

## The Salesian Ethos of Dunlea Centre

### Don Bosco

Don Bosco was called to give his life in the service of young people, especially those who have greater need of love, care, education and family support. From the beginning he involved many helpers for this mission, starting with his own mother, who set about creating a happy family environment for her boys. Today, in a different historical and geographical context, the same mission is entrusted to the Salesians and their lay partners.

Dunlea Centre exists to provide help, affirmation, new hope and the opportunity of a fresh start to young people and their families—after the example and method of Don Bosco and Fr Tom Dunlea. The philosophy of Dunlea Centre is based on the belief that every person is unique and specially valued in the eyes of God. At Dunlea Centre all efforts are directed towards the preservation and strengthening of family bonds and relationships, irrespective of family circumstance.

The Salesian *preventive system* promotes an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance, forgiveness, and change. It is based on the fundamental belief that all young people can change for the better. Don Bosco's advice to all his helpers is still valid today; *“Let your words be gentle, patient and loving. Make yourself the friends of all. Be quick to forgive and never rake up the past. Kindness in speaking, in working, in giving advice will win over everyone.”*

Salesians and their helpers cannot remain bogged down in the past. A new culture with new kinds of poverty or disadvantage and new needs, requires new responses. It is not the structures that make up a Salesian work, but the educators defined by a charisma; those to whom the work is addressed and the programs they are offered. And within the context of a professional relationship and a specialist service, there is no doubt that the first thing we must offer the young is our hearts, totally focused by pastoral love and the educational zeal as exemplified by Don Bosco.

### Therefore, we are challenged to:

- Be ready and available to help young people and their families in their struggle to grow and accept each other
- Keep alive Fr Dunlea's legacy for the children and families we serve in partnership
- Be a home that welcomes
- Be a community where broken lives find love and goodness
- Be a school that prepares for life



- Be a place where family relationships are restored and young people feel valued, loved and happy
- Act according to the charitable objectives of the Dunlea Centre Constitution
- Be guided, inspired and open to the love of God and our neighbour
- Carry out our duties and responsibilities with honesty, justice and integrity
- Safeguard and enhance the tradition and ethos of Dunlea Centre

## Dunlea Centre's Mission and Vision

Dunlea Centre's **mission** is to empower adolescents and families at risk to change their lives and restore relationships through the provision of quality therapeutic and educational services.

Dunlea Centre's **vision** is to be a welcoming community where lives are changed and right relationships are restored.

## Salesian Vision for Dunlea Centre

Dunlea Centre provides residential programs for young people so that they can have time out from their families and communities and be helped to get along with both in a more harmonious and productive way.

A critical and essential part of the vision is that clients are reintroduced into meaningful, useful and rewarding educational experiences.

The vision sees the acquisition of life skills, experiences of success, working with and talking constructively with adults, physical health and fitness and spiritual growth in their lives all contributing to the complete achievement of the program.

The methodological approach is underpinned by the well tested Salesian system of education, known as the Preventive System that has at its heart a deep and interpersonal system of personal relationships between educator and young people, educator and educator and young people with other young people.

## Dunlea Centre's Values

The following values underpin our work with young people and their families/carers at Dunlea Centre.

### **Openness:**

- Being open to change
- Making the distinction between a person and their behaviour
- Offering & receiving constructive criticism



- Accepting individuality/“uniqueness” of others
- Thinking “outside the square” and appreciating the creative approach of others
- Open and transparent communication with others
- Honesty with self and others
- Challenging others perceptions
- Having your own perceptions challenged

**Presence:**

- Offer support and show interest to those in the Dunlea Centre community
- Awareness of personal abilities, skills, needs, roles and effect of our interactions with others
- Look for ways to praise each other
- Offer a non-judgemental and accepting environment that encourages people to be themselves
- Show others that they can be a positive influence in relationships and others can learn from them
- Being present to those who are suffering

**Responsibility:**

- Encourage others to be involved in and take ownership of the decision making processes
- Encourage others to own and analyse their own behaviour in order to make appropriate decisions for themselves
- Empower others through ownership of a creative process or the mastery of a skill
- Explore and validate another’s “voice”
- Belief in team members to carry out their roles and have confidence in their skills and abilities to encourage continual professional growth

**Integrity:**

- Awareness of self
- Honesty in communication with self and others (It’s OK to say you don’t know. Accept positive criticism)
- Always act in a professional way—maintain professional detachment and be aware of the impact of actions on others
- Continually challenge yourself to make a positive difference
- Believe that even the smallest positive change is worth the effort

**Respect:**

- Respecting others’ ideologies and beliefs
- Courteous to one another
- Valuing others’ strengths and abilities
- Taking responsibility for yourself within the agency (e.g. punctuality)
- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy
- Looking after resources and property



- Working within the Salesian ethos
- Awareness of own and others boundaries, limits and needs
- Follow through on agreed policies and procedures

**Commitment:**

- To engage in a process of resolution, which may arise from conflict
- To follow through on decisions made
- To be enthusiastic in bringing your energy and skills to your workplace
- To belong to a group/team and support it
- To be committed to the wellbeing of young people, families, colleagues and ourselves (believe in what we do – show passion)
- To further personal growth and professional development
- To uphold the Salesian philosophy
- To communicate a positive image about the Dunlea Centre, internally and externally

## History of Dunlea Centre

Fr Thomas Dunlea (1894-1970) founded Dunlea Centre at Engadine in 1939. His immediate source of inspiration was the movie about Fr Edward Flanagan (1886-1948) who founded the original American Boys Town in 1917 at Omaha, Nebraska. Both Fr Flanagan and Fr Dunlea drew inspiration from St John Bosco (1815-1888), whose work with disadvantaged youth began in Turin, Italy, but had since spread worldwide.

St John Bosco is the Founder of the Salesian Society of Priests and Brothers who, since 1952, have been responsible for the work of Dunlea Centre.

Dunlea Centre has undergone many changes over time as it has continued to respond to changes in society and the changing needs of youth and families. Today it is a comprehensive service to adolescent boys and girls and their families who are at risk of family breakdown, but who want to restore their relationship.

As an agency Dunlea Centre incorporates therapy, education and family support in an out-of-home care setting with an end goal of family preservation wherever possible. The residential nature of the core program allows the child and the family an opportunity to bring about the change. Dunlea Centre works in partnership with families to help bring about this change.



## Some Salesian Skills

Don Bosco believed that reason, religion and loving kindness were the three key elements in engaging youth in a constructive approach to life. In a more secular age and with an interdenominational agency the essence of Bosco's 'religion' theme is an acknowledgement of a spiritual quest for meaning in life. The following table expands Don Bosco's elements into contemporary challenges for those seeking to be faithful to the example of Don Bosco.

REASON	SPIRITUALITY	LOVING KINDNESS
Listening	Awareness of one's own spirituality	Cheerfulness
Thinking ahead and evaluating later	Recognising the spiritual in the lives of the young	Making the first move towards others
Knowing the world of young people	Ability to forgive and encourage	Empathy
Remembering one's own childhood	Able to share one's own faith appropriately	Giving praise and recognition
Challenging young people at the right time	Respecting the freedom and conscience of young people	Being optimistic about the goodness of young people
Managing one's own anger and enthusiasms according to the needs of the young	Ability to celebrate life, change and success	Withdrawing affection when appropriate
Discerning danger and opportunities ahead	Creativity in opportunities for service of others	Being able to ask forgiveness of young people
Making rules simple and clear and sticking to them	Recognising the gifts of young people and drawing them out	Helping to form positive emotional groupings for vulnerable young people
Using the skills of one's professional training		

Further, an authentic spirituality involves the experience of a deep sense of meaning and purpose in life. It creates a felt sense of belonging. It searches out patterns and significance in life. It creates an energy and focus in individuals and a group that moves them forward in maturity and wisdom. It demands respect, understanding, affection and humour (**RUAH**), as elements of good practice in any organisation. These elements are described further in the following table:



<b>SECULAR GOOD PRACTICE</b>			
<b>RESPECT</b>	<b>UNDERSTANDING</b>	<b>AFFECTION</b>	<b>HUMOUR</b>
Don't isolate individuals	Recognise faults as due largely to thoughtlessness	Make the first move towards the young – set the mood	Do not bewail the times
Don't humiliate or correct in public	Recognise the limits of young people in maturity and/or thoughtlessness	Find something to encourage and praise	Always correct with the hope of change and growth
Don't use sarcasm	Be aware of what might happen	Use a quiet word in the ear	Celebrate achievement
Correct in quiet	Arrive ahead of the young people	Apologise to the young when at fault	Be cheerful
Do not act out of anger or revenge	Be well prepared and set the atmosphere	Remember names	Allow spontaneity and genuine laughter
Build small groups that support those at risk	Defuse destructive situations by distractions	Let them know that you care	Reward groups for success in a public way
Be present with young people especially when you don't have to be there	Enter the world of the young, go to meet them on their territory	Strive to inspire love	Put individual failure into a wider more optimistic context
Protect the freedom of the young where possible	Vary your approach and offer variety to young people	Do not develop favourites	Identify and support those who are unusually sad
Provide a range of choices where possible for the young	Keep reflecting on experience and make the rules clear and consistent	Use activities to build relationships	Always meet or leave the young with an encouraging word

