



# Adult Support Handbook



MN Young Christian Students

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# YCS FOUNDATIONS

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## 1.1 YCS CREED

As Young Christian Students we believe in God. We believe that God created the universe and that we, as part of God's creation, are invited to help complete God's plan.

We believe that the earth has been entrusted to us, to care for, to nurture and to respect. People, as God's creation, have a dignity and worth beyond measure, and deserve to be treated with respect and understanding.

We believe the Holy Spirit empowers us to live active lives following the example of Jesus Christ. We do this through communicating our thoughts, opinions and emotions and accepting and loving each other unconditionally.

We believe that our schools should promote these values through encouraging students to form and question their own opinions and beliefs and treating each student as a worthwhile individual who has unique needs and talents. Our schools should educate for life.

And we believe that Jesus calls us to live through actions, not just words.

Amen.

## 1.2 YCS PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

please fill us with your spirit of love.  
Help us to SEE the world as you do,  
to JUDGE with your heart,  
and to ACT with the strength and courage you have shown us  
as we work to transform our world.

Amen.

### 1.3 YCS PRINCIPLES

1. The Young Christian Students movement of Australia is led for, by and with secondary school students.
2. It is inspired by and aims to live the mission of Jesus Christ among secondary school students.
3. It has a specific task of formation and education of secondary school students.
4. It believes in the Review of Life as its method of education.
5. Its faith in Jesus Christ challenges students to form an active response among, with and on behalf of all secondary school students.
6. It commits itself to working for justice and peace, especially among secondary school students.
7. It is a local, diocesan, national and international movement and accepts that it has a responsibility at all these levels.

## 1.4 PURPOSE AND VISION

The Young Christian Students movement (YCS) is an international movement that is run for secondary school students and run by the students themselves. The movement aims to empower students to take action in their own lives, in order to change the world around them in the light of their faith and beliefs.

YCS is currently active in dioceses around Australia and in over 80 countries across the world. The movement was inspired by a young priest named Joseph Cardijn, who believed that young people could, and must, be the ones who took action in their daily lives to bring about the Kingdom of God. Therefore, YCS has always ensured that students talk, review, plan and co-ordinate the movement together with other students. Adults are important for supporting the YCS, but they should not run the movement.

The method developed by Cardijn is called the Review of Life. This method has three main sections: SEE, JUDGE and ACT. Beginning with the See section, students examine a situation that is happening in their life, challenge each other to look at the impact of the situation on the people involved, and investigate what truly caused it to occur. They then make a judgement about what they have seen. This judgement is reflective and critical; students relate the situation to their faith and what they think should be happening. In doing this they can decide what their faith and beliefs are calling them to do. Following from this, in the Act section, the students work out what they would like to change and plan an action to achieve this.

The Review of Life can lead to a wide variety of actions being taken by students. This is one of the strengths of YCS, as the movement is always relevant to whatever the current concerns of students are (their reality). Actions can range from very small personal actions, such as talking to someone who is being excluded at lunchtime; to large collective actions such as working in partnership with an exterior organization like the St. Vincent de Paul's Society. It is therefore important to ensure each YCS group has the freedom to be creative in their use of the Review of Life and the in actions they take.

## 1.5 STUDENT RUN MOVEMENT

YCS is a movement that is run for, by, and with secondary school students. This is a crucial part of what the YCS movement aims to do.

