

## Policy Document

| <b>Code of Professional Conduct for SCECS Staff</b> |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |               |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Policy Hierarchy link</b>                        |                  | Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Clause 13 (c)<br>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 168(2)(i),( i)- Policies and procedures.<br><br>National Quality Standard:<br><br>Quality Area 4 -Staffing Arrangements – Standards 4.2 |               |
| Version                                             | Authorised by    | Effective Date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Revision Date |
| 3                                                   | SCECS Management | August 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | August 2029   |

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

This Code of Professional Conduct (the Code) sets out the standards of conduct, professional and personal behaviour that Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services (SCECS) requires of its staff in upholding and encouraging a safe, supportive, ethical, productive and harmonious workplace.

As a Catholic workplace SCECS seeks to create caring and faith filled environments where Gospel teachings affirm the highest standard of ethical conduct.

Staff members have a responsibility to uphold the standards contained in the Code, including upholding the teachings and values of the Catholic Church and to avoid by word, action or public lifestyle, behaviours which are contrary to those teachings and values.

The Code does not attempt to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what staff can or should do in every situation but instead sets out standards of guidance and expected behaviour.

### 2. SCOPE

The Code applies to all Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services (SCECS) staff and other persons engaged to undertake work for SCECS. In this policy staff means all employees of SCECS, volunteers, trainees (including practicum teachers), interns, students and advisory groups. This policy is also applicable to contractors, specialists, and consultants.

All staff must familiarise themselves with the Code and act in line with the conduct described in it.

Failure to comply with the responsibilities and obligations outlined in the Code may result in disciplinary action being taken, including termination of employment, termination of contract/s, notification to external agencies and/or criminal charges.

### **3. LAWFUL COMPLIANCE**

Staff must act lawfully and comply with all legislative, contractual and industrial requirements while engaged by SCECS. Staff must also comply with SCECS' policies and guidelines and follow all reasonable and lawful directions given by SCECS.

### **4. ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR**

Staff are required to:

- Uphold SCECS values
- be honest and act with integrity at all times
- be objective, fair, impartial and accountable
- respect the dignity, rights and views of others
- listen and seek to understand different points of view (this does not necessarily mean agreeing with the point of view)
- act respectfully at all times, including respecting cultural, ethnic and religious differences
- acknowledge the genuine contributions that others make
- express constructive feedback considerately and in a moderate tone
- not disparage, harass, bully or discriminate against colleagues, children, parents or community members
- be courteous, fair, sensitive and considerate to the needs of others
- actively assist in managing workplace conflict that personally affects them or staff members under their supervision to create positive and constructive outcomes
- respect physical boundaries with colleagues

## **5. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR**

### **5.1 Productivity and performance**

Staff are required to:

- maintain a high standard and quality of work
- never plagiarise and always acknowledge the work of others
- maintain and develop knowledge and understanding of their area of expertise
- continuously seek to improve work performance and bring about improvements in the workplace
- exercise care, responsibility and sound judgement when carrying out their duties
- dress appropriately, professionally and in a manner that maintains respect and upholds the good reputation of SCECS. Service staff to wear clothing and footwear appropriate for child related work.
- ensure procedural fairness is followed in all processes
- maintain adequate documentation to support any professional decision making

### **5.2 Health and Safety**

Staff are required to:

- take reasonable care of their safety and health in the workplace
- take reasonable steps that their acts/omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others, including colleagues, children, parents/carers and members of the wider school community
- comply and cooperate with any reasonable instruction, policy or procedure
- ensure they report within 24hrs of any injury, incident, hazard or near miss to their direct line manager
- staff are prohibited to carry out their duties under the influence of alcohol, any illegal substance, or any drug which impairs work performance or poses a safety risk to themselves or others
- staff are prohibited to use tobacco, e-cigarettes or vape while at work and/or in the presence of children.

### **5.3 Integrity**

Staff are required to:

- not ignore work duties or waste time during working hours
- not take or seek to take improper advantage of any SCECS information or intellectual property gained in the course of employment
- not take improper advantage of their position to benefit themselves or others
- not allow personal political views/affiliations or other personal interests to influence or conflict with the performance of duties or exercise of responsibilities

### **5.4 Communications and reporting**

Staff are required to:

- report to Centre Director / Coordinator / ROO / or Manager any instance where they believe they, or anyone within their workplace, has breached SCECS policies, directions or guidelines, including this Code
- inform Centre Director / Coordinator / ROO / or Manager and make mandatory reports to the NSW Early Learning Commission, NSW Police, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) and/or the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) if you witness, suspect, or receive a disclosure from a child or parent regarding inappropriate discipline, including corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances.
- not make or publish inappropriate or disparaging public comments about SCECS, including on their personal social media, or make comments, including political commentary that could be perceived to be attributed to their role within SCECS
- use all forms of communication, including social media, responsibly and appropriately and in line with the Ethical Behaviour outlined in section 4 above.
- maintain confidentiality and privacy where required

