



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

CHANCERY AND PARISHES – NON EMPLOYEES

COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY (CHILD/VULNERABLE ADULT)

APPLICATION

This Complaint Handling Policy (Child/ Vulnerable Adult) (**Policy**) applies to applies to complaints about the conduct of individuals who are

- (a) **Clergy** of the Diocese;
- (b) **Associates** of the Diocese (including contractors, volunteers and work experience students) who are not employees or trainees; or
- (c) part of the **General Public**.

This Policy applies only to complaints involving, related to, or in connection with a Child or Vulnerable Adult.

DEFINITIONS

Child / Children means a person(s) who is under the age of 18, as defined by the *Children Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW) and any other amending or repealing statutes.

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 Adult means any person(s) 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 Associates, Clergy, and the community, with the aim of providing a safe and respectful environment for all. The Bishop recognises, however, that at times complaints will be made.

The Bishop acknowledges that power imbalances may make it difficult for some people to come forward with a complaint. Managing complaints sensitively and confidentially, and supporting

complainants and any Associates or Clergy associated with the complaint, is of utmost importance throughout the complaints handling process. Associates and Clergy have the option to submit a complaint anonymously and steps will be taken to protect anyone who makes a complaint from reprisals, adverse treatment, or victimisation.

Sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination will not be tolerated and are unlawful and prohibited under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). Complaints regarding sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination will be managed in accordance with the *Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Chancery and Parishes Policy*.

This Policy provides a process for complaints to be managed and addressed in accordance with canon and civil law, taking into account the nature, circumstances, and seriousness of the complaint.

The Diocese is committed to ensuring there are easy to follow guidelines for making complaints, managing complaints, supporting Complainants, resolving complaints fairly and promptly. The Diocese is also committed to ensuring continuous improvement to its complaint handling policies.

This Policy outlines the Chancery and parishes approach to raising and promptly addressing complaints or concerns involving a Child or Vulnerable Adult.

A complaint concerning a Child or Vulnerable Adult is any complaint made by anyone, that involves, relates to, or occurs in connection with a Child or Vulnerable Adult.

1. GUIDELINES FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT

The Diocese encourages all people to communicate concerns and complaints, including those that are anonymous.

The Diocese acknowledges cultural diversity and individual needs, including those of Children and Vulnerable Adults, and makes all efforts to be objective when addressing complaints.

1.1 Complaints Concerning a Child or Vulnerable Adult

When a complaint involves a Child or a Vulnerable Adult, the complaint will be managed in accordance with applicable Diocese guidelines and will involve Safeguarding Broken Bay (SBB), the Vicar General (VG) and, if necessary, Head of People and Participation Broken Bay (PPBB).

Examples of complaints that involve a Child or Vulnerable Adult may include alleged Criminal Conduct by a Member or Clergy, defined as conduct which constitutes a criminal offence;

MANAGING COMPLAINTS AND SUPPORTING COMPLAINANTS

2.1 Managing Complaints

All Associates and Clergy will have access to this Policy. A complaint may be resolved informally, or may involve a more formal process, such as an investigation.

Any information obtained in the course of an investigation will only be shared with the appropriate people and will be treated with sensitivity and kept confidential in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and applicable Diocesan policies. All relevant parties will be kept up to date with the progress of their complaints.

All efforts will be made to avoid conflicts of interest and, if a conflict of interest is identified, the matter will be referred to the Legal Counsel (LC), VG, Bishop or an external investigator.

Following an investigation, where an allegation is found to be intentionally falsified, the Diocese may decide not to investigate, and the Complainant will be notified of the decision.

If a complainant is found to be an unreasonable complainant, the Diocese may close the complaint.

2.2 Reporting to the OCG

If there is an allegation of reportable conduct made about a Member or Clergy, 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.

2.3 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 Managing Appeals

A complaint may be appealed once an outcome has been advised. Any appeal must be notified to PPBB and LC or the VG within 10 calendar days of being advised of the outcome of the complaint.

The notification must include reasons for the appeal.

Upon receipt of the notification, either PPBB, LC or the VG will determine how the appeal will be managed which may include review by an external party.

2.5 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. It must be noted, however, that anonymous complaints can be more difficult to investigate.

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

If there is insufficient detail to conduct an investigation, and if the complainant is known, the complainant will be asked to provide further details. If the complainant cannot provide further details, or the further details provided remain insufficient to conduct an investigation, then the complainant will be advised that no further action will be taken.

2.6 Supporting Complainants

The Diocese acknowledges the need to ensure both the physical and mental well-being of both the complainant and any Associates, Clergy, and General Public involved in the complaint management process.

The Diocese will respond to complaints compassionately, appropriately, and in a timely manner, and complainants will be afforded procedural fairness and support services, such as a support person, where appropriate.

3 RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

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

If following an investigation a complaint is substantiated, actions can include mediation, a verbal or written apology, coaching of Associates or Clergy, and, where appropriate, disciplinary action.

A complaint will be resolved when investigations have been completed, and any appeal process finalised, or if the Diocese closes the complaint because the complainant has been found to be an unreasonable complainant.

4 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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

RELATED POLICIES

Code of Conduct 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)
Privacy Policy
Volunteer Engagement 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
Nov 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