

GRIEVANCE HANDLING POLICY

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Introduction

At Berwick Church of Christ ("the Church") we aim to foster good relations amongst staff and volunteers. We acknowledge that the enjoyment you experience in your job is reflected in how well you work and how well you relate to your colleagues and participants.

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

Scope

This Grievance Handling Policy outlines the procedures you should follow to try to resolve a grievance and also outlines the steps the Church will take to resolve your grievance if you make a formal complaint.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to allow you to have such problems, referred to as grievances, addressed internally in a timely and confidential manner.

Definitions

Please refer to the General Definitions document – www.berwickchurch.org.au/policies.

Responsibilities

Elders:

- Ensure Pastors are appropriately trained to manage and investigate grievances.

Pastors:

- Act promptly to follow up on any grievances reported.
- Treat all grievances confidentially.
- Document all grievances and actions taken.
- Refer any ongoing grievances or matters that cannot be informally resolved for a formal investigation.

Staff and Volunteers:

- Follow this procedure for reporting all grievances.

Policy

A grievance can be about anything done, or not done, by management or another staff member or volunteer, which you feel affects you unfairly or unjustly. A grievance can also be about discrimination, harassment, bullying or any other employment related decision or behaviour that you think is unfair, unjust or upsetting.

What Are Your Options If You Have A Grievance?

In general, there are three options to consider if you have a grievance, being:

- **Deal with the matter informally.**
A grievance can be dealt with informally by approaching the person involved in your grievance if you feel comfortable in doing so. You can tell them that their behaviour, decision, actions, etc. was unfair, inappropriate, discriminatory, etc., and why you believe this to be so. The person may have been totally unaware of the effect of their behaviour or decision on you. By telling them you will give them a chance to

redress the situation. This may not be appropriate in some cases, particularly if you do not feel comfortable with speaking to the person.

- **Speak to a Pastor.**

If you do not want to speak to the person directly, you can tell a Pastor about your grievance. They should be able to tell you what your options are. They may approach the person complained about and talk to them informally about your grievance. They may decide to take more formal action. Generally, they will seek your approval before doing anything – although sometimes they may decide that taking action will be necessary even if you do not wish them to do so (for example where failure to do so poses a health and safety risk). If your grievance is about a Pastor, you may wish to speak to the Executive Pastor or Senior Pastor. Alternatively, you may decide to make a formal complaint.

- **Make a formal complaint.**

If you do decide to make a formal complaint, this can be done by putting the complaint in writing and reporting it to a Pastor (or the Executive Pastor or Senior Pastor). The written complaint should contain a description of the incident(s), decision, behaviour in question, the time and date of the incident(s), the names of any witnesses, your signature and date of the complaint. Alternatively, you can complete the online [Reporting Concerns Form](#).

If You Make a Formal Complaint How Will Your Grievance Be Handled?

Grievances will be handled in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Grievances will be treated with the utmost confidentiality (except where the Church deems it is necessary to disclose the complaint for the purpose of dealing with it effectively; disclosure will be no wider than is strictly necessary). It is important that you also maintain confidentiality and do not discuss your complaint with others unless the Church gives you permission to do so.
- Any grievance will be taken seriously, handled impartially and any steps taken will be in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness;
- Staff/Volunteers who raise grievances are protected from victimisation;
- Grievances will be dealt with promptly, taking into account all of the circumstances; and
- Generally, you may have a support person with you at any stage of the process.

The Investigation

Where a grievance cannot be resolved informally and the Church deems an investigation is required, the matter will be investigated by such appropriate person as deemed by the Church. This may be an external investigator.

How the investigation is to be conducted is at the complete discretion of the Church. The following are general guidelines only.

During the investigation, you will generally be interviewed first, following with any witnesses, the person against whom the complaint is made, and any other relevant people will be independently interviewed. Both you and the person against whom the complaint is made will generally be allowed to have a support person present when the interview is being conducted.

- If the complaint is substantiated, appropriate action will be taken (see below).
- If the complaint is unsubstantiated, you will generally be given an explanation as to why that finding was made.
- If the complaint is found to have been fabricated or vexatious, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken against you up to and including termination of employment.

At any point in a staff member's employment, the Church may suspend a staff member on full pay (i.e. direct them to not attend work). It might be appropriate in some circumstances to suspend a staff member involved in a complaint matter so that the matter can be investigated fully. This should not be seen as a punishment and should not suggest any finding of wrongdoing on behalf of the staff member or staff that are suspended. Generally during a period of suspension, a staff member will be required not to contact any volunteers or church members or other staff members or to discuss the matter with anyone else. Breach of this requirement could of itself be grounds for disciplinary action.

If the person whom the complaint is made is a volunteer, the Church may require the volunteer not to attend the Church for any reason while the matter is being investigated. This should not be seen as a punishment and should not suggest any finding of wrongdoing on behalf of the volunteer. Generally during this period of not attending the Church, the volunteer will be required not to contact any other staff, volunteers or church members or discuss the matter with anyone else. Breach of this requirement could of itself be grounds for disciplinary action.

What Are the Possible Outcomes?

If the investigation reveals that your complaint is valid, a number of actions may be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint. The person against whom the complaint is made may be asked to give you a written apology, they

may be given a written warning, counselling, or may be subjected to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or if a volunteer, asked to leave the Church.

If the investigation is inconclusive, i.e. the complaint cannot be proven due to lack of evidence or the conduct is not sufficiently serious to justify disciplinary action, the Church may nevertheless take a number of actions. These may include training and/or monitoring of relevant staff or volunteers.

If the complaint is found to have been fabricated or raised vexatiously, appropriate action may be taken against you in accordance with the Disciplinary and Termination Policy including counselling, a formal warning, or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or if a volunteer, asked to leave the Church, depending on the seriousness of the circumstances.

What If You Are Not Satisfied with The Outcome?

If you are not satisfied with the way in which your grievance was handled, initially, you may discuss the issue with the Senior Pastor.

If you are still unsatisfied, you have the option of raising your complaint with an outside agency, such as SafeWork, the Fair Work Ombudsman or the Australian Human Rights Commission or the relevant State Anti-Discrimination Board or the Safe Places team at CCVT, and other bodies. You may also wish to consider making a claim in the Fair Work Commission or the court. In appropriate circumstances you may wish to seek advice from a lawyer.

Other Policies

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

- Code of Conduct or Minors Code of Conduct
- Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Equal Employment Opportunity, Discrimination and Sexual Harassment 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 safety 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 cycle of all Church policies and procedures.

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:	Church Office: 9702 1011 (Mondays to Fridays)

Applicable Legislation, References and Other Policies

Item	Description
<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)</i>	Federal Legislative duties and responsibilities of organisations.
<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)</i>	The <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)</i> (OH&S Act) is the main workplace health and safety law in Victoria. Click on the following links to access the current Victorian OH&S Act , OH&S regulations as well as other relevant legislation .
For details of all Worksafe Acts & Regulations in Victoria.	https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/all-acts-and-regulations
BCOC Policies	www.berwickchurch.org.au/policies