## **6. BOUNDARIES BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND CHILDREN**

### **6.1 Required behaviours**

Staff are required to:

- promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children
- comply with their duty of care including ensuring adequate supervision of children at all times
- maintain professional relationships and ensure appropriate and respectful communication with children and parents, including outside the workplace and on SCECS social media platforms

- abide by the Australian Professional Standards and ECA Code of Conduct for Teachers for teacher-qualified staff
- inform their manager immediately if they are charged or convicted of a criminal offence, or have a reportable allegation made against them (as defined in the Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy)
- provide written notice to their manager if they receive a negative notice or if there is a change to the educator's accreditation or registration as a teacher within 72 hrs of the event or within 24 hrs of being aware. A negative notice includes being a disqualified person under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, is subject to an interim bar, has their application for a WWCC clearance refused, has their WWCC clearance cancelled
- inform their manager of any family or friendship relationships with children and ensure there is no conflict of interest involving family members of children of close friends
- abide by SCECS child protection policies and guidelines, including ensuring they fulfil their mandatory reporting obligations including reportable employee conduct, risk of significant harm notifications and any possible criminal activity involving children

All staff working with children are mandatory reporters and are required to report any relevant child protection allegations in accordance with the following SCECS Child protection policies:

- Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy: Responding to Complaints and Allegations
- Reportable Conduct Procedures: Responding to Complaints and Allegations

## 6.2 Prohibited behaviours

Staff must not:

- have a sexual relationship with a child
- verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear
- invite children to join their personal social networking sites or interact online in any form
- accept an invitation to join a child's personal social networking site or interact online in any form
- transport a child in their vehicle or arrange transportation of the child without prior authorisation from the parent/carer as specified in the enrolment record or in an emergency situation (in which case a second adult should accompany the staff member and the Manager should be notified as soon as possible thereafter)
- use sexual innuendo or inappropriate language with children including telling

adult jokes or discussing topics of a sexualised nature

- share inappropriate material with children either verbally or via technology platforms such as an iPad, mobile phone, social media etc
- give children gifts that are not in accordance with the services' general practices or that will lead them to think there is a special relationship with the staff member
- physically enter a child's personal space without an appropriate professional reason
- engage in any unwarranted or inappropriate physical contact with children including tickling, wrestling, prolonged or unnecessary hugging, massaging or physical closeness such as encouraging a child to sit on an educator's lap for an extended period
- engage in grooming behaviours including but not limited to favouritism, offering gifts or special privileges, encouraging emotional dependency or initiating private or secret communication with a child
- use corporal/physical punishment in any circumstances.
- develop or allow to develop a relationship with any child which could be interpreted as being personal rather than professional
- be alone with a child where there is no professional reason to do so. Staff should remain visible to others where possible
- use, take or share photographs/artwork/videos etc of children without prior authorisation from the parent/carer as specified in the enrolment record.
- cannot retain any images of children on personal devices.
- make personal comments or address students in an overly familiar way (e.g. pet names)
- engage in conversation with children on personal or intimate matters or share personal information, materials or belongings
- invite children to their home or attend a child's home without an appropriate professional reason and without the consent of the parents/carers and the Manager

It is acknowledged that in some instances, such as a staff member being close family friends with a child's parents or their child being close friends with a child at the service, some of the above behaviours may occur as a consequence of those relationships, not for a professional reason e.g. driving their own child and their friend to a private sporting competition on Saturday morning.

Where this is the case, a staff member may be exempt from some of the above restrictions. Given this, the staff member should disclose such relationships to their manager, so that they may be considered to see if an exemption applies.

## **7. BOUNDARIES BETWEEN WORK COLLEAGUES**

### **7.1 Required behaviours**

Staff are required to:

- Develop and maintain relationships based on mutual respect, equity and fairness
- Communicate effectively and respectfully with each other
- Contribute to a positive and calm space to ensure children are supported in feeling safe
- Adhere to ethical principles such as those outlined in Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics (2016)
- Have a strong commitment to their work, including punctuality, reliability and dedication to providing high quality education and care
- Take responsibility for their actions and decision
- Work together, sharing knowledge and skills to support the team and improve children's learning outcomes
- Engage in ongoing critical reflection on biases and actively minimise their impact on professional practice and relationships with colleagues
- Keep conversations work related and avoid gossiping
- Address work-related issues directly with the colleague if appropriate or through supervisors
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid physical contact with colleagues that may be considered inappropriate or unprofessional
- Declare any personal relationships and Inform the Centre
- Encourage a workplace culture that alleviates the risk of bullying and harassment of any kind including sexual harassment

