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Type	Protocol
Subject	Grievance Protocol
Authorised By	Diocesan Council in accordance with Part 3 of the Professional Standards Ordinance 2017
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Scope

The Grievance Protocol describes the process to be followed when there is a grievance or conflict between two or more members of our Diocese.¹ The protocol applies to all members and church workers (ordained and non-ordained, paid and voluntary, licensed and unlicensed) who are associated with the ministry of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Northern Territory. This protocol is to be read in conjunction with [SM001 Diocesan Safe Ministry Policy](#).

The aim of this protocol is to provide a safe mechanism under our Safe Ministry Policy for people to address grievances and respond to conflicts within the church in a godly, loving, compassionate, and procedurally fair manner.

Exclusions

This protocol is not applicable and should not be commenced (or should be suspended) where::

- a. there is an alleged breach of a standard in Faithfulness in Service by a church worker including inappropriate behaviour toward a child or vulnerable person. The Safe Ministry Help Line should be called on 1800 070 511 in such cases and will be handled via the Professional Standards Ordinance or the Faithfulness in Service Investigations Protocol of the Diocese.
- b. at least one of the people in conflict or disagreement meet the definition of a Person of Concern in the Anglican Church of Australia - Person of Concern Protocol. In such cases advice must sought from the Safe Ministry Helpline (1800 070 511) prior to the application of this protocol.
- c. at least one of the people in conflict or disagreement are less than 18 years of age. In such cases advice must sought from the Safe Ministry Helpline (1800 070 511) prior to the application of this protocol.
- d. there is an allegation of bullying behaviours by a church worker. In such cases advice must sought from the Safe Ministry Helpline (1800 070 511) prior to the application of this protocol.
- e. criminal or civil legal proceedings are underway.
- f. the matter in involves workplace performance management.

¹ For the purpose of this protocol a member of the Diocese is a person who regularly worships in a Parish or ministry unit within the Diocese.

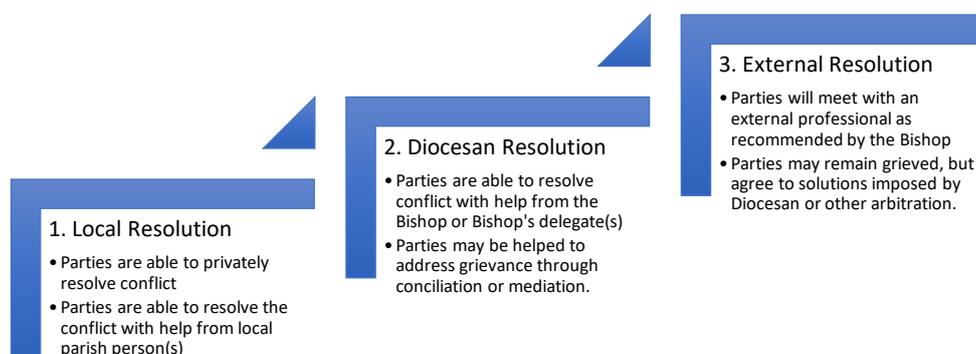
Guiding Principles

The principles used to implement this Grievance Protocol are:

- seeking to glorify God in our responses to each other
- focusing on restoration of relationships
- striving to be peacemakers in the midst of disunity
- seeking to become more Christ-like in our reactions to each other
- extending grace and forgiveness to each other
- seeking help where needed, to address a grievance.
- a focus on the pastoral care of all parties.
- a focus on clear communication of the processes and outcomes.

Pathways to Resolving a Grievance

The Diocese commits to a case-by-case approach to the resolution of substantive issues and, where possible, appropriate restoration of relationships between all parties.



Where possible, grievances should be resolved with the least escalation possible, which has the maximum opportunity for restoring relationships and draws the least number of people possible into the conflict.

The pathway employed will depend upon:

- the nature of the conflict situation and/ or grievance
- the positions/ roles of the parties involved
- the skills and/or capacity of the local church leader to address the situation.

The pathway employed does not prevent the parties to the grievance seeking independent advice at any time, should they choose to do so.

A grievance has potential to escalate, causing significant relational wounds. For this reason, the Bishop, Rector or church leader who is managing the grievance is responsible not only to communicate clearly with involved parties, but also to provide appropriate communication to all persons affected directly by the dispute. Members not directly involved in the resolution of a dispute are advised not to discuss the matter except with the church leader leading the process. In the case of a significant conflict, it is appropriate to also care for those indirectly impacted persons to heal relationships and prevent ongoing division and mistrust within the parish or ministry unit.

