The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Tool

FACT SHEET 3
If you are the Respondent and a Church Member or Adherent

Complaints About a Church Member or Adherent (Reg. 5.2)

Purpose of the Process

To restore relationships within the Church community and address conduct concerns fairly and pastorally.

Who handles the complaint against me?

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

What can I expect?

- You will be informed in writing of the complaint and it will be dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.
- You will be offered **visitation, pastoral care, counsel, or guidance**.
- You may be offered pastoral, spiritual or financial support if within the resources of the Congregation
- You may provide a response or explanation.
- You will be asked to consider **renewing a satisfactory relationship** with the complainant or the Church community.
- 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 may bring a support person.

What are the possible outcomes?

If restoration is successful, no further action will be taken

If restoration is unsuccessful, consideration will be given to:

- Suspension of your rights/privileges as a Member or Adherent

- Removal of your name from the membership roll
- For Church Councillors: removal from Council, suspension, or direction to cease responsibilities
- 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 made the decision → Appeal to Presbytery
    - If Presbytery made the decision → Appeal to Moderator's Appeal Committee
- You must be notified of appeal outcomes in writing.
- **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 *– "Concerns about a Conflict of Interest / Bias / Other"* and send that Form to:
        - 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.

Term	Meaning
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.
Respondent	means the member, adherent, office holder or Minister against whom a complaint has been made.
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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