



## Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

The Mission of the College is to nurture the personal, spiritual and academic growth of each individual in this community in an atmosphere of FAITH, CARE, SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT. As a living commitment to the ethos of the College Mission Statement, the following Bullying and Harassment Policy was developed.

### COMMITMENT OF THE COLLEGE

Catholic Regional College Melton is committed to the provision of a safe environment for all who participate in any school activity. This is achieved by developing a non-threatening, supportive and co-operative environment with an emphasis on dispute resolution and conflict management as the primary means of dealing with instances of bullying. Bullying in any form, whether by staff or students, will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment (as defined below) is totally unacceptable at Catholic Regional College Melton. Our Mission Statement clearly emphasises our commitment to self-esteem and personal worth.

"Sexual harassment in a school means that people will be offended, self-esteem and morale will be undermined and work effectiveness and learning ability will be impeded. Students and staff should not have to work in such an environment." (Ministry of Education and Training, 1985)

It is recognised that sexual harassment may be experienced by either sex, but that the majority of those subjected to it are female. Sexual harassment communicates to people that they are seen as a sexual object. They are denied the personal respect, which is their right to expect from others. Sexual harassment is personally offensive, promotes feelings of powerlessness and has a negative effect on the working environment of the school.

Strategies for the prevention of sexual harassment are an integral part of the curriculum at Catholic Regional College, Melton. The policy supports the ministerial document "National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–1997" and the two Acts of Parliament which cover sexual harassment.

These are: The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1984.  
The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1986.

We believe in promoting positive relationships between staff, students and

parents.

All members of the College community are responsible for promoting a safe and caring environment, and to model appropriate behaviour. It is part of our 'duty of care.'

## BULLYING

### Definitions

(a) Bullying can be "repeated intimidation, over time, of a physical, verbal or psychological nature of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons."

*Rigby & Slee*

or

(b) Bullying can be a deliberate attempt to make someone else feel bad about themselves, using either word, gesture, exclusion, sexual, physical or other means.

or

(c) Bullying can be "the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone."

*Tattum & Berbert*

Some examples of these categories of bullying are:

### Verbal/Written

- Name calling, taunting, disparaging comments or asides (within earshot of a person), insults, rumours, rude notes, drawings, degrading comments aimed at family members.
- Having comments made about your family, your country of birth or religion.
- Threatening words or actions.
- Constant unwanted attention.
- This may be in the form of written, verbal or electronic communication, including mobile phones or the Internet.

### Cyberbullying

- Cyberbullying is repeated behaviour which uses e-technology (internet, Email, personal websites, chatrooms, social networking such as Facebook, video uploading site such as Youtube, blogs, wikis, SMS, MSN, forums, webcams and phones) as a means of threatening, frightening or hurting others, which reflect a lack of respect in the way a person is threatened.

### Exclusion

- Leaving students out of group activities either in the playground or in the classroom, encouraging others not to speak to someone (using the 'silent treatment').

### Gesture

- Hand signals, sneering, insulting looks ('greasies'), offensive full body gestures, staring someone down.
- The use of innuendo.

### Sexual

- Inappropriate touching or brushing up against another in a sexual manner, invading another's personal space even when he/she has asked them to stop, drawings of, or writing about, someone's body, using rude names or commenting about someone's morals or perceived sexual preferences/habits.
- Comments about the way you look.
- For a more detailed explanation refer to Appendix One.

#### Physical

- Pushing/shoving, damaging another person's property, hitting, kicking, punching, throwing/flicking objects, chesting.
- Forcing to give money or belongings to someone without wanting to.
- Placing undue pressure on an individual whilst lining up at the Canteen.

### DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGARD TO MANAGING BULLYING

#### STAFF

Teaching staff are best placed to create a safe and supportive environment for students in classes and at homeroom times. Our classroom management plans and other policies reflect the values of care and respect for others.

Staff will be vigilant to the possibility of bullying situations and watch for any signs of distress in students. School buildings, particularly locker areas, toilets, canteen, walkways and play areas, are actively supervised. Staff should arrive promptly to class so as to minimise opportunities for bullying to occur.

Staff will take action according to designated procedures if incidents of bullying are witnessed and/or reported.

Students who experience bullying will be believed, protected and supported. Action will be taken with the student who has been bullied, the student/s who is/are bullying and, where appropriate, parents will be involved.

