

3.2 | SVD POLICY on the Use of Social Media

What is included in this policy?

This policy includes (but is not limited to) media devices capable of recording and/or sending visual images and audio messages, such as still and video cameras, landline phones, mobile phones and other communicating devices. It also includes photography, dissemination of photos and video clips uploaded to media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., and any inter-personal means of communication including text and voice messaging via carrier services such as e-mail and mobile phones using applications ('apps') such as Whatsapp, Messenger, etc.

To whom does this policy apply?

This policy applies to all members of the Divine Word Missionaries in the Australia Province whether in active ministry or retired, to our employees, and to those who associate with us in our ministries and activities. It applies to students in formation, to SVD overseas visitors whether staying in one of our communities or living externally, and to those who are permanently or temporarily resident in our houses and communities.

3.2.1 Photography and the capture of still and moving images.

The Province requires that province members exercise politeness and discretion in the use of still and video cameras. The permission of persons to be photographed or video captured must always be sought before the event takes place. The participants must be advised of the use to which the images will be put, e.g. to be uploaded to Facebook or a media platform, to be published on a website or be used in a printed publication, etc. If any person does not wish to be photographed or captured on video, then this wish must be respected.

3.2.2 Uploading of images to the web and platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Discretion must be employed when sending or uploading any image, still or moving, to a web address, e-mail address or media platform. Further, the images must not be of a compromising or intimate nature involving sexual innuendo or suggestiveness. The civil laws and guidelines of the States or Territories where the owner of the image resides, in respect to the nature and use of photographs and images, of personal privacy and its conditions and violations, must be carefully adhered to.

3.2.3 Photography of children and vulnerable persons.

Use extra discretion when photographing children and vulnerable persons. The permission of accompanying adults or guardians must always be obtained before children or vulnerable persons are photographed. Children should be photographed in groups, with adults included in the group, and always in the context of an activity of the Society, e.g. a day of celebration organized by the Society, or to which members of the Society have been invited, e.g. a parish event. Children must not be depicted in a compromising position with other children or with an adult or member of the Society: for example, holding a child as only a parent would, touching a child in an inappropriate place, etc.

- **3.2.3.1** Members need to be aware that considerable cultural differences with respect to relating to children exist between Australia and the member's country of origin. What may be culturally normal and acceptable in one's home country may actually constitute an offense under the law in Australia. As a guide, watch what others are doing, and if in doubt, ask.

For a fuller understanding of the Best Practice guidelines for photographing children, and for keeping safe on line, go to the following websites:

* Australian Institute for Family Studies:

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/images-children-and-young-people-online>

* Office of the e-Safety Commissioner: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

3.2.4 Use of mobile phones for texting and messaging.

Care and discretion must be employed in using mobile phones, especially in situations where a disparity of authority may exist, for example between a priest in a parish or ministry, and the parishioners who are a part of that parish or ministry. In situations where pastoral responsibilities exist, the boundaries attached to those pastoral situations must be recognized and observed. Province members who have duties and responsibilities towards particular individuals, for example in a helping or counselling relationship, must take great care to exercise due diligence in observing appropriate behaviour when using mobile phones for communicating within the pastoral situation. The sender should be aware that text messages can be sent on to others, and thus easily become public. In this way, pastoral boundaries can be breached and the recipient of the text message can have their Right to Privacy compromised. In some cases, this would constitute an infringement of State or Territory law.

In all cases, when communicating to those with whom there is a pastoral relationship or commitment, the sender must observe the guidelines and boundaries of professional standards. This means that text messages must not be of a compromising nature towards the recipient, intended to threaten, cajole or intimidate the person, or to entice or encourage the recipient into a behaviour or relationship which takes him or her beyond the pastoral relationship.

The sender should also be aware that text messages of a non-professional nature can be misinterpreted by the recipient. For this reason, all text messages intended to convey a pastoral communication message must be expressed in language that is clear, unambiguous, professional and brief. Apart from situations of emergency, such messages would usually be conveyed during working hours, in order to preserve professional boundaries, and should not be sent after 10:00 pm or before 7:00 am.

- **3.2.4.1** Text messages with sexual content. A known social phenomenon is that of sending sexual messages by mobile phone application, usually with an explicit image, known as 'sexting.' Although research has shown that this activity exists mostly among young persons in their teens and twenties, this form of messaging is strictly forbidden for Province members. Any departure from the 'norms of decency' in text messaging, either with or without images, must be seen as not coinciding with the ethics and morals or religious life, Gospel values and professional standards.

3.2.5 Uploading of images from mobile phones.

The same precautions in capturing audio and video on mobile phones and uploading them to the web or a media platform must be observed, as for uploading images from still and video cameras (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 above).