Process

1 Local Resolution

- 1.1 In the first instance, where a conflict situation arises between people and they feel able to express their concern safely, they are to go to one another and express their concern with a view to resolving their differences directly.
- Prior to initiating this, it is strongly recommended that those in conflict prepare prayerfully, to clearly communicate their concerns and offer suggestions on how these may be addressed. Preparation may include: 1) seeking counsel from a wise and unbiased senior leader in their Parish, an external person, or engaging in some conflict coaching; 2) making an agreed upon time to talk with the other party in a mutually safe space; 3) considering sentences like “I feel...”; and 4) meditating on verses such as:
- ‘In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold’ (Eph 4:26-27) ...
 - ‘...If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone...’ (Romans 12:17-21)
 - ‘A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger’ (Proverbs 15:1).
- 1.2 If any person feels for any reason that they require help in resolving the situation they may speak privately to the Rector to request assistance in addressing it. If the Rector or a member of his or her family is a party to the conflict, refer to Pathway 2 (Diocesan Resolution).
- 1.3 In general, the Rector will address grievances and conflict. However, a suitably skilled Church Warden, Parish Councillor or Senior Ministry Leader may be delegated by the Rector (or by the Bishop if there is no Rector).
- 1.4 A **Grievance Notification** (See Schedule 1) **may** be submitted to the Bishop and the Business Manager.
- 1.5 If the Rector feels comfortable in assisting those impacted, all parties involved in the conflict or grievance are willing to work towards restoring relationships, the conflict is still at a low level, all parties are still amicable and able to talk calmly together and want to restore their relationship, then the Rector (or delegate) will:
- a. meet with each party separately
 - b. during private meetings ensure that all parties are given a chance to tell their side of the story in private, and to work through the underlying concerns in moving towards resolution. This might be called conflict coaching or preparing for a resolution meeting.
 - c. clearly communicate to each party the process to be used during resolution meetings and keep records of meetings and agreements.
 - d. hold resolution meetings with all the parties to work through the issues and determine the course of action and desired outcomes, bearing in mind all material (substantive) issues, including relational issues
 - e. follow up the parties with a view to ensuring that the solutions are implemented
 - f. monitor the situation.
 - g. Over time check with the parties to ensure the resolution is continuing to work well for all and, if appropriate, communicate something of the resolution to indirectly affected parties.

- 1.6 At this stage a **Conciliation Report** (See Schedule 3) **may** be submitted to the Bishop.
- 1.7 At any stage throughout the process, the Rector, or anyone party to the conflict may contact the Bishop or the Safe Ministry Helpline for assistance or resourcing without being deemed as breaking confidentiality.

2 Diocesan Resolution

The grievance is referred to the Bishop by the Rector or anyone party to the conflict, in order to seek Diocesan intervention and resolution, when the grievance or conflict:

- is with the Rector or a member of their family.
- has escalated beyond the capacity of a Rector to resolve the substantive and or relational issues.
- in the view of the Rector (or delegate) requires independent help in moving towards addressing the grievance or responding to the conflict.

To initiate Diocesan Resolution a **Grievance Notification** (See Schedule 1) **must** be submitted to the Bishop and the Business Manager by any of the parties involved or the Rector (or their delegate). The Bishop will determine the best person(s) to assist the parties towards resolution.

The **Grievance Notification** must be assessed by the Business Manager according to [SR001 Risk Management Policy](#) and [RI001 Reportable Incidents Policy](#).

The parties involved are to be advised that, as the process progresses, they remain free to seek help from the Safe Ministry Helpline or from outside the Diocese if they feel the conflict is not being resolved.

The Diocese commits to a prayerful case-by-case approach to each matter.

2.1 Assessment

Upon receiving a **Grievance Notification** and request to assist with addressing a grievance or a conflict, the Bishop or his/her delegate will make an initial assessment of the situation. This may include a review of correspondence, and holding briefing meetings with the parties to:

- understand the history and current status of the conflict/grievance
- ascertain their willingness to address the grievance or conflict
- determine each person's conflict resolution style and preferences regarding an ideal pathway for resolution
- make judgements as to the intensity level of conflict
- determine the substantive issues.

The Bishop or his/her delegate may also seek advice, including consulting with a relevant professional as part of this assessment.

2.2 Pathway Recommendation Report

A **Pathway Recommendation Report** (See Schedule 2) is to be prepared. This Report must include an outline of key issues, the type of conflict and the conflict resolution approach that is to be used. The recommendation must also give due consideration to the resources required for the recommended approach.

Possible approaches for diocesan resolution which may be recommended include, but are not limited to:

- summary dismissal of the investigation
- provision of special pastoral care
- negotiation of agreed changes to conduct / role or other substantive matter

- conflict coaching.

The report may also recommend external resolution strategies, including but not limited to:

- counselling
- conciliation
- mediation
- arbitration

When a matter is identified by the Bishop or delegate as fulfilling the **threshold questions (a-d above)**, the matter must be referred as appropriate under other Diocesan protocols or ordinances and if appropriate to relevant law enforcement agencies.