#### Proactive and reactive approach

The College will respond to all incidents of bullying when an incident has taken place. However, the College must try to encourage an environment in which bullying does not occur. A positive, proactive approach to minimising bullying is part of the College's philosophy.

The proactive procedure adopted by this College will attempt to:

1. Develop a safe environment for the College community.
2. Inform staff and students about how to recognise bullying behaviour. This may take place at a staff meeting or professional development sessions.
3. Educate staff and students to manage bullying behaviour (e.g. Beating Bullies by Andrew Fuller). This is to be conducted annually at a staff meeting, or at assemblies and extended homeroom for students.
4. Develop and maintain a commitment to conflict management and dispute resolution across the College.
5. Inform the broader College community (parents, parish primary schools) of the College policy on bullying.

The reactive procedure by the College will:

1. Provide a system of reporting and recording incidents of bullying.

2. Have in place response mechanisms which provide prompt support for the victims and perpetrators.
3. Where the incident involves a student, inform the student's parents of the incident in an appropriate manner.
4. Involve outside specialist support where needed.

#### General principles for reporting

All bullying incidents will be treated seriously and appropriately.

Reports of bullying incidents will be officially recorded. This will:

1. Help the College monitor and evaluate the incidence of bullying behaviour.
2. Ensure that records of an individual's experiences are available for future reference.
3. Show that the College policies deal with the issue and appropriate procedures are in place if a negligence action is brought against the College.

Our records will include facts such as when, where and how the bullying incident happened, as well as statements about the reactions and feelings of the participants.

Evidence or suspicions of serious cases of long-term bullying will lead to the involvement of specialist personnel, either within or external to the College.

#### STUDENTS

The College believes that every student has the right to feel safe at school and not accept bullying.

A student who is bullied will be supported and protected by the College. It is important that the student keeps designated staff aware of any negative behaviour directed to him/her. Counselling will be offered to assist the student to use strategies to face the bullying and not take on its hurtfulness.

A student who has bullied another student needs clear messages from the College that this behaviour is unacceptable and that there are consequences. Strategies to use may include mediation between students concerned using a "method of shared concern", contracts, counselling in social skills, anger/aggression management, peer group influence, involvement of parents, referral to an outside agency and ultimately, established disciplinary sanctions.

All students will be encouraged to identify bullying as unacceptable, to be confident to speak up against it and to practise strategies for handling the situation for themselves or if others are being bullied.

#### Student Strategies

- Before classes begin, at recess and lunchtime, students who have concerns about their safety, should stay near teachers who are on duty or in areas which are easily monitored by staff.
- Students should stay with other friendly students during recess and lunchtime.
- If a student is bullied, the College recommends one or more of the following:
  - a. In the first instance, the student should attempt to handle the situation him or herself.
  - b. If the bullying continues, students should tell another personnel, i.e. Homeroom Teacher, Year Level Co-ordinator, College Counsellor or Deputy Principal.

- c. It is highly recommended that students confide in their parents if they are being bullied.
- d. Students should speak out against all forms of bullying.

## **PROCEDURES AND SANCTIONS**

### **1. Observation of an incident/or information given to a staff member.**

- a. Any staff member who observes or witnesses a real or perceived incident of bullying needs to act immediately and intervene to ensure the safety of the individual involved.
- b. In the first instance, the student or person reporting the incident is to be believed and the report treated as legitimate, until proven otherwise.
- c. If the incident is perceived to be minor in nature then the incident is to be dealt with on the spot, however a written account must be forwarded to the Year Level Co-ordinator as soon as possible. This information is to be recorded on the proforma entitled Bullying Report Form.
- d. Staff must advise the bullies that the behaviour is inappropriate and not accepted by the College and that the incident will be reported.

### **2. Handling a complaint:**

Student/Student

The staff member recording a complaint should establish:

1. What was said and/or done to the complainant(s),
2. The time and place the incident(s) occurred,
3. The reaction (if any) of the complainant(s),
4. Whether this is the first time the complainant has experienced bullying behaviour and, if so, whether the same person or group was involved,
5. Whether there were any witnesses to the incident(s).

This information is to be recorded on the Behavioural Management System. This information will be kept as a record of the complaint.

Once completed this form is to be given to the Year Level Co-ordinator. Once the basis of the complaint is established, the next steps in the investigation by the Year Level Co-ordinator/Counsellor/Deputy Principal are to:

1. Record any statements from any witnesses,
2. Notify the alleged bully of the complaint (and the alleged bully's parents if he/she is a student),
3. Hear both sides fairly,
4. Determine whether the complainant knows of anyone else experiencing the same treatment,
5. Determine punishments and further actions in relation to the complaint.

