

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Date	15/11/2018
Policy Number	BCOC2-08
Status	Version 4
Revised & Approved by Board on	21/10/2024
Scheduled review date	10/2027

Introduction

Berwick Church of Christ (the Church) is committed to providing a work environment that is safe, enjoyable and free from bullying.

Workplace bullying has a detrimental effect on the Church and its people. Bullying can cause significant issues, affecting teams, turnover, productivity and results. It creates an unsafe working environment and can result in serious injuries and illnesses. Workplace bullying is against the law. For these reasons bullying will not be tolerated by the Church.

Please refer to our Scriptural References for our Safety Policies to understand the foundational principles for our policies.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to communicate the Church's zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment in any form and to set out the process to follow should any instances be reported.

Scope

This Policy applies to Staff, Contractors and Volunteers. Bullying will not be tolerated by any associated stakeholders such as participants, visitors or suppliers.

Definitions

Please refer to the General Definitions located at www.berwickchurch.org.au/policies.

Responsibilities

Elders and Pastors Responsibilities:

- Elders and Pastors have an important role to play in terms of fostering a culture that does not tolerate or encourage harassment, bullying or workplace violence and must ensure that they do not engage in any conduct of this nature themselves.
- Ensure that Staff and Volunteers understand this policy and consequences of non-compliance.
- When Elders and Pastors observe harassment, bullying or workplace violence occurring, they must take steps to prevent such conduct from continuing and warn the individual(s) involved of the disciplinary consequences that may entail if such behaviour continues (disciplinary measures may include termination of employment).
- Elders and Pastors will treat reports of bullying seriously and act promptly.
- Elders and Pastors must treat grievances raised by Staff and Volunteers in accordance with the Grievance Handling Policy.

Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Not to engage in harassment, bullying or workplace violence;
- not to aid, abet or encourage others to engage in harassment, bullying or workplace violence;
- to behave in a responsible and professional manner;
- treat others in the Church with courtesy and respect;
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of others; and
- to be fair and honest in their dealings with others.

What is Workplace Bullying?

Workplace bullying occurs when an individual, or a group of individuals, repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards a member of staff or volunteer, or a group of staff or volunteers, and the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. It includes both physical and psychological abuse.

Bullying behaviours can take many different forms, from the obvious (direct) to the subtle (indirect).

The following are some examples of direct bullying:

- Abusive, insulting or inappropriate language or comments;
- violent, aggressive or intimidating conduct;
- belittling or humiliating comments;
- victimisation; and
- inappropriate practical jokes or initiations.

The following are some examples of indirect bullying:

- Unjustified criticism or complaints;
- deliberately excluding someone from activities;
- withholding information that is vital for effective work performance;
- setting unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines;
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level;
- denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of the person;
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours; and
- changing work arrangements such as rosters and leave to deliberately inconvenience a particular person or persons.

The above examples are not an exhaustive list of bullying behaviours. They are indicative of the type and pattern of behaviours that may constitute bullying and are therefore unacceptable to the Church. Should staff or volunteers require clarification on whether or not the conduct (not listed in this policy) constitutes bullying, they should contact a Pastor in the first instance.

The Church recognises that workplace bullying can take place through a number of different methods of communication including face to face, email, text messaging and social media platforms. As such, this policy applies to all methods of communication through which workplace bullying can take place.

This policy applies to behaviours that occur:

- in connection with work, even if it occurs outside normal working hours;
- during work activities, for example, when dealing with participants;
- at church related events and functions, for example, at meetings; and
- on social media platforms where staff or volunteers interact.

What is not Bullying?

Reasonable management action taken by Pastors or Leaders to direct and control the way work is carried out is not considered to be workplace bullying, if the action is taken in a reasonable and lawful way.

The following are some examples of reasonable management action:

- realistic and achievable performance goals, standards and deadlines;
- fair and appropriate rostering and allocation of working hours;
- transferring a member of staff or volunteer to another area or role for operational reasons;
- deciding not to select a member of staff or volunteer for a promotion where a fair and transparent process is followed;
- informing a member of staff or volunteer about unsatisfactory work performance in an honest, fair and constructive way;
- informing a member of staff or volunteer about unreasonable behaviour in an objective and confidential way;
- implementing organisational changes or restructuring; and
- taking disciplinary action, including suspension or terminating employment where appropriate or justified in the circumstances.

