

# TEEN RANCH AUSTRALIA

## STAFF CONDUCT POLICY

As a Christian organisation, the staff of Teen Ranch are wholeheartedly committed to living according to God's standards as revealed in the Bible. God's will for all humanity is that we would live according to His perfect commands, both in our inner attitudes and motivations as well as our words and actions.

We live in a world that generally does not recognise God's standards for life or His right to rule over His creation. For many of us, we have absorbed too much of the world's value system and have allowed it to direct our thoughts, words and deeds. It is our desire that Teen Ranch staff members appreciate the goodness of God's way of life, turn away from all that is evil, foolish or false, and wholeheartedly embrace all that is good, wise and true.

We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, expressing an absolute respect for Him and His honour. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves, expressing a deep respect for each other's life and well-being. These two commands, to love God and love our neighbour, summarise God's intention for mankind (Matthew 22:34-40).

Our society resents absolutes, particularly regarding behaviour. As a consequence, love for God and one another has been radically redefined and devalued. We find it helpful, therefore, to remind ourselves of God's good and perfect absolutes (as given to us in the Ten Commandments – Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5) and how they direct us towards true love for God and for one another.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

1. 'You shall have no other gods before me' – have absolute respect for God
2. 'You shall not make idols' – have absolute respect for God (don't give to any created thing the time, attention, trust, love and worship that only God deserves)
3. 'You shall not misuse God's name' – have absolute respect for God (for his name, character, reputation and everything he stands for)
4. 'Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy' – have absolute respect for God (by remembering our absolute dependence on God for all things and by keeping proper balance of godly work and godly rest)

Love your neighbour as yourself

5. 'Honour your father and mother' – respect your parents, elders and those in authority, by listening to them, learning from them and giving them honour
6. 'Do not murder' – respect the life of a person; reject hatred and contempt in all its forms
7. 'Do not commit adultery' – respect the preciousness of sex, marriage and intimacy; reject all forms of sexual immorality (including homosexuality, sex before marriage, adultery, pornography, crudity, wrong desires)
8. 'Do not steal' – respect another's belongings; reject greed, selfishness and jealousy
9. 'Do not lie' – respect the truth; reject all forms of deception, gossip, exaggeration and dishonesty
10. 'Do not be jealous' – respect another's belongings and relationships; reject greed, selfishness and jealousy

The true disciple of Jesus does not find these commands of God burdensome. Instead, he delights in them. In thankfulness towards God, the true disciple joyfully and wholeheartedly obeys Him. But he does so, in dependence on God, knowing that left to himself, he is simply unable to live this life of love. Joyful obedience and dependent obedience is the way of the true disciple of Jesus.

Teen Ranch desires that all staff members, both paid and volunteer, will seek to live according to God's ways, in dependence on Him and motivated by love for Him. Those who do not yet know God in this way are encouraged to "come and see" – to come to know and appreciate His goodness to all mankind and respond in love, gratitude and obedience.

Given the nature of the mission of Teen Ranch, there are a number of standards of conduct that we have found necessary and helpful to highlight. It is expected that all staff members will abide by these standards whilst being involved in either a paid or unpaid capacity.

1. **Confidentiality:** All staff members are required to maintain strict confidentiality regarding information related to Ranch business, participants in Teen Ranch camps and other programs, and colleagues in the mission.
2. **Alcohol, Smoking, & Drug Policy:** Teen Ranch is an alcohol, smoking and drug free facility. Staff visiting local pubs and restaurants should be particularly careful to ensure the name of Jesus, as well as the name of Teen Ranch, are represented well. We would encourage any staff member with particular difficulties in the areas of alcohol, smoking or previous drug use to be open and honest with senior staff to determine the most wise and loving approach in each circumstance.

3. **Respect for and Privacy of Campers:** Staff members are not to obtain contact details (email, phone, address, MSN) of campers or give their own contact details to a camper. Only cabin leaders can contact campers and, even then, only within certain guidelines. Staff are not to have romantic relationships with campers of the Ranch.
4. **Relationships Amongst Staff:** Some great friendships can develop whilst we are serving God together but we need to be wise in how we relate to each other. During a camp, staff are discouraged from dating or pursuing romantic relationships with other staff members as this can exclude others and distract staff from the main focus of the mission. Privacy in bedrooms should be respected, with no males in female rooms, and vice versa.
5. **Staff Counselling Policy:** Male staff counselling female campers and vice versa is discouraged as it often leads to misunderstanding and wrong perceptions. To help protect the Ranch and your personal integrity, make sure you are never alone with someone of the opposite gender. If a situation arises where counselling across genders is necessary, you must be accompanied by a mature Christian who is of the same gender as the counselee.
6. **Child Protection Policy:** Our society regards abuse of children with the utmost seriousness. Our child protection policy details guidelines relating to the screening of staff, physical contact, personal privacy, sleeping arrangements, reporting of abuse and the maintenance of a healthy physical and emotional environment for campers. These guidelines are to protect the children and young people from harm as well as protecting staff members and the organisation from misunderstanding and allegations. These guidelines are highlighted at the beginning of each camp and all staff members are expected to fully adhere to them.
7. **Approach to Misconduct of a Staff Member:** Sadly, but only occasionally, a staff member steps outside these standards of staff conduct. In these situations, senior staff have a responsibility to protect campers and staff from harm, to maintain the good name of Teen Ranch in the local community and to honour God and His reputation. Disciplinary action may need to be applied to the staff member concerned and may involve restrictions on their future involvement with the Ranch. In each situation, senior staff will seek to conduct the process in a prayerful, fair and considerate manner, seeking to reflect God's attributes of truthfulness, justice, mercy and love to all concerned.