	Governance
Legislation	<i>Fair Work Act (2009) (Cth)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (ACT)</i>
Related Documents	Complaints Management Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Whistleblower Policy
Effective Date	11 August 2025
Review Date	11 August 2027
Responsible Officer	National Council CEO
Approver	National Council
Enquiries	National Council CEO



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