Other Unacceptable Conduct

Single incidents of unreasonable behaviour (such as harassment, violent or threatening behaviour) can also present a risk to health and safety and will not be tolerated. Harassment is considered to be any form of behaviour that is:

- unwanted;
- inappropriate, humiliates or intimidates; or
- creates a hostile environment.

Where such conduct occurs towards a person due to a particular characteristic of that person (such as when based on sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital status, age, disability, ethnicity or race, etc.) this may be unlawful under discrimination and equal opportunity law, even if it is limited to a single incident.

All staff or volunteers are required to comply with the Church's Equal Employment Opportunity, Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy which provides further guidance in this area.

The Church will not tolerate any form of workplace violence (occupational violence). Workplace violence is considered to be any incident where a person is abused, threatened or assaulted at the Church or while they're working. It can cause both physical and psychological harm. Workplace violence can be directed or initiated by any person associated with the Church, such as a member of staff, volunteer, contractor, subcontractor, participant, partner or visitor.

It includes (but is not limited to):

- Any type of direct physical contact such as punching, pushing, tripping, blocking of someone's way, etc.;
- Screaming/yelling at someone;
- Swearing at someone;
- Abusive communication, such as texts, emails or other correspondence;
- Intentionally coughing or spitting on someone;
- Hazing or initiation for new/young staff or volunteers;
- Any form of unwanted physical contact.

Reporting Issues

Anyone affected by bullying, harassment, workplace violence or other forms of unacceptable behaviour must report the incident/s to a Pastor as soon as possible. If this option is not suitable, reports can be made to the Executive Pastor, Senior Pastor, or Safety Contact Person.

Staff and Volunteers can also use the incident report form to complete a report of any incident, near miss, or hazard of this nature.

Once a report has been made, the appropriate Pastor will support the member of staff or volunteer in the next steps. The Church's priority is to eliminate any form of bullying or harassment and appropriately support affected staff or volunteers. This may involve supporting the member of staff or volunteer to make a complaint.

Complaints

Complaints of bullying, harassment and workplace violence will be taken seriously and will be handled in accordance with the Church's Grievance Handling Policy.

Complaints will be dealt with sympathetically and in a confidential manner (except where the Church deems it is necessary to disclose information in order to properly deal with the complaint).

Persons making a complaint will not be victimised or treated unfairly for making a complaint.

If the claim is found to be substantiated, the Church will act in accordance with its Discipline and Termination Policy.

Please note that any member of Staff or Volunteer found to have fabricated a complaint may be subject to disciplinary action under the Discipline and Termination Policy, up to and including termination of employment.

Other Policies

Staff and volunteers are encouraged to read this policy in conjunction with other relevant policies, including:

- Code of Conduct or Minors Code of Conduct
- Equal Employment Opportunity, Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy
- Grievance Handling Policy
- Discipline and Termination Policy

Raising Concerns

We encourage all staff and volunteers within the Church and our congregation to report any concerns they have about safety and wellbeing. We are committed to handling all concerns seriously, legally and in a child-focused way (if concerning children).

If you have any concerns about the safety of someone at the Church, we strongly encourage you to share your concern with one of our Pastors or the Safety Contact Person and fill in our [Reporting Concerns Form](#).

Policy Review Statement

This policy will be reviewed regularly as a part of the ongoing review and continuous improvement of all the Church's policies and procedures. In the case where changes to legislation and regulations that may impact this policy, a review will be carried out within 30 days of the change to legislation, regulation, or other legislative requirements.

If you have any feedback you would like to make about this policy, please email policies@bcoc.com.au.

Safety Contact Person

Name:	Karen Fletcher
Phone number:	0438 886 337
Email:	karenf@bcoc.com.au
Other contact details:	Office: 9702 1011 (Mondays to Thursdays)

Applicable Legislation, References and Other Policies

Item	Description
<i>Fair Work Amendment Act 2013(Cth)</i>	Bullying is defined under section 789FD
<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i>	Sexual harassment is defined under section 28A
<i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</i>	Section 18C prohibits offensive behaviour based on racial hatred
<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>	Section 25 prohibits harassment in relation to an employee's disability.
<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC)</i>	If someone is bullied because of a personal characteristic - it is a form of discrimination.
<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (VIC)</i>	The Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act) is the main workplace health and safety law in Victoria
<i>BCOC Policies</i>	All Church policies can be obtained from the website link, www.berwickchurch.org.au/policies