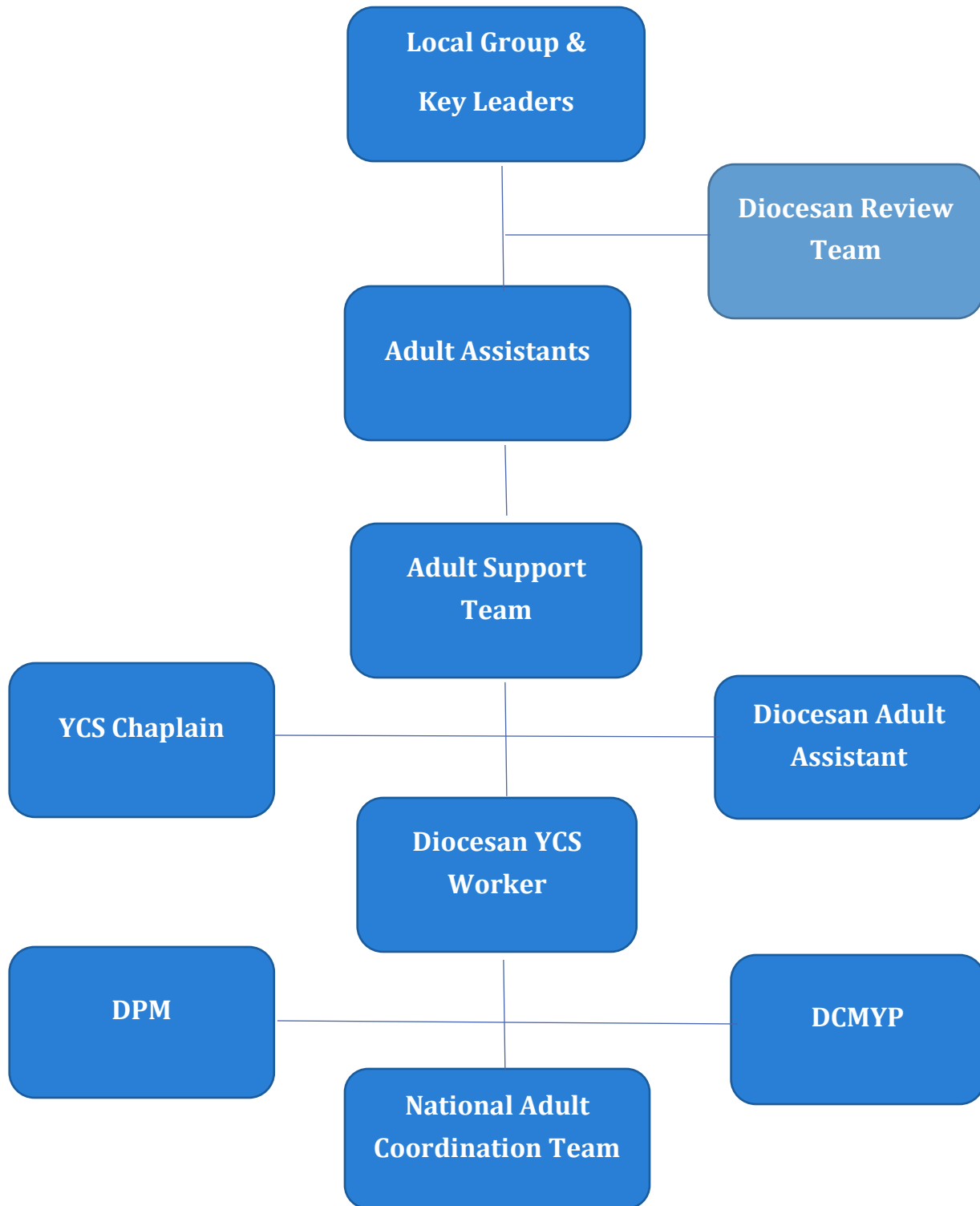
To form committed Christian leaders, it is important that they are not only capable of acting out their faith but also developing valuable leadership and organisational skills.

One of the key ways that YCS develops these qualities is through being a student run movement. Students take ownership and responsibility for the movement and this allows them to develop the skills needed to lead an organisation (such as how to run meetings, take minutes, handle finances, etc.) as well as those needed to play an active leadership role in their own community and among their peers (such as setting a positive example, being prepared to go against the trends, etc.).

