

Parish Complaints Policy and Procedure

Objective

Te Wairua Tapu Parish is committed to the highest pastoral and professional standards. It welcomes any complaints and/or concerns as opportunities to be learned from, and commits to taking seriously any concerns or complaints that are raised, and to dealing with any person who has raised a complaint promptly, professionally and courteously.

Scope

This policy is intended for use in connection with complaints about actions (or inaction) on the part of Parish representatives, (see specific definitions on page 2) or about the organisational processes of the Parish.

It is not intended for complaints of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse complaints should be made directly to the Police. If the sexual abuse complaint relates to a priest it can also be referred to the Archdiocese Sexual Abuse Protocol Committee on 0800 005 346.

This policy does not supersede processes for employment related complaints which are set out in legislation together with the Collective Agreement or Individual Employment Agreements.

Policy Principles

The principles within which the Parish will work to resolve the complaint include:

1. Subsidiarity

Complaints will be resolved at the closest and simplest level which is appropriate in the circumstances.

2. Restorative Justice

Rather than engaging in adversarial processes, people involved in a complaint, where appropriate, will be encouraged to participate personally in resolving their complaint. The restoration, with justice, of the dignity and also the relationship between the person complaining, and the person complained about, will be given a high priority.

3. Natural Justice

The process will be fair to all parties involved and free from bias.

4. Dignity of the Person

The dignity of all parties involved in a complaint will be respected and protected.

5. Confidentiality

Information about a complaint will be shared strictly on a “need to know” basis only.

6. Visibility and Transparency

Information about how and with whom to raise a complaint will be well publicised.

7. Continuity of Care

Whoever receives the complaint will assume responsibility for ensuring that the complainant receives timely responses, but they will avoid acquiring detailed information about the complaint, if the complaint has been referred to another person for resolution.

Specific Definitions

The term “Parish representative” includes all employees, volunteers, contractors, religious and priests who are working on behalf of the Parish.

Procedures

The purpose of the policy is to promote a resolution of concerns or complaints about processes, actions or inaction by a Parish representative.

The quickest and most satisfactory way of dealing with concerns or complaints is for the complainant to deal directly with the Parish representative concerned. This gives the complainant and the Parish representative the opportunity to discuss the matter to come to a quick resolution. It also enables both parties to understand the issues and assists in ensuring that mistakes are not repeated.

However, if the issue or matter cannot be resolved - or should not be resolved - at this personal level, then the complainant may raise their concern or complaint with the person responsible for the area concerned (see table below). The preferred style of resolution will be by conversation, which may involve the parties in a facilitated conversation. If a resolution cannot be reached in this way, the complainant may choose to lodge a formal complaint. A complaint may be lodged verbally, or in written form.

| Complaint is regarding an action / process / decision in or by | Person Responsible |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Administration, payroll etc including any action by paid staff members and therefore an employment matter | Parish Priest |
| A community Group including members | Stewardship Team Chair |
| A committee including non-chairperson member of a Committee – e.g. Stewardship Team, Building Committee, Finance Committee | Chairperson of that Committee |
| Chairperson of a Committee – e.g. Stewardship Team, Building Committee, Finance Committee | Parish Pastoral Council Chair |
| Parish Pastoral Council Chair | Parish Priest |
| Assistant Priest | Parish Priest |
| Parish Priest | Archdiocese |

Timeframes for dealing with complaints:

On receipt of a formal complaint, the person responsible will ensure that the complaint is acknowledged within five (5) working days. The Parish representative will be fully briefed about the nature of the complaint which has been raised against them.

Within ten (10) working days of receiving a complaint, the person responsible will determine whether the complaint requires further investigation, whether an independent person should undertake that investigation and will ensure that an investigation, if needed, is started.

Taking these and any other necessary factors into consideration, the person responsible will decide how much, if any, additional time is required to resolve the complaint. Where, for whatever reason, uncertainty exists for a person responsible about how to best proceed with dealing with the complaint, they should seek peer review of their actions, and supervision as required. All steps taken and communications received and initiated by the person responsible must be recorded for future review as necessary.

If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, the complaint will be referred to the next appropriate Parish structure for resolution. The Parish Priest and Archdiocese will be informed of complaints on an as needed basis, determined by the seriousness of the concern or complaint and by any likely wider ramifications for the Parish or Archdiocese.

If a complaint is made against a Priest or Lay Pastoral Leader of the Parish the Archdiocese will be kept informed, and any such complaint will always be processed in accordance with Canon Law. If the complaint has legal, financial or employment considerations the Parish Priest will be kept informed and standard Human Resource practice and procedures will be applied.

If a complaint containing pastoral implications remains unresolved despite the best efforts of the person responsible, it will be referred to the Parish Priest for a final determination.

Making a complaint

If you wish to make a complaint, and are not sure who the person responsible noted in the table above is, or how to contact them, then contact the Parish Office – holyspirit41@gmail.com or (04) 971 7885.

The Archdiocese Sexual Abuse Protocol Committee may be contacted on 0800 005 346.

Review Date

This policy was approved by the Parish Pastoral Council on 8 May 2018. It is due for review in May 2020.