



Complaints and Allegations Policy

POL-0003

Statement

The Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod believes that all people are created in the image of God. The Church therefore accepts every individual regardless of race, age, creed or gender. As a Christian community, the Church believes that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance and that our relationships with each other are to express love and respect and are never to be abused. The Church does not tolerate any abuse, exploitation, harm, harassment or misconduct towards any person, as this behaviour is destructive to God's people and violates the love we know in Jesus Christ.

The Church (also called **we** or **us**) means the functions and activities of the Uniting Church in Australia —

- within and in relation to the bounds of the Queensland Synod; and
- outside the bounds of the Queensland Synod (where managed by parts of the organisation located within the bounds of the Queensland Synod),

under the *Uniting Church in Australia Act 1977 (Qld)* which are numerous and varied.

We rely on our members, members-in-association, adherents, ministry agents, volunteers, employees, contractors and advisors of the Church to conduct our functions and activities as our representatives and through them we interact with many persons in many ways.

The Church is committed to calling to account anyone who abuses, grooms, exploits, harms, harasses or engages in any misconduct towards another. The Church recognises that this behaviour occurs when power is used to take advantage of the vulnerability of another.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- every individual, member, member-in-association, adherent, ministry agent, volunteer, employee, contractor and advisor of the Church; and
- every individual with whom one or more of the abovementioned persons interact,

and includes complaints and allegations by and about our representatives.

Similar complaints and allegations against employees or volunteers in Agencies or Schools of the Church are subject to the policies and procedures of those institutions whether or not they are a member, members-in association, adherent, ministry agent, volunteer, employee, contractor or advisor of the Church.

In the event of an inconsistency between this policy, to the extent they are inconsistent and:

- any other complaints or allegations policy, this policy prevails;
- the Church's Regulations or Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice (Code), the Regulations and/or Code, prevails; and
- any legislative requirements, the legislative requirements prevail.

Principles

- 1 We are committed to ensuring that when a complaint or allegation is raised all people involved are afforded compassion and dignity.



- 2 All individuals have a right to raise complaints and allegations regarding the behaviour, or suspicion of behaviour, of any individual member, adherent, ministry agent, volunteer, employee, contractor and advisor of the Church.
- 3 All complaints and allegations raised will be taken seriously and actioned appropriately by us.
- 4 We will respond diligently to all reports of suspected or actual harm.
- 5 All complaints and allegations will be responded to by applying the principles of procedural fairness at all times.
- 6 Where a complaint or allegation which includes an aspect of criminal conduct or suspicion of criminal conduct, the person making the complaint will:
 - (a) be encouraged by the Church to approach the relevant statutory authorities, including police; and
 - (b) be advised that the Church has the practice of informing the relevant statutory authorities, including police.
- 7 We recognise that complaints and allegations are traumatic for all of the Church community but most of all for the people directly involved and will offer support to all people directly affected by the complaint.
- 8 We will not tolerate reprisals against any person making a complaint and action will be taken against any person who is found to engage in such behaviour.
- 9 We expect the highest standard of care and ethical behaviour from those individuals charged with responding to complaints and allegations for us.
- 10 All parties will be given the opportunity to tell their story in a safe and trusting environment.
- 11 All personal information (including sensitive information) of all individuals disclosed as part of the complaint or allegation or the ensuing process will be handled by us in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

Dictionary

Term	Meaning
allegation	means a claim of a fact by one party against another which, until proven, remains merely an assertion and includes but is limited to an allegation of physical or emotional harm, spiritual abuse, grooming, sexual abuse and/or other behaviour considered to be inappropriate by the person making the allegation
complaint	means a written expression of dissatisfaction or concern made to the Church in relation an activity, function, action or inaction of the Church where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected and includes but is not limited to a complaint of physical or emotional harm, spiritual abuse, grooming, sexual abuse and/or other behaviour considered to be inappropriate by the person making the complaint
grooming	refers to the process of an adult using their power to establish a special trusting friendship to force a child to engage in sexual activity. Grooming includes the conditioning of parents, other adults and church leaders to consider the relationship with the child to be “normal” (not sexualised). The grooming of a child is a preparatory act essential to the subsequent crime of child sexual abuse and the two elements are inextricably linked (Randhawa & Jacobs, 2013)
relevant statutory authorities	includes the police, government agencies and government instrumentalities who must be notified when certain complaints are made known to a third party



The other terms used in this policy have the same meaning as defined in this policy itself, the Regulations and Queensland Synod By-laws.

References & Related Documents

- Uniting Church in Australia Regulations
- Uniting Church in Australia Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice
- Privacy Policy (POL-0001)
- Complaints and Allegations – Initial Response Process (PRO-0001)
- Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Policy (Assembly)
- Conflicts Policy (Qld) (POL-0002)
- Child Safe Church Policy 2013 (Qld)
- Prevention of Workplace Harassment Policy (Qld Synod) (POL-PEO-01)
- Grievance Management Policy (Qld Synod) (POL-PEO-03)
- UnitingCare Queensland (HRM03, HRM06; HRM08 & HRM14)
- UnitingCare Community (SPO1, SP15, SP18, SP19 & SP20) & (HRM01, HRM12 & HRM18)
- BlueCare policies and processes
- Wesley Mission Brisbane policies and processes

Revisions & Reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author / Reviewer	Endorsed	Approved
1.0	05.06.14	Created to replace pre-existing policy and processes contained in Chapter 11 of Healthy Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People & Projects Manager • Complaints Legal Counsel • Risk & Insurance Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Secretary • Qld Synod Royal Commission Task Group • Presbytery Ministers 	SSC (#14.148)
1.1	06.02.15	Amended for consistency with the Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Policy (Assembly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Legal Counsel • Manager Risk & Insurance • Professional Standards Advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Secretary • Associate General Secretary • Qld Synod Royal Commission Task Group 	SSC (#15.008)
DUE	01.01.17	Review cycle – every 3 years			