Any organisation or movement that aims to develop the spirituality of humans, especially young people, needs to make sure that in doing so they don't discount or disempower their abilities as a person. To simply run something for young people can never have the full impact of developing committed and capable Christian leaders.

In the local group situation this means that the leaders of the group are students and that adults involved are there to support and empower students, rather than to run the group or the movement. This is why adults in YCS are known as Adult Assistants.

## 1.6 DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE YCS STRUCTURE





YCS functions at a local, diocesan, national and international level. The most important level is local; the groups that exist in schools, parishes and communities. It involves the students as local group members and key leaders, as well as an Adult Assistant for each local group.

Like the local groups, each diocese should ideally have an Adult Assistant and additionally, a Chaplain. The Diocesan Review Team is open for key leaders from all the local groups and is the major decision-making body for the diocese.

Adult Assistants, Chaplains and an Adult Support Team are also featured on the national level and like the Diocesan Review Team, the National Executive Representatives are the major decision-making body for all the dioceses across the country. Every 6 months there is a National Executive meeting and this team is made up of one or two student representatives from each diocese.

Finally, on an international level, there are co-ordination meetings held once a year and a World Council every fourth year. The World Council is open to people involved with YCS all over the world. It is also worth noting that as an international movement, various countries may operate and run YCS differently.

Where possible, the Diocesan Review Team and the Adult Support Team hire employees to work for the movement in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. While these workers are obviously not secondary school students, they are employed by students and should always be directed by the students of the YCS movement.

The structure of the movement ensures that all members are always represented and therefore included, at each level of the movement.

# FORMATION

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## 2.1 METHOD: The Review of Life

A method of evaluation, reflection and implementation, the Review of Life encourages individuals to reflect on their everyday experiences in a multifaceted manner and consider how their faith calls them to action. Through this method, individuals are supplied with the knowledge and wisdom to transform the world in which they live.

The Review of Life method is utilised continually on a local, diocesan, national and international level.

### *SEE SECTION:*

#### **Finding out what is happening in the situation**

- What exactly is happening? (the facts)
- What is this doing to people? (the consequences)
- Why is this happening? (the causes)

### *JUDGE SECTION:*

#### **Asking ourselves what we are called to do? What is the ideal solution?**

- What do you think and feel about this?
- What does your faith say? What would Jesus do?
- What should be happening?

### *ACT SECTION:*

#### **Acting on our informed knowledge and faith to create change**

- What is it that you want to change? (long term)
- What action are you going to take now? (short term)
- Who and what can be involved in your action? (resources)

## 2.2 THE THREE TRUTHS

The Three Truths is one of the foundations of the movement that was developed by Joseph Cardijn. It explains the mission and spirituality of the YCS Movement. Understanding The Three Truths provides an integral understanding of what YCS aims to achieve.

### *THE TRUTH OF FAITH*

- We believe that every single human being has a dignity and worth beyond measure. As Cardijn said, we believe that everyone is worth more than all the gold in the world.
- The reason that we believe this is because every person was created by God and created in God's image. And because everyone is created by God, we all have a part to play in creating the Kingdom of God here on earth.
- When you believe someone is created by God and has a unique role to play in the world, then they are definitely worth more than any amount of money. This idea is one of the most important aspects of our faith.
- Because everyone has this dignity and worth, each person has the right to be able to live in peace and justice, the right to be free from exploitation and war and hate, and the right to be treated with respect by every other person.

### *THE TRUTH OF EXPERIENCE*

- The truth of faith is what we believe. But when we look around us we experience so many situations where people aren't treated with the dignity and worth they deserve. We see poverty, wars, lies, division between the rich and the poor, racism, unjust treatment of refugees, consumerism, materialism, and generally a world where money is worth more than people.
- In the student world we can see discrimination against young people, pressure for exams, boredom, bullying, unsuitable student/teacher ratios, schools where students have no say or voice and much more.
- In each of these situations we see or feel a contradiction between our faith and our experience. Each time we see a contradiction, our faith calls us to do something about it, to play our part in building the Kingdom of God.

