The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Tool

FACT SHEET 1
If you are the Complainant and your Complaint is about a Member or Adherent

(Regulation 5.2)

Purpose of the Process

To address conduct concerns through **pastoral care, guidance, restoration of relationship**, and—if restoration is not possible—formal action as set out below.

How do I make a complaint?

- You must make your complaint in writing.
- Your complaint should, in the first instance, be sent to the Synod's Complaints Officer at the following email: complaints@ucaqld.com.au
- You should succinctly set out the conduct that you wish to complaint about.
- Your complaint will, in the vast majority of cases, be referred to a member of the Church Council, unless your complaint is against a member of the Church Council.
- If your complaint is against a member of the Church Council, it will generally be referred to the Presbytery.

Where does my Complaint Go?

- **Ordinary Member/Adherent:** In the vast majority of cases, if your complaint is against a Member or Adherent, it will be sent to your Church Council which will handle the matter. It may be your complaint is dealt with under another Synod Policy, Procedure or process. You will be informed about how your complaint is being dealt with.

- **Church Councillor:** In the vast majority of cases, if your complaint is against a Church Councillor, it will be sent to the Presbytery which will handle the matter. It may be your complaint is dealt with under another Synod Policy, Procedure or process. You will be informed about how your complaint is being dealt with.

What can I expect?

- Your complaint is acknowledged and recorded and will be dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.

- You may be offered pastoral, spiritual or financial support if within the resources of the Congregation.

- The Church Council or Presbytery will attempt **visitation, pastoral counsel or guidance** with the respondent.

- You may be contacted for clarification, but usually **no formal investigation** will be conducted by whomever is handling your complaint.

- If the complaint alleges sexual misconduct, it is dealt with in accordance with the Assembly's Member or Adherent –- Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Complaints Policy.
- You will be informed in writing of outcomes.

What are the Possible Outcomes?

- **Restoration successful:** No further action.
- **Restoration unsuccessful:** Consideration will be given to whether it is appropriate to:
    - Suspend the rights/privileges of the respondent
    - Remove the respondent's name from the membership roll
    - For Church Councillors: remove the respondent from the Council, suspend, or direct the respondent to cease responsibilities
    - Acknowledge the current situation and consider implementing appropriate strategies to manage the ongoing relationship
- The Respondent may be encouraged to observe any applicable provision of the Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders, where applicable and relevant.

What are my rights to appeal?

- **Appeal**:
    - If Church Council makes the decision → Appeal to Presbytery
    - If Presbytery makes the decision → Appeal to Moderator's Appeal Committee
    - Appeals are limited and must be based on procedural fairness.
- **What if I have concerns with the process**?
    - If you have concerns with the process as it is taking place, you should raise those concerns with the person handling the matter
    - If your concern relates to the person handling the matter having a conflict of interest or being biased or some other concern → fill out the Form (located on the Hub) – *"Concerns about a Conflict of Interest / Bias / Other"* and send that Form to the person mentioned in that Form:
        - the Presbytery → for concerns about a Member or Adherent (including a Church Councillor)
        - the Synod's Complaints Officer → for concerns about a Presbytery officer

Related documents

Assembly's Member or Adherent – Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Complaints Policy
Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders
Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice

Form – Tool – Concerns about a Conflict of Interest / Bias / Other

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Adherent	means a person not being a member but recognised as sharing in the life of the Congregation and within the pastoral responsibility of the Church.
Bias	is determined by considering whether a fair-minded person who is informed of the relevant facts might reasonably apprehend that the decision-maker might not bring an impartial and unprejudiced mind to the resolution of the matter.
Complainant	means a member, adherent or Minister who is making a complaint.
Complaint	means a written complaint made by a Complainant: (a) against a member or adherent; (b) against an office holder; or (c) against a Minister describing, in each case, the conduct complained of.
Conflict of Interest	generally refers to an actual, potential or perceived conflict arising from the facts. Such conflicts can come in many forms, but the more common types of conflicts arise from personal, financial or relational interests infecting the impartiality of the decision-maker.
Member	means a baptised member, confirmed member, and a member-in-association.
Procedural Fairness	includes ensuring: (a) the Respondent is given sufficient information regarding the complaint to know what is being alleged; (b) the Respondent is given the opportunity and sufficient time to prepare and present a response; (c) no person who is closely associated with the Complainant or Respondent deals with the complaint; and (d) the entity that deals with the complaint remains impartial.
Respondent	means the member, adherent, office holder or Minister against whom a complaint has been made.

Term	Meaning
Support person	means a person not otherwise involved in the complaint process who only provides emotional support to a Complainant, Respondent, or a witness. Note: A support person does not have a right to be heard in the complaint and disciplinary process and is not permitted to represent a party.

Revisions

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