Further steps the College needs to take are to:

1. Monitor the situation on an ongoing basis,
2. Attempt to prevent retaliation,
3. Provide counselling and support for both the victim and the bully.

A bullying incident involving staff, whether between staff and students or staff only, presents a more difficult situation. Any investigation should be fair to all the

parties involved.

Staff/Student or Staff/Staff

1. The complainant is encouraged to report their concerns to either the Principal or member of the Leadership Team.
2. The Principal or Deputy Principals will discuss the details of the grievance with the complainant and with the other parties, as deemed necessary.
3. Where possible, the aim will be to reach a satisfactory resolution through mediation.
4. Recommendations for future actions/behaviours will be made and, if necessary, sanctioned by the Principal or his/her representative.

### **3. Further action – The Bully(ies)**

Further action may constitute any or a combination of the following:

- Reiteration of the fact that bullying will not be tolerated and is not accepted by the College.
- Referral to the College Counsellor.
- Provision of the opportunity for mediation to be overseen by the College Counsellor, Year Level Co-ordinator or the Homeroom Teacher (depending on the seriousness of the incident).
- A verbal warning.
- A penalty that is congruent with the Student Welfare and Discipline Policy of the College.
- Involvement of the Police in the case of a serious physical and/or sexual assault.

### **4. Further action – The Student(s) bullied**

- Offer support by giving the student the opportunity to de-brief.
- Reassure the student of the College's position that bullying is always unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Offer the support of the College Counsellor.
- Offer to mediate a session with the other party.
- Inform the Homeroom Teachers (and subject teachers when necessary) of the incident so support can be given and the situation monitored.
- A review of the situation to take place after an agreed period of time.
- Contact made with the parents to inform them of the actions being taken by the College.

## **PARENTS**

The parents of students who have been bullied and those who bully may be involved in action taken by the College. Parents must be aware that there are a number of options at their disposal when they suspect that their child is being bullied or is bullying.

- Take an active interest in what their child and their child's friendship group is doing at the College.
- Contact the College if there is any suspicion of their child being bullied.
- Be aware of any signs that their child may be experiencing problems with bullying. Some examples may include:
  - a. Unwillingness to attend school

- b. Headaches
  - c. Upset stomachs
  - d. Unexplained crying
  - e. Withdrawal from regular activities
  - f. Excessive agitation
  - g. Unexplained bruising and/or injury
  - h. Damaged property and/or clothing
  - i. Missing equipment
  - j. Excessive time spent on Internet chat rooms.
- Parents will be able to help more by listening to their child's fears and feelings, and re-assuring them of their self-worth.

If the parents believe that their child is the bully, they have a number of options in dealing with this situation:

- They can access any available help from the College.
- Reinforce values of honesty, tolerance and the difference between right and wrong.
- Listen to their opinions and explanations as to why they behave in this manner.
- Allow them the opportunity to explain their behaviour.
- Discuss ways of avoiding bullying types of behaviour.
- Explain that the College does not tolerate bullying. Their education is important and must not be jeopardised by behaving in an unacceptable manner.
- Seek to remain calm and look for positive solutions to the problem.
- Ensure child's computer use is supervised, i.e. in a common area, not a child's bedroom and not excessive.

Parents are asked to accept the College Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying.

## Appendix One

### 1. DEFINITIONS

#### Gender Based Harassment

Gender based harassment is the unwanted imposition of behaviour that is based on sex stereotyping. It often goes unrecognised, is trivialised and is seen as teasing. It does not have to be explicitly sexual. It is, however, always based on unequal power and it happens whenever a person is made to feel embarrassed, frightened, hurt, angry or uncomfortable because of a comment or an action which was in some way related to being male or female.

#### Sex Stereotyping

Is the unreasonable assumption that certain attributes are characteristic of a certain sex.

#### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which is unwelcome and offensive. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments or common courtesies. There are various forms of sexual

harassment. None is acceptable and none is too trivial to warrant complaint. All complaints of sexual harassment will be investigated as valid complaints. There are three basic categories of Sexual Harassment – SUBTLE, EXPLICIT and CRIMINAL ACTION.

#### 1.1 Subtle (Not always obvious)

Subtle forms of sexual harassment tend to be the most common. They include:

- Leering, peering.
- Sexual comments about a person's body or dress.
- Smutty comments or jokes.
- Questions about another's sexual activity.
- Persistent comments about a person's private life.
- Physical contact, e.g. purposefully brushing up against another's body.
- Belittling (degrading) comments based on sex-role stereotyping.

