



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

CHANCERY AND PARISHES - EMPLOYEES

COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY (CHILD/VULNERABLE ADULT)

APPLICATION

This Complaint Handling Policy (Child/Vulnerable Adult) (**Policy**) applies to employees, including trainees and to clergy who are employed by the Diocese under a contract of employment (**Employees**). It applies only to allegations of Reportable Conduct by an Employee at work (**Complaint**). However, the Diocese of Broken Bay (**Diocese**) may elect at its discretion, to apply this Policy to any complaint concerning the alleged mistreatment of a Vulnerable Person.

Please refer to the *Complaint Handling Policy for Chancery and Parishes – Employees*, for all other complaints that are non-child related.

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person who is under the age of 18, as defined by the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW) and may include Vulnerable Adults.

Complainant means a person who has made a Complaint.

OCG means the Office of the Children's Guardian

Reportable Conduct includes:

- a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child,
- sexual misconduct with, towards or in the presence of a child,
- ill-treatment of a child,
- neglect of a child,
- an assault against a child,
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child,
- any offence under section 43B or 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), whether or not with the consent of the child.

Vulnerable Person means a person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of abuse, such as those who: are elderly, have a disability, suffer from mental illness, have diminished capacity, have cognitive impairment, are experiencing transient risks, such as bereavement or relationship breakdown (or other such adversity) have any other impairment that makes it difficult for that person to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation.

PURPOSE

The Bishop desires for the Diocese to develop strong and effective relationships with all Employees and the community, with the aim of providing a safe and respectful environment for all. The Diocese encourages all Employees and community members to raise a Complaint if they have a reasonable belief or suspicion of mistreatment of a child by any Employee.

The Bishop acknowledges that power imbalances may make it difficult for some people to come forward with a Complaint. Managing Complaints sensitively and confidentially (to the extent possible), and supporting Complainants, Children and any Employee associated with a Complaint, is of utmost importance. Appropriate and proportionate steps will be taken to protect participants from reprisals, adverse treatment or victimisation. Complaints may be submitted anonymously.

This Policy provides a framework of principles for the management of Complaints in accordance with canon and civil law, having regard to the nature, circumstances and seriousness of the Complaint.

The Diocese is committed to ensuring that there are easy-to-follow guidelines for making and managing complaints and supporting Complainants, resolving Complaints fairly and promptly, and is dedicated to continuous improvement.

This Policy outlines the Diocese's approach to promptly addressing Complaints involving a Child.

1. GUIDELINES FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT

The Diocese acknowledges that its community is diverse and is committed to addressing Complaints objectively. Further details about the Complaint management process are available in the relevant Guidelines.

Complaints made under this Policy will be addressed by Safeguarding Broken Bay (**SBB**) with the assistance of the Head of People and Participation Broken Bay (**PPBB**) as appropriate.

2. MANAGING COMPLAINTS AND SUPPORTING COMPLAINANTS

2.1 Managing Complaints

All Employees have access to this Policy.

All Complaints made under this Policy will be investigated to the fullest extent possible based upon the information provided to the Diocese.

Where there is sufficient information to undertake an investigation immediately, the Complaint will be managed by the appropriate Head of Mission and PPBB.

If there is insufficient detail in the Complaint to conduct an investigation, the Complainant (if known) will be asked to provide further details and assistance. If the Complainant cannot provide further details, or insufficient further details are provided, the Diocese will proceed to investigate.

The investigation will be completed with urgency. However, in certain circumstances, an investigation may be delayed due to NSW Police Force involvement and/or the Department of Communities and Justice.

All Complainants will be updated with the progress of their Complaint in accordance with the timeframes set out in the relevant Guidelines, unless there is a proper basis for this not to occur.

Involvement of the Child or Vulnerable Adult in the complaint management process will occur as appropriate, having regard to the special circumstances of the Child or Vulnerable Adult.

Reasonable efforts will be made to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest when managing a Complaint. If a conflict of interest is identified, the matter will be referred to the Legal Counsel (**LC**), Vicar General (**VG**), Bishop or to an external investigator.

If a Complaint is found to have been made maliciously or vexatiously, there may be disciplinary consequences if the Complainant is an Employee.

2.2 Stand Down from Employment

An Employee who is the subject of a Complaint to which this Policy applies, will be suspended (with pay) for an initial period not exceeding 2 business days (**Initial Review Period**). The purpose of the Initial Review Period, is to enable the Diocese to make an initial risk assessment and determine whether, in the particular circumstances, further stand-down from employment is appropriate.