### **7.2 Prohibited behaviours**

Staff must not:

- Undermine staff moral and the quality of children's education and care through unresolved conflict
- Engage in personal relationships with colleagues within the service where such relationships may compromise professional judgment, child safety or effective supervision
- In relation to other educators, ignore, overlook or fail to address and or report any child safety or child protection concerns in accordance with legislative and service requirements
- Single educators out, show favouritism and or exclude educators selectively
- Engage in harassing, discriminatory or bullying behaviour towards another person. This includes face to face, over the phone, via email,

instant messaging, mobile phone and social media whether at work or outside of work where it impacts the workplace

- In relation to other educators, ignore any behaviour that is witnessed which may constitute bullying, harassment or discrimination

## **8. Conflicts Of Interest**

The work of SCECS must not be compromised or affected by personal interest. A conflict of interest arises when a staff member is in a position to be influenced, or appear to be influenced, by private interests when doing their job.

A conflict of interest includes any circumstance, whether real, potential or perceived arising from a conflict between the performance of a staff member's professional duties with SCECS and their personal interests.

A conflict can arise where there is a reasonable expectation of a personal benefit, direct or indirect, for a staff member that could influence the performance of their duties. This benefit may be financial or non-financial.

### **8.1 How to behave and report situations of conflict of interest**

Staff members must take suitable measures to avoid, or appropriately deal with, any situation or relationship they may have where a conflict of interest could, directly or indirectly, compromise the performance of their duties.

This includes promptly reporting any conflict of interest (including potential or perceived) to their manager as soon as the staff member becomes aware of it. The conflict, and how it has been mitigated or eliminated, is to be recorded on the [Conflict of Interest & Gift/Benefits Register](#) located on the SCECS Intranet.

### **8.2 Questions to ask yourself to identify whether a conflict exists**

A staff member may ask themselves the following questions to assist in identifying whether a situation or relationship is potentially a conflict of interest:

- Do I have personal interests that may conflict, have the potential to conflict or could be perceived to conflict with, my position at SCECS?
- Could there be benefits for me now, or in the future, that could cast doubt on my objectivity in acting in the best interests of SCECS?
- How will my involvement in the decision or action be objectively viewed by others?
- Does my involvement appear fair and reasonable in all the circumstances?

If a staff member is working at a service in which their child is enrolled, the staff member and manager are to ensure appropriate practices are employed to mitigate any conflict including the staff member not working directly with their child, not being involved in any assessment, reward or benefit and not being involved in any management of discipline of their child.

Staff members with children at any SCECS service are to ensure any interactions

about their children are in the capacity as a parent only and through the appropriate parent channels.

Staff members are also to recuse themselves from any action/decision that may involve a family member. Furthermore, a family member cannot be engaged in the same service as a staff member without the written approval of the SCECS Head Office Manager.

## **9. GIFTS AND BENEFITS**

Receiving a gift or benefits can represent a conflict of interest, including giving rise to a perception of bias.

Staff members therefore must not solicit or accept gifts, benefits or hospitality which might reasonably be seen to, either directly or indirectly, compromise or influence their professional duties with SCECS. This could occur by creating a sense of obligation or undermining a staff member's impartiality.

Always consider the value and purpose of a gift or benefit before making any decision to accept it. Under no circumstances, should staff members solicit or accept money.

### **9.1 Examples of gifts and benefits and how they should be treated**

Gifts of a nominal value, or moderate acts of hospitality offered as a genuine thank you by a parent/carer or client, may be personally retained as long as they have not been solicited by the staff member or could be seen to have compromised or unduly influenced the staff member's professional duties with SCECS.

An example of an acceptable gift would be parents or students offering a small gift to an educator at the end of the school year. All gifts of a value greater than \$50 must be recorded in a register online and discussed with your manager prior to acceptance.

Gifts or hospitality offered as an inducement to purchase, provide information or treat someone favourably are not acceptable regardless of their monetary value and must be returned.

Examples of inducement include a parent/carer offering a gift or benefit that could be seen as attempting to obtain favourable treatment for a child or a recruitment agency offering theatre/sporting tickets for each temporary person employed.

If a staff member is unsure whether it is appropriate to accept a gift or benefit, they should seek advice from their Manager or contact SCECS Head Office.

## **10. SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT**

Staff members employed on a full-time basis must seek and obtain approval in

writing from the SCECS Executive prior to engaging in any secondary employment or business activity, including employment with a family company. Approval must be obtained annually and a record maintained by SCECS.

