



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This procedure guides the submission and handling of complaints about workers or ministries in the Diocese.

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This procedure applies to complaints from any members of the public, including church members.
- 2.2 This procedure does not apply to complaints from workers about other workers. For these, refer to the Grievance Procedure.
- 2.3 Complaints which fall under the Children and Community Services Act 2001 (WA) or anti-discrimination legislation or that involve activities that may be illegal will be referred to the Bishop, and/or the Police and local community services as required.
- 2.4 This procedure distinguishes feedback, which does not require a resolution, from complaints, which do require resolution. Feedback can always be sent to the Minister-in-Charge of the relevant ministry.

3 PROCEDURE

4 Submission of Complaints

- 4.1 If a person feels dissatisfied about a Diocese-related experience or feels they have been treated unfairly or adversely affected in some way, it is recommended that they raise the matter directly with the person or area most concerned, or with the appropriate supervisor of that person. The Diocese expects that in most cases, the discussion of the concern with the relevant officer will result in a prompt resolution.
- 4.2 If this attempt to resolve a complaint informally does not reach a satisfactory outcome, or if the complainant is not able or not willing to approach the person or area most concerned, then they may pursue a more formal process by lodging an official complaint.

4.3 Official complaints can be submitted:

- by email to the Registrar, registrar@anglicandnwa.org;
- in writing to The Bishop, Diocese of North West Australia, P O Box 2783, Geraldton WA 6531;
- in person at the Hummerston Centre, 101 Cathedral Avenue, Geraldton

4.4 The following should be included in an official complaint submission:

- name/s and contact details;
- date of the complaint;
- the church to which the complaint relates (if relevant);
- the nature of the complaint, including full details of what occurred and when it occurred;
- a summary of any action previously taken to resolve the complaint;
- any supporting documentation such as emails, screen shots, etc.; and
- an indication of what outcome is being sought.

Submitting using an Official Complaint Form (Appendix 1) may help ensure all necessary details are included.

4.5 Official complaints submitted in writing are preferred to ensure all relevant information and evidence is captured. All written and verbal official complaints will be accepted and reviewed by the Diocese.

4.6 A complaint must be lodged within 12 months of the adverse experience occurring. It is advisable that a complaint be lodged as soon as possible as the sooner a complaint is lodged, the better the opportunity for resolution. A complaint about an adverse experience which occurred more than 12 months ago may be considered if there are exceptional circumstances which prevented the complaint from being lodged within 12 months. Details of the exceptional circumstances must be included in a complaint lodged outside the 12-month timeframe.

5 Assessment of Complaints

5.1 All official complaints will be forwarded to the Registrar for investigation.

5.2 Upon receipt of a complaint, one Responsible Person shall be nominated by the Registrar, in consultation with the Bishop, to take charge of handling the complaint. This may be the Registrar himself unless the complaint concerns the Registrar. On completion of the investigation, the findings and recommendations shall be documented and the complaint signed off and dated by the Responsible Person and communicated to the Bishop and the Registrar.

5.3 Regular feedback is required to the complainant where the complainant is not anonymous. Initial feedback stating receipt of the complaint and either a proposed course of action or a request for additional information should be given within 48 hours of the receipt of the complaint. Further feedback is then made at completion of each stage of the schedule for handling the complaint.

5.4 The substance of a complaint will determine its category and priority and the investigative actions taken, not a complainant's demands or behaviour. The Diocese may not action complaints where the complainant exhibits unreasonable conduct.

5.5 Whenever possible, complaints shall be actioned within two weeks.

5.6 Where a complaint is made against a church worker regarding actions or behaviours which could be considered to be misconduct or serious misconduct (e.g. as outlined in Faithfulness in Service: a national code for church workers), the matter will be actioned under the Reporting a Concern Procedure.

5.7 All timeframes for official complaints will be monitored and managed by the Registrar. If the complaint involves the Registrar, it will be managed by the Bishop.

- 5.8 The timeframes listed in section 5.5 are the maximum expected for a complaint. It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be dealt with well within these timeframes. However, some complaints may be complex or complicated and unable to be resolved within these standard timeframes.
- 5.9 If a complaint does not include enough information, it may not be possible for the Diocese to pursue the matter. The complainant will be contacted and further information sought. If no further information is provided within 25 working days, the complaint will be dismissed and the complainant advised.