Stand down during the Initial Review Period is not to be regarded as adverse to an accused Employee but is a necessary initial step to protect stakeholders. The Employee will be informed whether they will remain suspended during the Initial Review Period.

If an Employee remains suspended after the Initial Review Period, the Diocese will review the need for the suspension periodically during the investigation.

2.3 Communication of Outcome

Stakeholders will be advised of the outcome of any investigation, unless there is proper basis for this not to occur.

2.4 Reporting to the OCG

If there is an allegation of reportable conduct made about an Employee, the Head of Relevant Entity, or their approved delegate, are required to notify the Office of the Children's Guardian Reportable Conduct Scheme within 7 business days of becoming aware.

The Diocese Head of Relevant Entity, or their approved delegate, will provide an update about the investigation to the OCG either on an interim or final basis within 30 days of the notification of the complaint.

The Diocese Head of Relevant Entity, or their approved delegate, will report to the OCG the final outcome of the investigation, including any action taken.

2.5 Managing Appeals

A Complainant or subject of a Complaint may appeal the outcome of a Complaint in which they are involved (**Appeal**) within 10 days of being advised of the outcome. Any Appeal must be notified to PPBB and LC or the VG in writing and must include detailed reasons for the Appeal.

2.6 Managing Anonymous Complaints

The Diocese acknowledges that there may be circumstances where a Complainant finds it difficult to openly make a Complaint. While Complainants are encouraged to identify themselves, they are not required to do so. However, the Diocese notes that anonymous complaints can be more difficult to investigate.

2.7 Supporting Complainants

The Diocese acknowledges the need to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of any Employee involved in the Complaint management process, including Complainants and the subjects of Complaints.

The Diocese will endeavour at all times to respond to Complaints compassionately, appropriately, and in a timely manner. Complainants and the subjects of Complaints will be afforded procedural fairness and support services, such as a support person.

2.8 Confidentiality

Any information obtained in the course of addressing a Complaint will only be shared with the people directly involved in addressing the Complaint and other people who have a need to know the information such as the NSW Police Force and the OCG. All Complainants, subjects of Complaints and persons involved in addressing Complaints will be informed of the requirement to keep information confidential.

3. CONSEQUENCES ON EMPLOYMENT

The Diocese is committed to ensuring all complaints are appropriately addressed and steps are taken to resolve the complaint in a timely manner.

If an investigation substantiates a Complaint, it is likely that the Employee's employment will be terminated.

4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Diocese is committed to continuous improvement through incorporating learnings into policies and guidelines, keeping appropriate records of Complaints and their outcomes, and undertaking regular process reviews.

RELATED POLICIES

Code of Conduct Policy

Managing Psychosocial Hazards Policy

Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy

Integrity in Our Common Mission – National Code of Conduct for those exercising pastoral ministry in the dioceses of the Catholic Church in Australia (2023)

Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Chancery and Parishes Policy

Privacy Policy

Work Health & Safety Policy

RELATED GUIDELINES

Guidelines for Complaint Handling

POLICY REVIEW

Review of this Policy will be undertaken every three years by the Head of PPBB in consultation with Legal Counsel and approved by the Bishop.

REVISION/ MODIFICATION HISTORY

Date	Version	Title	Summary of Changes	Approval Date	Commencement Date
Apr 2009	1.	Grievance Policy	N/A	Apr 2009	Apr 2009
Apr 2011	2.	Grievance Policy	Review	Apr 2011	Apr 2011
Feb 2017	3.	Management of Concerns, Complaints and Commendations	Review	Feb 2017	Feb 2017
Aug 2018	3.	Management of Concerns, Complaints and Commendations	Review	Aug 2018	Aug 2018
Aug 2018 v2	4	Management of Concerns, Complaints and Commendations	Review	Aug 2018	Aug 2018
Mar 2021	5	Complaint Handling Policy	Review	Mar 2021	Mar 2021
Nov 2021	6	Complaint Handling Policy	Review	Jul 2021	Nov 2021
June 2022	7	Complaint Handling Policy	Review	Jun 2022	Jun 2022
November 2025	8	Complaint Handling Policy	Review	Nov 2025	Nov 2025

APPROVAL DATE/ REVISION SCHEDULE

Approved by: Bishop Anthony Randazzo

Date: 12 November 2025

To be revised: November 2028