*THE TRUTH OF METHOD*

- To make an impact and change the contradictions between our experience and faith, students need to act with a united purpose and method; the basis of a *movement*.
- The movement must be organised and committed to its mission. The mission of the YCS movement is to take actions that can overcome these contradictions so that what we experience is equivalent to what we believe should be happening. If we take actions on our own we can fix part of the problem, but by working in a movement that involves students across the world, we can work on fixing the causes of these problems.
- The movement must also have a method. The YCS movement adopts the Review of Life method. This method was developed by Cardijn based on the Three Truths to overcome the contradictions in our everyday lives between our experience and faith. The Review of Life produces wholesome and effective actions as they are guided by the desire to unite our reality and what we believe through our faith and our values.

## 2.3 HOLISTIC FORMATION

One of the key elements of the YCS Movement is that it provides students with holistic formation. This can be broken into two main parts:

1. A balance between action and reflection
2. Life-long formation

### *ACTION AND REFLECTION*

Through using the Review of Life, YCS aims to encourage students to reflect on their lives in the light of their faith and beliefs and subsequently, challenge them to act in the way their faith calls them to.

It is often easier to focus only on action or focus only on reflection, but if the two aren't joined together then we miss key aspects of who Jesus calls us to be.

This means that YCS can cater for students in various points of understanding or identification with their faith. For example, if students already identify as Christians or have a relationship with Jesus, then being involved YCS can help them develop that further by encouraging and empowering them to act in the courageous, loving and challenging way that Jesus did.

Alternatively, YCS can also be attractive to students who see something wrong in the world and want to make a difference. Often this might be because of more 'humanist' beliefs, but through the Review of Life and doing Gospel Reflections they may come to realise that the way Jesus spoke and acted is an inspiring example of the things they believe in and this can show them that Jesus and the Gospel are relevant to their lives and the world today.

### *LIFE LONG FORMATION*

Another key aspect of YCS formation is that it is a long-term process, with long-term results. We aim to train students to form and question their own opinions and beliefs and to live those beliefs out in their everyday lives. This involves taking actions and making a difference, in the present, but also, that they are learning to continue this every day for the rest of their lives. It is not something that can be achieved through one event, or one retreat, or even over a month or two. The events, retreats and programs have their place in attracting and engaging people, but they do not replace ongoing formation.

It is this life-long formation, which produces committed Christian leaders both now and well into the future that really sets the YCS method apart in terms of ongoing benefit. Pope Francis calls youth to “leave a mark” and the basis of YCS’ holistic formation is about giving students the opportunity, skills and knowledge, to do something and make a difference both in the present and future.

# STUDENT ROLES

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## 3.1 LOCAL GROUP KEY LEADER ROLE

The Key Leader is a core group member and their role is to run the meeting through the Review of Life, See, Judge, Act Process. They meet with the Adult Assistant/s prior to, and immediately following a Meeting to plan and review each meeting.

## 3.2 DIOCESAN REVIEW TEAM

A body of student representatives from each local YCS group, who come together at a Diocesan level to review their local movements, and coordinate and support events and collective actions. They are a key tool of communication between local members, local groups, and between the National Movement. They are at the core of a strong, sustainable, student run, diocesan YCS movement, whose members are ready to transform themselves and the world.

# ADULT ROLES

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All adult volunteers within the movement should ensure that they are well formed on the principles and mission of YCS and should continually use the Review of Life method.

YCS groups are led and run by secondary school students. This is one of the key principles that separate YCS from other youth groups or movements and it is essential to the method of faith formation that the movement uses. As an adult with a role in the YCS movement, it is important to always be conscious of this.

Perfection is not expected in your role as adult support. It is only asked that you do your best in the spirit of supporting the students and workers to develop as well-rounded people, as leaders and as Christians.