#### 1.2 Explicit (Obvious)

Explicit forms are easier to identify as they often involve overtly offensive or intimidating behaviour. They include:

- Pinching, patting, touching, embracing, grabbing.
- Repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal.
- Smutty jokes and comments.
- Sexually provocative remarks.
- Displays of sexually graphic material (pornography).
- Offensive gestures.

#### 1.3 Criminal Action

Criminal action covers:

- Indecent exposure.
- Sexual assault.
- Attempted sexual assault.
- Sending obscene letters or making obscene phone calls.

### 2. AIMS OF THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

- To raise awareness in the school community of all issues relating to sexual or gender harassment.
- To ensure strategies for the prevention of sexual harassment.
- To follow up all reports of sexual harassment according to the given guidelines.
- To provide a support framework for the victims of sexual harassment.
- To promote equality of gender and remove all forms of sexual harassment from the Catholic Regional College Melton community.
- To provide strategies to students to deal with sexual harassment.

### 3. SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

All parties involved in sexual harassment should be referred to one of the Student Counsellors and appropriate counselling and/or action is to be offered. A support group including Year Level Co-ordinator, Homeroom Teacher or a



Teacher nominated by the student is to be created.

## **. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

### **Student to Student or Student to Staff**

4.1 For subtle cases of sexual harassment. The following procedures will occur:

- The victim will inform a teacher.
- The teacher will deal with the situation immediately and record the incident in the homeroom book.
- For such an incident a Level 1 Demerit may be appropriate.
- It is hoped that the victim would reply in a confidential and assertive manner. These strategies will be part of a sexual harassment program.

4.2 For explicit cases and repeated subtle cases of sexual harassment the following procedures will occur:

- The teacher will deal with the situation immediately. In some cases, the complainant(s) and respondent(s) may be sent to the Co-ordinator's or Deputy Principal's office.
- The teacher will write a report of the incident which will be given to the Year Level Co-ordinator which will be placed in the student's file.
- The student(s) will be interviewed by the Co-ordinator and a process for resolution will be established.
- The parents will be notified of the incident.
- A worded letter will be ready to fill in and send home.
- A report of the alleged incident will be kept by the Year Level Co-ordinator in the student's file and recorded on SIMON Student Profile - Student notes
- An appropriate action be taken - Level 2 or 3.

4.3 For extreme explicit cases or criminal cases. In the event of such cases the following procedures will occur:

- The offending student will be removed from class until parents attend an interview.
- An interview will take place with the student, parent or guardian, the Principal or Deputy Principal, the Year Level Co-ordinator, the Student Welfare Co-ordinator and an appropriate course of action recommended.
- In cases of PHYSICAL ASSAULT of a sexual nature, the involvement of the police is mandatory.

#### *Staff to Student*

- Student should make immediate contact with the Year Level Co-ordinator.
- The Principal will be informed.
- The Principal will take the appropriate action in line with the seriousness of the situation.

#### *Staff to Staff*

- The staff member should make immediate contact with another member of staff.

- The Principal will be informed.
- The Principal will take the appropriate action in line with the seriousness of the situation.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

### **Raising Awareness**

- The Catholic Regional College, Melton Sexual Harassment Policy is to be explained to all Staff and Students at the beginning of the year.
- The Year Level Co-ordinator, Homeroom Teachers and an additional number of supporting staff members will be responsible for the organisation of this.
- The Sexual Harassment Policy is to be put on the agenda for explanation and discussion at the general staff meeting on a non student day at the beginning of each year. A summary of the sexual harassment policy is to be placed in the staff handbook and the student diary.
- Copies of the policy should be available to all parents.
- Promotion of the sexual harassment policy is to be incorporated into the transition and information night programs. The Year Level Co-ordinators, Homeroom teachers and an additional number of supporting staff members will be responsible for the organisation of this.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT AS PART OF THE CURRICULUM**

- All teachers at Catholic Regional College, Melton will consistently adhere to the sexual harassment guidelines.
- A program on sexual harassment and strategies to use in sexual harassment cases will be developed for all year levels. These will be conducted in extended homeroom sessions.
- Where appropriate the issue of sexual harassment should be included as part of course development eg: Religious Education "A Sense of Fairness"

### **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed throughout the year by students and staff.