

1. Policy Statement

Peace Christian Church is committed to ensuring that the church is a safe place for everyone. It has adopted a grievance policy which sets out the principles that are to be applied to ensure that the Church provides an avenue for the prompt and fair resolution of complaints as they arise.

2. Complaints that may be resolved under this policy

Peace Christian Church encourages the prompt lodgement of any concerns by church attendees and church members regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination, bullying, as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

1. The Church, or its employees or volunteers having done something wrong.
2. The Church, or its employees or volunteers having failed to do something they should have done.
3. The Church, its employees or volunteers having acted unfairly or impolitely.
4. Issues of volunteer or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant Peace Christian Church Code of Conduct.
5. Issues related to communication between attendees or volunteers.
6. General administrative issues.

Complaints may be brought by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

3. Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy:

1. Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children. Complaints of this nature should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the Church's Child Protection Policy.
2. Employee complaints related to their employment, including complaints about their work, the work environment, or working relationships. Complaints of this nature by employees should be directed to the Senior Minister.

3. Complaints about violence or possible criminal matters should be directed to the Senior Minister who will involve the Police as appropriate.
4. Formal legal proceedings.

4. Complaints Handling Principles

Peace Christian Church is committed to managing complaints under this policy according to the following principles:

1. Complaints will be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.
2. Complaints will be taken seriously.
3. Anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits.
4. Complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner.
5. The Senior Minister will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance.
6. Mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives.
7. Procedural fairness will be provided to all parties, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard.
8. Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible.
9. All parties to the complaints will be supported.
10. Peace Christian Church will give reasonable progress updates.
11. Appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented.
12. Provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted.
13. Complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaints and they will not suffer any other reprisals.
14. The Church will keep records of complaints.
15. The Church's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Church

The Church has the following role and responsibilities:

1. Develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the Church's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.

2. Appropriately communicate the Church's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to attendees, volunteers and employees.
3. Ensure that the Complaints Handling procedures are readily accessible by staff, volunteers and church attendees.
4. Upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling procedures.
5. Ensure that support is provided to all parties to a complaint.
6. Take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.
7. Appropriately implement remedies.
8. Appropriately train relevant employees and volunteers.
9. Keep records.
10. Conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time.
11. Report to the Church's insurer when that is relevant.

5.2 All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

1. Apply and comply with the Church's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.
2. Lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises.
3. Expect that the complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively; in a timely manner; with procedural fairness wherever practicable; and that confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible.
4. To provide complete and factual information in a timely manner about the circumstances that gave rise to the complaint.
5. Not provide deliberately false or misleading information.
6. Not make frivolous or vexatious complaints.
7. Not make defamatory statements.
8. Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner.
9. Act in a non-threatening manner.
10. To be appropriately supported.
11. Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities.
12. Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties.
13. Not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

6. Employees Receiving Complaints

Employees of the church who receive a complaint about a matter covered by this policy have the following role and responsibilities:

1. Act in accordance with this Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.
2. Inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required.
3. Provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint.
4. Provide the complainant with a copy of the Church's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.
5. Maintain confidentiality.
6. Keep appropriate records.
7. To forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Senior Minister, as appropriate.
8. Not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

7. Implementation

Peace Christian Church is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the Church, including by the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.

Peace Christian Church is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related procedures.

Peace Christian Church will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution.

Peace Christian Church will act to encourage attendees, volunteers and employees to contribute to a healthy Church culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

PROCEDURES

Peace Christian Church has developed procedures for the resolution of complaints brought under this policy. These procedures emphasise an approach to resolution with as little formality and disruption as possible, and where all parties receive fair treatment.

These procedures do not pre-empt, limit, or deny a person the right to concurrently pursue other avenues of resolution.

1. Informal Resolution Process

Persons making a complaint under this policy are encouraged to attempt informal grievance resolution prior to resorting to a more structured process.

Ideally, they should first discuss the issue with the other person (i.e., the person who the complaint is about) and try to resolve the issue directly with them.

Parties to an informal resolution process should endeavour to:

- (i) amicably discuss the matter;
- (ii) identify all perspectives of the issue at hand; and
- (iii) come to a mutually agreeable conclusion.