2.3 Bishop's decision on approach towards resolution

Taking into account the Report, and any other advice or submissions made by key stakeholders, the Bishop shall determine the resolution approach that will be employed in this situation.

2.4 Approach employed

Depending on the Bishop's decision regarding resolution strategy, appropriate resources must be allocated to enable the parties to determine agreed solutions. As part of determining the appropriate pathway, the Bishop shall determine where funding responsibilities lie. At the discretion of the Bishop, funding may be sourced by any combination of: parish funds, billed to anyone party to the conflict, diocesan funds or other sources.

2.5 Implementation of solutions

Once all parties are in agreement, as far as is possible, regarding resolution strategies a **Conciliation Report (See Schedule 3)** must be made by the Bishop or their delegate and communicated to the relevant parties and the Rector.

2.6 Ongoing monitoring

The Bishop, or his/her delegate(s), in negotiation with the parties, is to make health checks on the situation until the Bishop is satisfied that the solutions that have been employed are working. This may include communication to indirectly affected persons if appropriate.

3 External Resolution

3.1 Pathway employed

Once the Bishop has determined where funding responsibilities lie, external conflict professionals may be engaged.

3.2 Implementation of solutions

When external arbitration is the Bishop's decision, then the Bishop, or his/her delegate(s), together with external conflict professionals are to work on an arbitrated solution to the substantive issues. It is to be noted that, dependent upon the type of conflict and issues involved, this step may take several meetings and some time to work through.

Once all parties are in agreement, as far as is possible, regarding solutions, the Bishop will decide to ratify or modify the solutions, communicate any modifications to all parties, then authorise implementation of the solutions.

3.3 Ongoing monitoring

The Bishop, or his/her delegate(s), in negotiation with the parties, is to make health checks on the situation until the Bishop is satisfied that the solutions that have been employed are working. This may include communication to indirectly affected persons if appropriate.

Timeframes

It is very important that a formal response to a notified grievance is made as soon as practicable, and within 30 days. Those with responsibilities under this protocol should act as expeditiously as possible in undertaking their roles in relation to a particular situation, to ensure that the time taken to undertake this process does not contribute unreasonably to escalation of the conflict and associated harm to those involved.

More Information

[SM001: Diocesan Safe Ministry Policy](#)

[The Diocesan Code of Conduct: *Faithfulness in Service*](#)

[The Professional Standards Ordinance 2017](#)

[Anglican Church of Australia - Person of Concern Protocol](#)

[SM002: The Diocesan Screening protocol](#)

[SM006: Diocesan Faithfulness in Service Investigations Protocol](#)

[SM009: Diocesan Protocol for Responding to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct](#)

[**SR001 Risk Management Policy**](#)

[**RI001 Reportable Incidents Policy**](#)

Schedule 1: Grievance Notification Template

Name Notifier		
Name Rector (or delegate)		
List of Involved Parties		
Brief Description of Grievance		
Key Dates Related to Grievance		
Meetings held so far		
Submitted to the Bishop by: (print name and sign and date)		Date:
Noted by Bishop on: (sign and date)		Date:

Schedule 2: Pathway Recommendation Report Template

Name of Bishop's delegate (if applicable)		
Name Rector (or delegate)		
List of Involved Parties		
Brief Description of Grievance		
Key Dates Related to Grievance		
Meetings held so far		
Recommended Pathway	<p>Possible pathways for diocesan resolution which may be recommended include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dismissal of the investigation • provision of special pastoral care • negotiation of agreed changes to conduct / role or other substantive matter • conflict coaching. <p>The report may also recommend external resolution pathways, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counselling • conciliation • mediation • arbitration. 	
Submitted to the Bishop by: (print name and sign and date)	Grievance Manager	Date:
Noted by Bishop on: (sign and date)		Date:

Schedule 3: Conciliation Report Template

Report prepared by: (name and role)	
Date of report:	
Pathway adopted: (circle)	Local Diocesan External
Established issue:	
Key Dates Related to Grievance	
Meeting(s) Held: List all dates and times and details of who was in attendance	
Indirectly identified affected persons: (list any additional persons affected by the situation)	
Details of agreed resolutions, strategies, commitments, agreements and actions.	
List all relevant Professionals consulted in this process, including the capacity in which advice was sought (i.e.: Safe Ministry Help Line / Bishop / other – include name and contact details)	
Date for review: And who is responsible to undertake this?	
Checklist for review:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have agreement(s) been maintained? - Have these actions had the intended impact on the situation? - Review of effectiveness of pastoral care mechanisms

Notes from review process:		
Name and signature of who managed the process: (print name and sign and date)		Date:
Name and signature of who managed the review: (print name and sign and date)		Date:
Noted by Bishop on: (sign and date)		Date: