



## **Crossroads Complaints Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Bible says a lot about the responsibilities of Christian life and leadership, especially about grievances between Christians. The Bible expects high standards of Christian leaders (Mark 10:42-45; 2 Timothy 2:14-26; Titus 1:5-9; James 3:1-2; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Leadership is exercised at Crossroads Christian Church both by Pastoral staff and volunteers who collectively work together to pursue God's mission for us in Canberra and beyond.

Additionally, as a body of believers we are to be kind, compassionate and patient with one another (Colossians 3:12-14). Nevertheless, at times people act outside these norms and also outside the norms accepted within society.

Where there is a breach of either of these leadership or congregational norms it is important these matters be dealt with promptly. Also where the breach has legal implications Crossroads may be legally obliged to address the matter.

This policy outlines our complaints policy, noting that given the complex nature of some issues there are additionally policies that may need to be referred to.

## **2. Complaints**

Crossroads is committed to treating all complaints seriously and with respect. Crossroads staff are committed to not ignoring complaints and we are committed to follow our policies in dealing with such matters.

All complaints will be brought to the attention of the Executive Pastor and the Senior Pastor regardless of their nature. Additionally, they may be brought to the attention of the Council or Safe Ministry coordinators depending on the nature of the complaint.

## **2. General Principles**

These principles apply to allegations of unacceptable behaviour under this policy:

1. Any complaint will follow the most appropriate procedures; these being:
  - a. Breach of Code of Conduct;
  - b. Bullying;
  - c. Safe Ministry/Reportable conduct; and
  - d. Privacy.
2. Allegations of criminal conduct, including sexual abuse or child abuse cannot be dealt with under this policy and will be referred to the police.

3. The physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of those involved will always be our highest priority in guiding how a matter is pursued in line with biblical principles.
4. Anonymous allegations or allegations made by a person who does not want to be identified cannot be dealt with under this policy.
5. Allegations of unacceptable behaviour should be treated seriously and sensitively. They should be dealt with promptly, having due regard to procedural fairness and confidentiality.
  - a. Procedural fairness includes
    - i. Being informed of the allegations;
    - ii. Being provided with a reasonable opportunity to respond;
    - iii. Being treated without bias; and,
    - iv. Being aware of progress in dealing with the allegation.
  - b. Confidentiality includes the way information or records relating to an allegation are stored and used.
6. No one making an allegation, or associated with an allegation or a person making an allegation, should be victimised.
7. Trivial, malicious or false allegations should not to be made.
8. Both parties to an allegation should receive appropriate information, support and assistance in resolving the matter.
9. Where possible and appropriate, allegations should be dealt with by discussion, cooperation and conciliation consistent with biblical principles. Conciliation aims to reach a mutually acceptable outcome which is fair and effective. It also aims to minimise the potential for on-going damage to relationships, and to help the ministry of the Crossroads to continue effectively.
10. Conciliation is intended to be a non-legal alternative for dealing with allegations of unacceptable behaviour. It should only be used when both parties freely agree to conciliate, on the basis that
  - a. Legal representation is excluded; and,
  - b. The matters discussed during the conciliation process are confidential.
11. At any meeting or interview during a conciliation process, both parties may be accompanied by a support person. A support person is purely there for support and may not speak without the permission of both parties or at the invitation of the conciliator and only for the purposes of facilitating the process.
12. It is not always appropriate to deal with an allegation by conciliation and the endorsed procedures will assist guide those involved.

### **3. Types of Complaints**

#### **3a. Breach of the code of conduct**

This involves an allegation that a person has breached either the Code of Conduct for Volunteers or the Code of Conduct for Staff. Such a breach will be examined in line with Code of Conduct Breaches as outlined in the relevant procedures.

#### **3b. Bullying**

This involves an allegation that a person has undertaken bullying behaviour. A person is bullied at Crossroads if:

- A person or group of people repeatedly act unreasonably towards them or a group of workers; or,
- The behaviour creates a risk to health and safety.

Unreasonable behaviour includes victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening. Whether a behaviour is unreasonable can depend on whether a reasonable person might see the behaviour as unreasonable in the circumstances.

Examples of bullying include:

- Behaving aggressively;
- Teasing or practical jokes;
- Pressuring someone to behave inappropriately;
- Excluding someone from work-related events; or,
- Unreasonable work demands.

#### **3c. Safe Ministries/Reportable Conduct**

A Safe Ministries unacceptable behaviour complaint would potentially involve any breach of our Safe Ministries policy and procedures. A subset of these breaches may also involve Reportable Conduct (see below) that would also involve the Ombudsman.

Crossroads is now covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme and will need to notify the ACT Ombudsman about allegations of reportable conduct involving an employee, which may include certain volunteers and contractors. Notifiable conduct falls under seven types of behaviours, that are:

1. Sexual offences and convictions where a child is a victim or is present;
2. Offences against the person, including physical offences and convictions, where a child is a victim or is present;

3. Conviction, or finding of guilt, under a territory law or a state or Commonwealth law, involving reportable conduct
4. Offences against the Education and Care Service National Law (inappropriate discipline or offences relating to protecting children from harm);
5. Ill-treatment of a child (including emotional abuse, hostile use of force/physical contact, neglect and restrictive intervention);
6. Psychological harm; or,
7. Misconduct of a sexual nature.

The procedures for examining a complaint of unacceptable behaviour related to Safe Ministries are outlined in the Safe Ministry Policy.

### **3d. Privacy**

A complaint about unacceptable behaviour around Privacy involves a complaint that someone (including the organisation) has breached our Privacy policy, including matters related to data security.

### **4. Questions**

All questions which relate to the complaints policy should be directed to [office@crossroads.asn.au](mailto:office@crossroads.asn.au)

### **5. Regular Review Periods**

The Council will annually review this policy, and its implementation.