
Code of Ethics

**Principles to guide family
peace building work of
religious and community
leaders**



Developed by Brisbane community leaders and agencies - 2020

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This is a 'living document' which can be improved over time.

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VALUES

Cultural Respect - First Peoples

1. I acknowledge the first peoples of the land where I live and work.
2. I hear and respect the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as spoken through the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* which called for *Makaratta* - the coming together after a struggle, and an agreement for a fair and truthful relationship that will bring a better future.
3. I acknowledge First Peoples wisdom and accept that coming together and agreeing on fair and truthful relationships is at the heart of peace building.
4. I pledge to seek deeper awareness of and connection to First Peoples to help build peace and community in this country.

Cultural Strength

5. I acknowledge there is wisdom and strength in all cultures and religions, and that each has much to give and teach, and to learn.
6. I acknowledge that culture, family and religion are at the foundation of society and create deep bonds within communities.
7. I offer respect to all religious traditions. I accept that people in Australia are free to choose any, or no religion. I will respect people whatever their religious faith.
8. I acknowledge that peace-building work is more effective if we know and connect to people's cultural background, as it gives deeper understanding of each other and the situation.
9. I value the knowledge and experience there is within community and will seek to work wisely and respectfully with that so as to promote peace building.
10. I will dialogue in the first language of community members where possible, as it can enable deeper understanding .
11. I will work with community to respond to peace building issues in ways that work together with cultural structures and obligations, so long as they support equal healthy relationships.

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12. I am aware there may be some negative cultural traditions or distortions of religious teachings that do not promote safe, equal, healthy relationships. I will analyse these deeply and only support cultural views that respect each persons equal rights to live in freedom and dignity.
 13. I acknowledge that many people carry with them conflict and trauma from overseas, and need support to help them heal and integrate.
 14. I am aware that people make culture and can change culture, and that change can happen.

Equality

15. I support equal human rights. I acknowledge every person should be given equal dignity and respect because we are human.
16. I acknowledge and accept Australia's human rights laws which aim to give all people equal opportunity regardless of characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexuality, disability.
17. I will be tolerant and accepting of difference, while remaining true to the core ethical values in this Code.

Safety

18. I will always prioritise and support the safety of people and especially of those that are most vulnerable.

Confidentiality

19. I will inform community members that information they confide in me will be kept confidential unless they consent to having it passed on, or if a court requires it, or where there's a need to prevent a threat to someone's life or health, or where there is a risk of child abuse. These are common professional standards of confidentiality.
20. There is no time limit on confidentiality. If I have gained confidential information in my work as a community leader then it will stay confidential into the future unless all affected parties give full informed consent for me to reveal.
21. If I am passing my leadership to another I will maintain confidentiality of private information that community members have passed on to me. As part of handing over I would give an incoming leader a general overview of community issues but will not pass on confidential information unless I have the parties consent.

Positive Change

- 22. I will not undermine others, and will always seek and work towards positive change in people and towards building their self-worth and realisation that 'change starts within me'.
- 23. I understand that Peace Building and violence prevention requires action across all sectors of society - individuals, peers, families, communities, services, media and policies, and that these all affect each other.

Integrity

- 24. I will be true to the values and principles in this Code. I will not hold myself out as a community leader if I do not follow these principles in my own life.

ROLES

Gaining Trust

- 25. I acknowledge that a leader must be trusted by the community to be an effective peace builder.
- 26. I will build trust with the community by showing them my honesty, commitment and knowledge. If that trust is not there then I will try to refer them to other leaders or support people whom they trust.
- 27. I understand that the community expects a leader to be someone who is: honest and respectful; a good listener and communicator; who follows clear, fair processes; keeps confidentiality; and supports people in the community towards safely and respectfully working through their issues.
- 28. I will be a good clear communicator and have a fair engagement process which is known to the community and which supports safe and respectful peace building.
- 29. Through deep listening, reflection and patience I will seek to understand the source of the conflict and the possible alternatives. I will encourage people to make their own decisions about dealing with disputes safely.

Independence

- 30. I will be impartial and not let my personal biases stop a fair process and fair outcome in a community disputes.

31. In a dispute I will be independent and not take sides - unless there is actual or possible abuse and violence, including threatening or dominating behaviour. In that case I will prioritise, and make it clear I will support those who are most at risk of abuse and harm. Where there is a real risk I will refer parties to relevant services. I will still seek to maintain a respectful relationship with all parties so as to explore their story and keep open a chance to promote positive change.