Part-time and casual staff members must inform their Manager of secondary employment and also seek approval in writing from SCECS. This is required if the employment may result in actual or perceived conflicts of interest that could adversely impact on the staff member's ability to perform their duties with SCECS including work health and safety concerns, or where the secondary employment may affect SCECS' intellectual property, financial position, services, clients or standing in the community. This would include working in another SCECS or non-SCECS service.

Employment by families, for e.g. babysitting, tutoring will not be approved where it involves children from the service where the employee works.

Approval for secondary employment is still required when staff members are on leave, including periods of leave without pay.

## **11. MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES**

Staff members must use SCECS' resources economically and ethically. Such resources include money, credit, facilities, equipment (e.g. phones, computers, ipads), vehicles, services (e.g. internet) and any other property which is owned or is the responsibility of SCECS. Staff members also have a duty to ensure SCECS' resources are used only for their intended purpose, are well maintained and secured against theft or misuse.

Staff members are fully accountable for the use of SCECS work time and resources. Staff members must not use SCECS work time or resources for an outside interest, secondary employment or personal gain, such examples include the development of a new commercial idea, writing a book or university assignments. Personal devices such a phone must not be used during work time.

Limited private use of SCECS' resources may be permitted in some cases, however, this should be short, infrequent and should not interfere with the staff member's work.

Staff members have a duty to report to SCECS any improper use, waste or abuse of resources.

## **12. REPORTING ILLEGAL OR IMPROPER CONDUCT**

Staff members have a duty to report to SCECS any illegal or improper conduct including child abuse and pornography, corrupt or fraudulent conduct or inadequate administration or accountability. Staff members who make such reports in good faith are entitled to seek support and protection when making such disclosures and to be notified of the action taken in relation to the disclosure.

In the first instance, reports can be made to your Manager or Supervisor. If a staff member is concerned that they may suffer reprisal or detrimental treatment as a

result of making a disclosure, they may make a disclosure in a safe and confidential environment in accordance with [SCECS Whistleblower Policy](#).

### **13. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Staff members must not divulge, either during employment or after, any confidential or personal information gained as a staff member of SCECS and only use such information for its intended work- related purpose.

### **14. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND COPYRIGHT**

Staff members must respect SCECS intellectual property. Anything developed or created, either alone or in collaboration with colleagues while employed at SCECS, remains the intellectual property of SCECS.

All research for external purposes, e.g. personal benefit, study, university research requests, must be approved through the SCECS Research Policy process.

Staff members must also ensure they comply with copyright legislation and regulations.

### **15. REFERENCES AND TESTIMONIALS**

SCECS only provides written Statements of Service and does not permit references to be provided on behalf of the organisation. Requests to staff members for verbal or written reference may therefore only be provided in an individual's personal capacity, and consequently must not be made on SCECS or service letterhead or email.

Staff approached by external organisations to give a testimonial, in their capacity as an employee of SCECS, on a product or service, are to seek the approval of their Manager prior to providing the testimonial.

- **Consequences of a Breach of the Code of Conduct**

A staff member holds a position of trust and is accountable for his/her actions. Consequences of inappropriate behaviour and breaches of the code are described in various legislation, policies, procedures and standards applicable to the organisation. Relevant SCECS policies, procedures and standards are available on the SCECS intranet.

If an employee's actions are found to be inappropriate, unethical or appear to breach the standards of the code of conduct, his/her manager has a responsibility to address any possible breach as soon as he/she becomes aware of it. This may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **16. FURTHER INFORMATION**

If you are unsure of any aspect of the Code or wish to report a possible breach, consult your Manager, or for more information contact the SCECS Head office team on (02) 9568 8628 or [scecs@syd.catholic.edu.au](mailto:scecs@syd.catholic.edu.au)

## Supporting Documents

- SCECS Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- SCECS Child Safe Code of Conduct
- A guide to the Child safe Standards – Office of the Children’s Guardian
- SCECS Values, Priorities, Vision and Purpose
- SCECS Conflict of Interest Register
- Enrolment of SCECS Staff children in a service
- SCECS Whistleblower Policy

## 17. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every two years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled in the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family’s ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

The authorisation and amendment history for this document must be listed in the following table:

|   | Authorised by    | Effective Date | Sections modified                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | SCECS Management | JAN20          | New policy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2 | SCECS Management | FEB26          | Details about expected and prohibited work colleague behaviours added<br>Staff will provide written notice to their manager if they receive a negative notice or if there is a change to the educator’s accreditation or registration as a teacher within 72 hrs of the event or within 24 hrs of being aware. |
| 3 | COO              | AUG26          | References to listed policies updated.<br>Online interactions between staff and children are prohibited in any form.                                                                                                                                                                                           |