The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Tool

# FACT SHEET 5
# If you are the Complainant and your Complaint is about an Office Holder

(Reg. 5.3)

**Purpose of the Process**

- To address concerns about the conduct of a person appointed to hold office within the Church, primarily through visitation, pastoral counselling or guidance, with a view to restoring affected relationships and amicably resolving the complaint.

**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
- In the vast majority of cases, your complaint will be referred to the appointing body for the office holder. 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.
- If the complaint involves a number of office holders with more than one appointing body, it should be referred to the entity best placed to deal with the complaint.
- The Complaints Officer may refer your complaint to the Moderator, ex-Moderator, Moderator-Elect or Secretary to determine which entity is best placed to deal with it.

**Where does my complaint go?**

- The appointing body generally handles the complaint.
- If the office holder is a Ministry Agent and the complaint is, or becomes, a CFD complaint, it may be referred to the Moderator for consideration of referral to the CFD, CFC, or back to the appointing body.
- If the complaint alleges sexual misconduct by a Ministry Agent, it is dealt with by the SSMCC under Part 5.6.
- If the complaint alleges sexual misconduct by a lay person, it is dealt with in accordance with the Assembly's Member or Adherent – Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Complaints Policy.

**What can I expect?**

- Your complaint will be dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.
- The appointing body should seek to deal with the complaint pastorally through visitation, pastoral counselling or guidance.
- You may be contacted for clarification or to provide further information.
- You may be offered pastoral, spiritual or financial support if within the resources of the Appointing Body.
- You will be notified in writing of any action taken.

**What are the possible outcomes?**

- The appointing body may help the Respondent discern and fulfil their office, nurture their gifts, and receive encouragement, guidance and support.
- The matter may be referred to alternative dispute resolution.
- The Respondent may be encouraged to observe any applicable Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice or Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders, where relevant and applicable.
- The Respondent may be removed or suspended from office, or conditions may be imposed on the performance of the office.
- A written comment may be made in a report to the relevant Presbytery, or, for a lay person, the relevant Church Council.

**What are my rights to appeal?**

- You may appeal a determination made by the appointing body only on the ground that the appointing body acted contrary to 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 or body handling the matter.
    - If your concern relates to the person or body 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 Synod's Complaints 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. |
| **Appointing body** | is a reference to the Church entity that has appointed a person to hold a particular Office, such as:<br>(a) an Elder who is appointed by the Congregation;<br>(b) a member of Presbytery who holds the office of Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer as appointed by the Presbytery (Regulation 3.6.2);<br>(c) the Moderator who is elected by Synod (Regulation 3.6.3.1); |

| Term | Meaning |
|---|---|
| | (d) the Secretary of the Synod who is appointed by Synod (Regulation 3.6.3.3);<br><br>(e) the President of the Assembly (Regulation 3.6.4.1);<br><br>(f) the General Secretary of the Assembly (Regulation 3.6.4.4); and<br><br>(g) any person appointed to any other body as referred to in Part 3.7 of the Regulations;<br><br>but does not include a member of a Church Council. |
| **Appointment** | when used in reference to a person being appointed to an office, includes electing a person to an office. |
| **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. |
| **CFC** | means the Committee for Counselling |
| **CFD** | means the Committee for Discipline |
| **CFD Complaint** | means a complaint against a Minister:<br><br>(a) that is being dealt with under Part 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 or 5.6 and that alleges conduct as referred to in Regulation 5.7.2(a) to (e); and<br><br>(b) in respect of which a responsible entity at any time while dealing with the complaint under this Part 5 forms an opinion that the allegations, if they were to be substantiated in any future proceedings of the Committee for Discipline under Part 5.7, may warrant the Committee for Discipline determining that the Minister's recognition as a Minister of the Church be withdrawn |
| **Complainant** | means a member, adherent or Minister who is making a complaint. |
| **Complaint** | means a written complaint made by a Complainant:<br><br>(a) against a member or adherent;<br><br>(b) against an office holder; or<br><br>(c) against a Minister<br><br>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 |

| Term | Meaning |
|---|---|
| | 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. |
| **Ministry Agent** | means a Minister as referred to in the Code of Ethics (i.e. Candidates, Community Ministers, Deacons, Deaconesses, Interns, Lay Pastors, Ministers of the Word, Pastors, Youth Workers and Ministers from another denomination serving in an approved placement), and includes a Synod Secretary, Moderator, Assembly General Secretary, President, and Presbytery Minister. |
| **Procedural Fairness** | includes ensuring:<br>(a) the Respondent is given sufficient information regarding the complaint to know what is being alleged;<br>(b) the Respondent is given the opportunity and sufficient time to prepare and present a response;<br>(c) no person who is closely associated with the Complainant or Respondent deals with the complaint; and<br>(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. |
| **Support person** | means a person not otherwise involved in the complaint process who only provides emotional support to a Complainant, Respondent, or a witness.<br>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. |
| **SSMCC** | means the Synod's Sexual Misconduct Complaints Committee. |

## Revisions

| Document number | | XXX-XX | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Version | Approval date | Approved by | Effective date | Policy owner | Policy contact |
| 1.0 | 04.09.2026 | General Secretary | 04.09.2026 | Associate General Secretary | Special Counsel, Synod Legal & Risk |
| Next scheduled review | | 31.12.2026 | | | |