## 4.1 LOCAL GROUP ADULT ASSISTANT ROLE

The role of the Adult Assistant(AA) in local groups is to support, empower and positively challenge the student leaders. There are essentially two parts to this role:

1. *OUTSIDE MEETINGS*
2. *IN MEETINGS*

### *OUTSIDE MEETINGS*

The main work of an Adult Assistant is behind the scenes and therefore outside the group meeting. The Assistant is vital to the formation of leaders and members.

They do this by:

- Meeting with the Key Leader/s before the local group meeting to plan how they will run the meeting. This should be particularly focused on how they will lead the Review of Life and the Gospel Reflection
- Following up with the leader afterwards to review how the local group meeting went and how they could improve things
- Building relationships with the group key leaders and members through activities outside the meeting



- Keeping parents and the school or parish community informed about what is happening with the group
- Attending diocesan events and encouraging group members and leaders to also attend
- Working in collaboration with the workers to support and empower the students
- Communicating with the Diocesan YCS Worker, Diocesan Adult Assistant, Diocesan Chaplain and Diocesan Adult Support Team about local group progress as well as how they are feeling in their role

### *IN MEETINGS*

The Adult Assistant also has a role in the group meetings, but it is more of a backseat role. They should:

- Attend YCS local group meetings
- Facilitate, guide and be present within local group meetings
- Ask questions that positively challenge students. You are inviting them to look deeper and take the next step
- Supervise
- Assist the leaders when and where they need it

### *KEY POINTS*

There are a few key points to remember:

- Adult Assistants should never make decisions for the group
- They should never be referred to as a leader
- Assistants do have an active role to play, but it happens behind the scenes
- The students are the leaders and the experts. This can be difficult because it reverses the roles we normally play, but it is essential to the movement
- **Attend an Adult Training Workshop and an Adult Retreat at least once year.**

## 4.2 DIOCESAN ADULT ASSISTANT ROLE

The Diocesan Adult Assistant has a role in supporting two key groups in the movement:

1. Students
2. Adults

### *STUDENTS*

The Diocesan Adult Assistant plays a similar role to the local group Adult Assistants in supporting, empowering and positively challenging students. However, their role is to work closely with the Diocesan Review Team (DRT) instead. They should:

- Act as the Adult Assistant to the DRT
- Attend DRT meetings and diocesan events
- Facilitate, guide and be present within DRT meetings, and ask questions that positively challenge students, inviting them to look deeper into their student reality and faith
- Communicate with the chairperson to plan how they will run the DRT meeting and assist them to monitor progress on actions and activities
- Participate in diocesan YCS activities once each term and school holidays as organised by the DRT and local groups
- Build relationships with the students and assist where and when they need
- Follow up on actions with the students
- Not act as a decision maker or a leader in YCS as a student run movement
- **Attend an Adult Training Workshop and an Adult Retreat at least once year.**

### *ADULTS*

The Diocesan Adult Assistant is the main form of support for adult volunteers on a diocesan level. They should aim to build good relationships with members of the AST, local group Adult Assistants, Diocesan Chaplain and the diocesan workers to support them in their roles. These relationships are essential as the role requires that they:

- Communicate between the DRT and Adult Support Team (AST)
- Work in collaboration with the diocesan workers and Diocesan Chaplain to support, challenge and empower the students
- Meet with local group Adult Assistant to support and assist them in their role
- Attend AA trainings
- Communicate with the National Adult Assistant Representative

### 4.3 DIOCESAN CHAPLAIN ROLE

The role of the Chaplain, like the Diocesan Adult Assistant aims to support two groups in the movement:

1. Students
2. Adults

#### *STUDENTS*

Their role is to empower and positively challenge students with a focus on their faith. The support and challenge they provide is one of the ways that YCS empowers students to develop a relationship with God and actively live as apostles. They should aim to guide and encourage the students to grow in their spirituality as well as being an example of a Christian role model. To be effective they should:

- Build relationships such that students can comfortably discuss, share and explore their Christian faith with each other and the Chaplain
- Ensure their actions and activities are Christ-centred by encouraging regular Gospel reflection and prayer. For example, making sure the JUDGE section of a Review of Life is meaningful, relevant and creative
- Ask questions that positively challenge the students, particularly in their faith
- Encourage students to take advantage of Bible passages as well as excerpts from other religious texts (e.g. Papal Encyclicals, articles/statements from religious leaders etc.)
- Ensure there is a thorough understanding of the meaning and message of passages and Christian teachings and how it is relevant to the current Review topic
- Attend local group and DRT meetings, diocesan events and camps
- Occasionally celebrate Mass or lead liturgies at events

#### *ADULTS*

Additionally, the Chaplain should have a good relationship with the Diocesan Adult Assistant, local group Adult Assistants, the Adult Support Team (AST) and diocesan workers. Like the Diocesan Adult Assistant, they should support, communicate and work with the adults on a diocesan level, particularly in faith. This also includes attending staff meetings/Reviews and Adult Support Team meetings.

## 4.4 ADULT SUPPORT TEAM ROLE

The Adult Support Team (AST) is a support structure which assists in training, employment, and communication within the YCS movement. They work on a diocesan level to support the movement by providing adult guidance enriched with personal experience. The AST should have a clear understanding of the movement and ideally, be well formed in the YCS mission and continually Review.

The AST has various tasks including (but not limited to):

- Training and support of Adult Assistants and Chaplains
- Supervision and mentoring of the diocesan workers
- Strategic planning for sustainable funding
- Support for adults (including workers, volunteers, AA's and Chaplains)
- Communicating with the students on the Diocesan Review Team (DRT)
- Maintaining a visionary plan for the movement

The team should aim to meet once every month to review and analyse the movement, as well as **facilitate and attend an Adult Training Workshop and an Adult Retreat at least once year.**

Ideally, an AST meeting should have the following members present:

- Relevant key party representatives (E.g. MN Catholic Diocese, Catholic Mission, Catholic Education Office etc.)
- AST key members (E.g. chairperson, secretary, treasurer)
- Communicators between DRT and AST (E.g. Diocesan Adult Assistant, Diocesan Chaplain)
- Diocesan YCS Worker

All members, except for the Local YCS Worker, can take multiple roles (eg. the MN Catholic Diocese representative can also be the Secretary and/or the Diocesan Adult Assistant).

Although it is possible, it is not recommended that any one individual takes on too many roles within the AST. It is encouraged to share the responsibilities of the AST among all members, not just a few.

# LEGAL INFORMATION

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## 5.1 CHILD PROTECTION

The YCS movement is dedicated to upholding the dignity of all people. As a movement committed to living the mission of Jesus Christ among secondary school students, it recognises that it must protect the safety and dignity of all students with special attention to those under 18 years of age. The YCS movement is committed to making every effort to protect students involved in YCS activities from any form of harm.

Adult volunteers will complete all required Volunteer Documentation for the Diocese of Maitland- Newcastle and become familiar with the AYCS Child Protection Code of Conduct.

### *ACCOUNTABILITY*

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has a specialist child protection service, Zimmerman Services, and all adult volunteers and paid workers associated with MNYCS will be expected to attend the required Child Protection Training provided through this service.

### *CODE OF CONDUCT*

Adult volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Fulfil to the best of your ability, specific roles and tasks given to you, while maintaining clear boundaries about appropriate behaviour and duty of care
- Build appropriate relationships with students and their families in a transparent manner so that you are a positive role model and representative of YCS and the wider Catholic community

Adults involved in YCS must **never** develop sexual relationships with students; develop relationships with students that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive; or act in ways that may be abusive or may place a student at risk of abuse.

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### *DUTY OF CARE*

Adults will exercise diligence, reasonable care and skill, to protect the students in their care from risk of harm. Adults are expected to take all reasonable steps to protect students from risk of harm.