Voluntary

32. I understand the role of a community leader when outside of their normal employment is voluntary, and I will not seek nor accept any payment from community members for work done in my role as voluntary community leader.

BOUNDARIES

Personal development

33. I acknowledge there are complex and high demands on leaders to help build community peace. I acknowledge that I, like all of us, have vulnerabilities and make mistakes and should always be open to learning.

34. I commit to ongoing learning and training as a community leader to enhance my peace-building work.

Capacity and Referral

35. I will be available as a point of contact for community when there are disputes, but will practice self-care to ensure my good health and ability to honour my responsibilities to family and other work. This means I will make clear to the community that there may be times I will not be available because my personal and family commitments must take priority.

36. I will advise community members if I do not have the capacity to adequately deal with a matter and will refer them to other trusted supports or services.

37. When referring, I will seek services that are most 'culturally safe' - this means as a minimum that the services are aware that cultural and religious practices may be different, that they treat each person as an individual with dignity and respect, that they use interpreters where necessary, and that they seek to integrate into their client work the cultural bonds that support community members.

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38. In the family violence area I will make myself familiar with clear referral pathways to police, specialist family violence services, men's behaviour change programs, alcohol and other drug services.
39. I will refer people to lawyers or registered migration agents when they need legal advice. I understand Legal Aid and Community Legal Centres can give initial free advice or referral in most cases.

Conflict of interests

40. I will not become part of the conflict. In my community work if there is ever a perceived or actual conflict between my own personal interests and that of the community, I will disclose this to all parties and will not be involved in the matter unless all parties fully consent.

Duty of care

41. I understand that if I hold myself out as a community leader and people rely on me then I have a legal 'duty of care' to minimise risks. This would include helping people understand their level of risk and options for safety, and also helping with effective referral such as to police and other specialist services.

FAMILY PEACE BUILDING

Family is core

42. I acknowledge family is at the basis of community and society, and that marriage and intimate partner relationships are a deep bond, and that children are treasured in all cultures.
43. I will support families to try to resolve their dispute if I am requested, and help them stay together, if they want, unless there is actual or possible violence. I will not encourage partners and children to stay in a family if their safety is at risk.

Understanding violence

44. I will make clear to the community that I am against violence and abuse in all forms, and that includes emotional, psychological and other forms of abusive control.
45. I recognise that in family violence cases those at highest risk will mostly be women and children.
46. I recognise that exposing children to violence is a form of abuse.

47. I understand that rigid gender roles which see men as dominant and in control of women, is one of the most significant factors that drives family violence.

Safety

48. If I suspect there is actual or real risk of violence in the family I will refer those most at risk to specialist services or the police. I understand in the case of violence against women that some of the most critical high risk factors are where there is evidence of either; threats to kill, strangulation, stalking, isolating or disregard of the law by the male partner.

49. I will speak up for safety and gender equality where men in my community show an attitude that supports male superiority or violence, and I will seek to promote alternate, healthier attitudes and behaviours.

50. If a woman who is at risk is reluctant to access domestic violence services, I will encourage at least a safety plan which would include matters such as: Plan who to call, where to go, what to take; Store safety contacts in phone under secret names; Check in daily with someone; Get neighbours to listen out; Alert police so they know to check.

Engaging with perpetrators of family violence

51. When engaging with known or suspected perpetrators of family violence I will:

- keep safety of victim-survivors at the very forefront and ensure police and family violence services are involved where there is risk of harm in the family
- carefully guard against being seen by the perpetrator as colluding or agreeing to their violence.

52. A person is accountable for their own violent behaviour. I will encourage reflection about the abusive behaviour but won't support attempts by a perpetrator to minimise, blame-shift or justify violence.

53. Where possible, if I have a relationship of trust with the perpetrator, I will:

- provide a respectful, safe and supportive space for the perpetrator to explore stopping violence
- explore positive values the perpetrator has and encourage the perpetrator to produce their own non-abusive solution
- aim for positive exchange by inquiring about what future the abuser wants and how they can get there
- encourage a view that power within oneself and self-control is a more powerful feeling than power over someone
- always have safety of victim survivors at the forefront.

REITERATION

54. I will be true to the values and principles in this Code and will seek in lawful and respectful ways to the best of my ability to support peace building in my community.

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Developed in partnership

Brisbane community and religious leaders

Refugee and Immigration Legal Service

Multicultural Australia

South Community Hub

Dispute Resolution Centre, Dept Justice and attorney General.

Key supporting agencies:

DV Connect

Immigrant Women's Support Service

Islamic Women's Association of Australia