



Diocese of Cairns Policy

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Feedback and Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

Providing a safe and effective avenue for receiving feedback and complaints is critical to good governance. Feedback and complaints assist the Diocese to improve our operations and respond to changing community expectations. This policy provides a framework to ensure all feedback and complaints received by the Diocese are handled fairly, efficiently and effectively. It is intended to guide any person (including without limitations our staff, contractors, volunteers, parishioners and members of the public) in sharing feedback or complaints with us, and in providing information on how feedback and complaints are handled by the Diocese.

2. Application

This Diocesan-wide policy applies to all parishes, divisions, departments and any other activities established under the authority of the Bishop of Cairns ("Division(s)"). It applies to feedback and complaints relating to Diocesan staff, clergy, volunteers and our activity at the Diocese.

Consistent with this policy, there are separate division-specific policies and procedures for Diocesan-operating divisions, such as Catholic Education, Centacare FNQ and Catholic Early Learning and Care. Where there are discrepancies between Diocesan and division-specific policy, it is the Diocesan policy that takes precedence.

This policy does not apply to any employment-related grievance, which is likely to be more appropriately dealt with through internal employee grievance process; Similarly, this policy does not apply to whistleblowing in relation to reportable conduct which is defined in our Whistleblower Policy.

3. Definitions

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the Diocese, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Complainant	A person, organisation or their representative making a complaint about Diocesan services or staff.
Dispute	An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of the Diocese.

Feedback	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, to or about the Diocese, about our services where a response is not expected or legally required.
Grievance	A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related issue, as defined in our Grievance Policy.
Procedural fairness	A principle of acting fairly in administrative decision-making, by making decisions through a proper process, based on evidence from all affected parties, without bias, pre-judgment and unnecessary delays.
Respondent	A party against whom a complaint is made.
Whistleblowing	Reporting of serious misconduct as defined in our Whistleblower Protection Policy.

4. Policy Statement

The Diocese recognises that concerns regarding our activity may range in severity, from feedback that is positive, to suggestions of improvements, and complaints that express a more serious view on something being unsatisfactory. We are committed to ensuring that all claims are handled in a manner consistent with principles of procedural fairness. Individuals should be free to raise a complaint without fear of retribution or victimisation. We are committed to a fair, effective and efficient complaint process guided by the following principles:

4.1. Fairness and Objectivity

- Each complaint will be managed in an objective and unbiased manner.
- Both the complainant and the respondent will have the opportunity to present their claims, provide supporting information and respond to any potential decisions.
- The person investigating and/or making decisions about the complaint must be impartial and must not prejudice the complaint in any way.
- The outcomes of complaints are to be clearly explained to complainants, while respecting the privacy requirements of all parties involved in the complaint.
- A respondent will be entitled to know sufficient, relevant information about the substance of the complaint, have the opportunity to respond, and obtain legal or industrial representation if needed.
- Complainants and respondents are to be treated with respect; All reasonable steps are to be taken to ensure that parties are not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them, on their behalf or against them.

4.2. Accessibility

- The complaints management process is accessible to everyone, particularly vulnerable people and those who might require assistance to make a complaint.
- Complainants are to be provided with adequate administrative support to make a complaint if needed.
- Members of the public can send us feedback and complaints through a publicly available message form on the Diocesan website <https:// Cairns.catholic.org.au/contact>.

4.3. Confidentiality and Privacy

- Information about complaints and parties involved must only be disclosed or used in compliance with all relevant privacy principles and ethical obligations.
- Complaints may be lodged anonymously, however anonymous complaints limit the scope of enquiry or resolution as material information may be omitted.

4.4. Efficiency and Responsiveness

- The complaint process must be conducted without undue delay. All complaints are to be promptly acknowledged and prioritised in accordance to the level of risk, seriousness or urgency. The safety of others who may be at risk of harm is always our priority.
- The complaint process will be transparent to the parties. Both the complainant and the respondent will be kept informed of the progress and the reasons for any decision.
- Complainants are to be advised, as soon as practicable, where part or all of their complaint is unable to be dealt with, or where there are delays in managing their complaint.

5. Organisational Commitment

The Diocese promotes a culture that values feedback and effective complaint resolution, and expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. Mechanisms for monitoring, analysing and evaluating complaints will inform Diocesan actions necessary for improvements and mitigation of reoccurrence of similar issues. Those responsible for the complaint management process are accountable for the specific tasks listed below.

Who	Commitment	How
The Bishop, Financial Administrator and Executive Directors	Promote a culture that values the effective management of feedback and resolution of complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive reports as appropriate from division Executives on complaint handling.• Provide adequate support for those involved in feedback and complaint handling.• Implement and maintain a robust complaints management system.• Monitor and review complaint and reporting trends and issues arising from such complaints.• Encourage all to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them in a timely manner.• Support continual process improvement and consider recommendations and relevant data regarding feedback and complaint management.
Parish Priests	Demonstrate open and transparent feedback and complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat all people with respect and humility, including complainants.• Assist people in providing feedback and making complaints when needed.• Comply with relevant policy and procedures.• Provide feedback to the Financial Administrator or appropriate Parish committee.• Support continual process improvement and consider recommendations and relevant data regarding feedback and complaint management.
Directors, Managers, Principals,	Demonstrate open and transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat all people with respect and humility, including complainants.• Assist people in making complaints when

Officers	feedback and complaint handling practices	<p>needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with relevant policy and procedures. • Continually review and apply improvements to the feedback and complaint management. • Undertake regular analysis of the complaints databases or registers. • Provide feedback to relevant staff on systemic complaints.
Staff whose duties include complaint management	Demonstrate open and transparent feedback and complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat all people with respect and humility, including complainants. • Assist people in making complaints when needed. • Comply with relevant policy and procedures. • Provide regular feedback to management on issues arising from complaints. • Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve the complaints management system. • Implement changes arising from individual feedback and complaints and from the analysis of data as directed by management.
All staff	Understand and comply with our feedback and complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. • Be aware of the feedback and complaint handling policies and procedures. • Assist people who wish to provide feedback of make complaints access the complaint process. • Be alert to complaints, assist others handling complaints and resolve matters promptly.

6. Communication, Compliance and Review

- 6.1. Communication and implementation of this policy will be achieved through consultation with relevant stakeholders, specific training, awareness raising measures, and/or various other internal and external communications.
- 6.2. Executive Directors, Parish Priests and relevant line managers are responsible for implementing division-specific complaints policies and procedures, in accordance with this policy and other applicable overarching Diocesan policies and procedures.
- 6.3. Non-compliance with this policy must be reported to the Financial Administrator or Executive Director of the division, or their delegate.
- 6.4. Where it is determined that a breach of this policy has occurred, the nature and gravity of the breach will be considered. Any matters requiring final adjudication will be referred to the Bishop of Cairns.
- 6.5. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or where significant changes occur, which impact on the policy, to ensure compliance with relevant Diocesan requirements, standards and legislation.

7. Enquiries

Diocesan Professional Standards Unit

Ph: 4050 9705

Diocesan Human Resources Department

Ph: 4046 5647

Catholic Education Human Resources Department

Ph: 4031 6134

Anonymous complaints contact

STOPline - 1300 30 45 50

8. Approval



Most Rev. James Foley
Bishop

Diocese of Cairns

22 November 2021