6 Investigation of Complaints

- 6.1 The investigative process will typically involve:
- confirming the facts indicated in the complaint;
 - identifying the issues;
 - identifying who is going to be interviewed and the sources of evidence required to sustain or not sustain the allegation;
 - discussing and interviewing all parties involved, including the complainant, church workers and third parties (where relevant), and examining relevant laws, policies and procedures;
 - analysing all relevant information obtained;
 - formulating findings and any recommendations; and
 - preparing a report on the results of the investigation or the outcome of the complaint, including if it was resolved during the process or withdrawn by the complainant (refer to section 7.2 for reporting requirements).
- 6.2 The Registrar will make and keep full and accurate records of the complaint process, including but not limited to:
- the complainant's name;
 - meeting notes;
 - the issue/s;
 - discussions with relevant stakeholders;
 - the investigative process;
 - the finding of fact;
 - the analysis process;
 - the outcome; and
 - whether or not the complaint was resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.
- 6.3 If the complaint cannot be resolved within the designated timeframes, the Registrar will advise the complainant that additional time is required, what action has been taken to date, and the estimated resolution timeframe.
- 6.4 In circumstances where facilitated discussion between parties to a complaint is considered the most practical and effective form of resolution, the complainant may be accompanied and assisted by a support person of their choosing.

7 Resolution of Complaints

- 7.1 Upon completion of the complaint investigation, the Registrar, in consultation with the Bishop, shall prepare a report for Diocesan Council on the results of the investigation or outcome of the complaint, including if it was resolved during the process or withdrawn by the complaint. The report should typically address the following matters to the extent each matter is relevant in a particular case:

- the complainant's issue/s;
- a concise summary of the material facts and circumstances of the matter, and relevant legislation, policy or procedures;
- persons interviewed and/or consulted and relevant information obtained;
- results of any relevant research and finding of facts;
- analysis of the complainant's issues to the extent necessary;
- the outcome of the investigation; and
- if the complaint is sustained, any recommendation/s to the Diocese to redress the complainant's grievance, whether by way of benefit to the complainant and other affected persons (if any) and/or systemic improvements to the Diocese's administrative practices.

7.2 The Registrar will advise the complainant in writing of the following:

- the outcome of the complaint investigation, or notification that the complaint will not be pursued;
- invitation to provide feedback on the complaint management process; and
- the review mechanism if the complainant was not satisfied with the outcome.

7.3 If any complaint results in a decision that supports the complainant, the Diocese will implement the decision and/or corrective and preventative action required, as soon as administratively practicable and will advise the complainant of the outcome.

8 RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance, monitoring and review

8.1 The Registrar will monitor and review the processing of complaints, complaint outcomes and the ongoing identification of issues and trends.

Reporting

8.2 All official complaints are to be reported to the Diocesan Council.

Records management

8.3 The Registry maintains all records relevant to administering this policy using its recordkeeping system.

9 DEFINITIONS

9.1 Terms not defined in this document may be in the Diocesan Glossary.

10 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Privacy Policy

Responding to Concerns Policy

Faithfulness in Service: a national code for church workers

Whistleblower Procedure

11 QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

- 11.1 Church members who have any questions about this regulation or who wish to provide feedback about this document should contact the Diocesan Registrar at registrar@anglicandnwa.org.

12 APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Certifications and Assent	Details	Signature	Date
Registrar	Certified as printed in accordance with the regulation as passed by Diocesan Council		
Bishop	Assented		
Approval and Amendment History	Details		
Original Approval Authority and Date	Approved by Diocesan Council 22/4/2021.		
Next Review Date			
Amendment Authority and Date			

13 APPENDIX

Official Complaint Form

OFFICIAL COMPLAINT FORM

Prior to submitting your official complaint, please ensure you have read the Complaints Procedure located in the Regulations section of the Diocesan website at www.anglicandnwa.org/regulations.

The Diocese of North West Australia seeks to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988*. When you lodge a complaint, the Diocese collects personal information from you for the purpose of dealing with your complaint. That information may be shared internally in order to resolve the complaint, however, your personal information is not passed to any outside party without your consent except as required by law.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact complaints@anglicandnwa.org.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____ Contact phone number: _____

Church: _____ Have you attempted to resolve this complaint informally? Yes/No

If yes, please provide the details: _____

Please provide the details of your official complaint: _____

Desired Resolution: _____

Please email this form to: complaints@anglicandnwa.org; or post it to the Bishop, Diocese of North West Australia, P O Box 2783, Geraldton WA 6531; or deliver it to the Hummerston Centre, 101 Cathedral Avenue, Geraldton.