

# Bankstown Community Church

## Complaint Procedure and Policy

### Overview

Bankstown Community Church (**BCC**) is committed to ensuring that the church and its operations are conducted with excellence. BCC recognises that there may be times when issues arise that require BCC to resolve difficulties, grievances and complaints in a prompt, and equitable manner. The procedure sets out the process by which this will occur.

### Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- provide guidance in the handling of complaints;
- provide a process where complaints are handled consistently, equitably, and ensuring privacy; and
- inform staff and leaders of their responsibilities regarding handling of complaints.

BCC is committed to the early and informal resolution of complaints. Complainants should attempt to resolve complaints in an informal way with the person directly involved.

### Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Bullying</b> include:	Bullying of any kind is neither tolerated nor able to take place. Bullying can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exclusion from a group or activity</li><li>• Intimidation</li><li>• Extortion</li></ul>
<b>Complainant</b> complaint.	The person/s that has lodged, or is considering lodging, a grievance or
<b>Duty of Care</b>	To do everything reasonably practicable to protect others from harm
<b>Informal</b>	The initial stage of the complaints procedure. A complainant should attempt to resolve complaints at this stage of the process.
<b>Formal</b> complaint can be	If the complaint is unable to be resolved at the informal stage a formal made
<b>Respondent</b> Church Elder	The person responding to the complaint, ministry leader, senior pastor or
<b>Unlawful</b>	An action in relation to matters prohibited by law
<b>Vulnerable people</b>	People who do not have the ability to advocate for themselves, are less able to protect themselves or are at risk of harm.

## Complaints Procedure

BCC seeks to resolve issues, difficulties, grievances and complaints in a prompt, impartial and just manner. Complainants should attempt to resolve complaints in an informal way with the person directly involved. The method of resolving complaints will differ depending on the specifics of the complaint. The complaint may be informal or formal in nature. All parties involved in a complaint must participate in the resolution of the matter in good faith. Leaders and members of the church are expected to conduct themselves in line with biblical principles. All parties involved are to be treated with respect and impartiality. The principles of natural justice should be observed. This includes that the matter will have a fair hearing and to have a decision made by an unbiased decision-maker. The Church will abide by legislative responsibilities at all times. This includes reporting to authorities when appropriate.

### Informal Complaint Process

A complaint can be made in different ways e.g. in person, by telephone, in writing, online. Where possible a complainant is to raise the matter directly with the relevant Ministry Leader as soon as practicable. If the matter involves allegations of, or suspected abuse, the matter is to be directly referred to the Safety Officer using the Incident form or if appropriate the Child Protection Reporting forms. The safety Officer will take the appropriate steps under their formal responsibilities. This notification should occur as soon as practicable.

The preferred method of communication of these matters is in person. Matters can be raised through the identification of red flags by a team leader, via a third party sharing concerns with a team leader or through direct disclosure to a team leader from the person.

The team leader will:

1. Receive Complaint: Listen to the complainant and provide advice on options available to the complainant, including providing advice on managing the matter themselves;
2. Assess Risks: The team leader should assess the complaint and if necessary (abuse) refer the matter to the Safety Officer and fill in an Incident form.
3. Otherwise Manage the Complaint: To manage the complaint:
  - a. Acknowledge the complaint: Respond seriously and impartially and deal with the complaint promptly. Advise the complainant and respondent of the responsibilities of all parties as outlined in the WHS Policy.
  - b. Maintain the confidentiality of the complaint, consider the wishes of the complainant wherever possible, but this may not include taking no action where duty of care requirements need to be considered;
  - c. Gather Information:
    - i. Seek a response to the allegations from the respondent.
    - ii. Provide copies of relevant policies and procedures, if needed;
    - iii. Ask the complainant:
      1. What other avenues they have explored to try and resolve the matter,
      2. What action they are requesting, and
      3. What expectations they have for an outcome.
    - iv. Examine the complaint and the response.
    - v. Pursue any questions and speak to other relevant parties (Check the facts)
    - vi. Evaluate any relevant documents and information and consider mitigating factors
    - vii. Seek advice from a more senior leader if unsure.

4. Resolve: Propose a resolution, where appropriate, with input from the complainant and respondent; and
5. Implement: Implement or facilitate the implementation of the resolution, if appropriate.
6. Record Keeping: Document and keep on file the outcomes of the agreed resolution.

### **Formal Complaint Process**

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the informal complaint, they can submit a formal complaint to the Church Elders. To activate a formal complaint, the complainant needs to have completed the informal complaints process first.

If the matter involves allegations of, or suspected abuse, the matter is to be directly referred to the Safety Officer so they can implement appropriate procedures. This notification should occur as soon as practicable. The preferred method of communication of these matters is in person. Matters can be raised through the identification of red flags by a team leader, via a third party sharing concerns with a team leader or through direct disclosure to a team leader from the person.

The Safety Officer will work with the Elders to:

1. Manage the Complaint: To manage the complaint
  - a. Acknowledge the complaint: Respond seriously and impartially and deal with the complaint promptly. Advise the complainant and respondent of the responsibilities of all parties as outlined in the WHS Policy.
  - b. Maintain the confidentiality of the complaint, consider the wishes of the complainant wherever possible, but this may not include taking no action where duty of care requirements need to be considered;
  - c. Gather Information:
    - i. Collate and review information from the completed informal complaint process
    - ii. Document the complaint using the Incident Report Form
    - iii. Seek a response to the allegations from the respondent.
    - iv. Provide copies of relevant policies and procedures, if needed;
    - v. Examine the complaint and the response.
    - vi. Pursue any questions and speak to other relevant parties (Check the facts)
    - vii. Evaluate any relevant documents and information and consider mitigating factors
    - viii. Seek advice from appropriately qualified professionals.
2. Resolve: Propose a resolution, where appropriate, with input from the complainant and respondent; and
3. Implement: Implement or facilitate the implementation of the resolution, if appropriate.
4. Record Keeping: Document and keep on file the outcomes of the agreed resolution. Obtain signatures of all parties on the Incident Report Form.

## **Appeal of Outcome**

Once the Safety Officer has responded to the complaint, the Complainant has ten working days to submit an appeal. Appeals are submitted in writing to the Elders.

The Elders will:

1. Maintain the confidentiality of the complaint;
2. Examine the complaint and the response to date;
3. Collate and review information from the completed informal and formal complaint process;
4. Consider the wishes of the complainant wherever possible, but this may not include taking no action where duty of care requirements need to be considered;
5. Respond seriously and impartially and deal with the complaint promptly;
6. Pursue any questions and speak to other relevant parties, if needed;
7. Evaluate any relevant documents and information and consider mitigating factors;
8. Seek advice from CCCAust or other respected Church Leader;
9. Provide outcome, where appropriate, with input from the complainant and respondent; and
10. Implement or facilitate the implementation of the resolution, if appropriate.

## **Escalation beyond the Local Church**

If a complainant is still unsatisfied with the response from the Church Elders, or the complaint is against the Elders, the church would need to decide how they would process future steps. Some options could include

- Seeking advice or support from their local State body
- Seeking advice or support from the CCCAust Board or a representative
- Referring the matter to the local Work Safe contact in the State.

The local church would need to define for the Policy what their process is to ensure there is an independent support group who could act on the complaint, if all other attempts to solve the problem do not reach a solution.