The Adult Assistant is only responsible for the duty or care and supervision of the students during the time allocated for the specific meeting/activity or event.

When a YCS local group is meeting or during an event that is organised by the local group the Adult Assistant of that local group is the person who has Duty of Care of the students.

At DRT meetings and events, the adult/adults who are present and in a supervisory role are the adults who have Duty of Care for those students.

At national meetings and events, the adult/adults who are present in a supervisory role are the adults who have Duty of Care for those students.

*\*For the full Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct for the Diocese of Maitland -Newcastle please contact Zimmerman Services*

# GETTING STARTED

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## 6.1 STARTING A YCS GROUP

This is a seven-step process. It is fairly simple to do with the resources provided, but there will always be help available for any difficulties or issues that might arise.

### 1. Get the support of the School or Parish

It is important that you get this support first. It seems obvious but not everyone does it! Make sure that the person you are asking (i.e. Director of Schools, Head of Religious Education and Spirituality, Principal, REC/Ministry Co-ordinator, Parish Priest) understands what YCS is. You need to ask for their support rather than just permission. This doesn't necessarily mean a significant commitment, but it is important that the YCS group is viewed as a valued part of the school or parish community rather than an outside add-on.

### 2. Find an adult who can be the Adult Assistant to the group

In the school situation this could be the Religious Education Coordinator (REC), Social Justice Coordinator, School Chaplain or any other interested faculty member. A ratio of 1 adult to every 8 students is a good guide to determine if more than one Adult Assistant is required.

### 3. Find a core group of students

The Assistant then needs to find students that they believe would perform well, thrive or grow as leaders of the group. Between 4 to 8 key leaders is recommended.

### 4. Plan the starting of the group

The Adult Assistant should meet with those students who will be key leaders to plan the first meeting and how to advertise it. Here are a few suggestions:

- The key leaders should meet at least twice before the first meeting of the program to sufficiently plan and organise
- Advertising of the group should be done as creatively as possible. This can include posters, newsletter notices, speaking on assembly, speaking at mass, flyers to be handed out in homeroom, etc. Advertise for around 2 weeks in a school and 4 weeks in a parish.

- While advertising is valuable for raising awareness, personal invitations are usually most effective in ensuring that students attend. Each of the key leaders should invite at least 3 others to the first meeting. It would also be beneficial to gather a list of about 15 names of students whom members of faculty think might be interested and personally give them invitations also.

## **5. Run the first meeting**

Depending on how often local group meetings will be held, it is the role of the Adult Assistant to meet with the key leaders to prepare. If the NUTS Program (Never Underestimate The Students) is being used, the agenda and activities for the meeting are already outlined. The preparation will mostly be making sure that the students understand the questions they are asking and the roles they are taking. It is also important to prepare the Gospel Review or Faith Reflection with them.

## **6. Continue running the NUTS Program for 8 Weeks**

The Adult Assistant should continue meeting for preparation with the leaders before each local group meeting. It is recommended that two leaders take on running the meetings two at a time. They can both be key leaders, however to promote a sustainable leadership team, the pair can include one of the key leaders, plus another member of the local group who is not a key leader. This encourages and prepares these individuals to undertake the role of a key leader, should they be interested in the future.

When running the meeting, roles may be separated between the two leaders; one student to run the Review of Life and the other to run the reflection and administrative parts of the meeting. The idea is that they do this as a pair, and the second meeting they swap over so that both get a chance at each role and they can learn and improve upon each time. This means that eight students (four pairs) should get a turn at running the meeting when using the NUTS Program.

## **7. After the program**

The local group can continue to run meetings and the Review of Life, with the leadership of the key leaders and support of the Adult Assistant, regarding various topics. The national and diocesan YCS team can support you in transitioning from using the NUTS Program into being an ongoing group. Please use the contact details found on the back of the handbook if further assistance is needed.





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MN Young Christian Students



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