

# Occupational Violence and Aggression Prevention in Queensland Catholic Schools



## Position Statement

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### Introduction

Queensland Catholic schools are committed to preventing occupational violence and aggression (OVA) in the workplace. School communities do not condone violence and aggression in any form. The social doctrine of the Church teaches us that violence is not an acceptable solution to any problem, it is unworthy of any human being, and it “destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity of life, the freedom of human beings.”<sup>1</sup>

### Definition

OVA encompasses a broad range of actions, incidents or behaviours including coercive behaviours that are outside of reasonable conduct and occurring in circumstances relating to work<sup>23</sup>. Incidents of OVA can result in the individual being abused, threatened or assaulted and may be experienced as isolated or repeated events occurring in-person or using other forms of communication. Specific examples of violence include biting, grabbing, damaging property, threats to use a weapon and sexual assault. Examples of aggression include verbal abuse or threats, intimidation, swearing, jeering and hitting items<sup>4</sup>.

### Rationale

The prevention of OVA in Queensland Catholic schools is founded in an understanding that “violence committed against even one human being is violence against all”<sup>5</sup>. All forms of violence and aggression, inclusive of that incurred in the occupational setting have the capacity to unduly influence the short- and long-term physical and mental health of the victim and any witnesses<sup>6</sup>. Incidences

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<sup>1</sup> [Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace. \(2006\). Compendium of the social doctrine of the church #496. Burns & Oates.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Safe Work Australia. \(2021\). Preventing workplace violence and aggression: National guidance material.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Queensland Government. \(2021a\). Occupational violence prevention procedure.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. Prevention and management of work-related violence and aggression in health services.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Pope Benedict : Solidarity With the Jewish People - Europe - International - News - Catholic Online](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Safework Australia. Workplace violence and aggression – advice for workers.](#)

specific to schools have the capacity to impact on staff self-worth, job satisfaction, and performance<sup>7</sup>. Catholic schools prioritise the importance of forming and maintaining positive and restorative relationships and recognize that it would be “unrealistic not to expect conflicts; misunderstandings will arise and they must be faced. Despite such difficulties, it is in community life that we are called to grow in mercy, forbearance and perfect charity”.<sup>8</sup>

### Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) acknowledges the principle that “workers and other persons should be given the highest level of protection against harm to their health, safety and welfare from hazards and risks arising from work as is reasonably practicable.”<sup>9</sup> QCEC advocates that Catholic School Authorities commit to:

- Creating and maintaining a workplace that seeks to prevent OVA by attending to matters of governance, prevention, training, response, reporting and investigation<sup>10</sup>.
- Specifically targeting key intervention areas that include managing risk<sup>11</sup>, promoting wellbeing<sup>12</sup>, strengthening school communities and raising the status of education staff.<sup>13</sup>
- An understanding that “Workplaces can play an important role in preventing and responding to family and domestic violence by providing a safe working environment for all workers.”<sup>14</sup>

### Implications

Catholic School Authorities will give consideration to:

- Ensuring staff are supported with adequate skills to recognize and respond to increased conflict; provided with training in the prevention, handling and reporting of OVA; supported following any exposure to OVA.
- Ensuring school communities are aware of behavioural expectations and protocols for managing concerns.
- Ensuring schools strive towards a safe work environment, supported by appropriate facilities, regular training in workplace health and safety protocols and an acceptance of incident reporting<sup>15</sup> inclusive of reporting to police where appropriate.

### Related Legislation

[Education \(General Provisions Act\) 2006](#)

[Human Rights Act 2019](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(QLD\)](#)

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<sup>77</sup> [Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership. \(2020\). National strategy to address the abuse of teachers, schools leaders and other staff.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Pope Francis \(2014\). Meeting with the religious communities of Korea: Training Centre “School of Love”.](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Australian Government \(2011\). Workplace Health and Safety Act. Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Victorian Government \(2017\). Framework for preventing and managing occupational violence and aggression.](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland \(2020\). Managing risk.](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland \(2020\). Health and wellbeing.](#)

<sup>13</sup> [National Strategy to Address the Abuse of Teachers, School Leaders and Other Staff](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Safework Australia \(2021\). Family and domestic violence at the workplace - Information sheet.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Queensland Government. \(2021b\). Occupational violence and aggression prevention strategy 2021-2023.](#)

**Next review: 17 May 2027**