A successful outcome to an informal grievance process consists of all parties having had an opportunity to present their views, and consensus reached on any decisions to be made or actions to be taken.

If resolution is not achieved at the informal stage or if an informal process is inappropriate in the circumstances, formal grievance resolution should be undertaken.

2. Formal Resolution Process

Where informal resolution is not appropriate or not achieved, the complainant may submit a formal complaint to Peace Christian Church.

A formal grievance must be lodged in writing, containing sufficient information to allow the complaint to be assessed. The form at Appendix 1 should be used. The form must be signed and dated. Where there is more than one complainant, each person must sign the document.

The complainant can access support from The Senior Minister to complete and submit the Formal Complaint form.

The Formal Complaint form must then be submitted to seniorminister@peace.org.au

If the complaint is about the Senior Minister, then the Formal Complaint form should be sent to board@peace.org.au

The complaint will then be reviewed by the Senior Minister or a member of the Board, as the case may be, who will:

- determine the most appropriate process or intervention to manage the complaint. In making such a determination, the nature of the complaint and the interests of all parties will be considered.
- discuss the matter with the parties and any other relevant individuals, and attempt to informally negotiate a satisfactory solution. This may involve one-on-one discussions, or a meeting of the relevant parties, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- take sufficient notes to identify the nature of the complaint and the outcome of the process. When the situation has been resolved, all documentation should be provided to the Senior Minister or a member of the Board as the case may be, for record keeping.
- ensure that all parties are advised of the outcome at the resolution stage. This communication should, where possible, take place in person. It may be appropriate for such outcomes to also be documented in writing to all parties.

Formal complaints should be addressed in a timely manner and where possible, time frames for the resolution of the complaint should be agreed between parties. Any agreed time frames for the resolution of a complaint may be extended by agreement of all parties. Where agreement cannot be reached, the decision about time frames will be made by person handling the complaint and should be as soon as reasonably practicable.

If, at any stage of the grievance resolution process, Peace Christian Church is satisfied that a complaint is frivolous, vexatious, misconceived or lacking in substance, the complaint may be dismissed. A finding that a complaint has

been made frivolously or vexatiously may lead to disciplinary action against the complainant.

Complainant – Roles and Responsibilities

In electing to lodge a formal complaint, a complainant accepts the responsibility to seek and support resolution of the issue or issues, and to cooperate with the process. A complainant must be prepared to provide evidence of their assertions.

A complainant may withdraw a formal complaint at any time and should be withdrawn in writing. All parties to the complaint will be advised by the person handling the complaint that the complaint has been withdrawn.

A complainant must not be victimized for lodging a grievance.

A complainant is able to nominate their own witness or witnesses if there is an internal or external investigation into the complaint.

A complainant may have the support and advice of a support person.

Person who is the subject of the complaint (the Respondent) – Roles and Responsibilities

A respondent to a complaint may have the support and advice of a support person.

The respondent should seek to resolve the issue or issues and cooperate with the process.

A respondent must not be victimized for being the subject of a complaint and will be treated as innocent until a decision is made by the person handling the complaint.

A respondent may nominate their own witness or witnesses if there is an internal or external investigation into the complaint.

Record Keeping

Any documentation associated with a complaint raised under this policy will be kept in confidential files. These shall be kept separately from any personnel files of the complainant and/or the respondent, if the complainant and/or respondent are employees.

Formal Complaint Form

CONFIDENTIAL



To submit a Formal Complaint, please complete this form and forward it to seniorminister@peace.org.au

STOP: Have you read the Peace Christian Church Complaints Handling Policy?

If you have not read the Peace Christian Church Complaints Handling Policy, please stop and do so before submitting your complaint.

Your name

Your phone number

Your email

Name of person about whom the complaint is being made

What happened?

Please provide a detailed summary of what has occurred, including when and where it occurred

What steps have you taken to resolve the issue?

What outcome are you seeking?

DECLARATION

Everything I have stated in this form is true to the best of my knowledge and understanding.

Indicate your agreement to this declaration here by stating yes or no: Yes / No

I have read the Peace Christian Church Complaints Handling Policy: Yes / No

Date you are making this Formal Complaint

Your signature