

Policy 12

MANAGING COMPLAINTS AND GREIVANCES

Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify the process for managing any complaints or grievances against Blackwood Church of Christ inc Ministers, Elders, leaders or Members.

Policy Statement

Blackwood Church of Christ inc takes any complaints about the conduct or attitudes of its Ministers, Elders, Leaders and Members seriously. If the allegation appears to involve a breach of the law, the complainant should be encouraged and assisted to report the matter to the police. Where this breach of the law relates to the abuse of a minor, it is mandatory for a report to be made to the police or to the Department of Human Services.

Where a breach of the law has occurred, the actions of the Minister and Elders will be guided by police.

Step 1.

Complaints are received by the minister or one of the elders of the congregation.

If the complaint is about the behaviour or attitudes of a **Minister** it should be referred to the State Minister, Churches of Christ in SA and NT Inc. At this point, the State Minister will guide the elders on the steps to be taken to resolve the issue.

Step 2.

Upon hearing a complaint about an **Elder, Leader or Member** of the congregation, the Minister or Elder receiving the complaint must document the details of the complaint as soon as possible.

Information to be documented includes:

- (a) The details of the complaint / grievance
- (b) Any steps the complainant has taken to resolve the issue
- (c) What the complainant would like to happen
- (d) Dated and signed by the Minister / Elder

Where possible, the individual should be encouraged to resolve the problem directly with the respondent.

Step 3.

Upon receipt of a complaint the Minister and/or Elders should form a Pastoral Intervention Team (PIT) comprising a Minister of the congregation, an Elder from the congregation and a helping professional from beyond the congregation.

Step 4.

The PIT should meet with the complainant as soon as possible or within 5 days to hear their story, offer pastoral support and guidance and determine whether the complaint warrants further investigation.

The outcome of this meeting must be reported to the Elders and Minister.

Step 5.

The PIT may recommend to the Elders the standing down of the respondent from positions of leadership during the course of the investigation.

Step 6.

If no further investigation is deemed warranted, the PIT should ensure adequate and independent pastoral support is offered to the complainant and the respondent, including access to professional counselling. The complainant should also be informed of their right to appeal the decision not to investigate the matter.

A report of the complaint and the process followed is to then be reported to the Elders and Minister at the next elders meeting.

Step 7.

If further investigation is warranted, the PIT should conduct such investigations as promptly as possible. Upon reaching a conclusion, the PIT will determine an appropriate course of action to bring a resolution to the matter. Such action may include, but ought not be limited to:

- Mediation (upon agreement of the complainant and the respondent)
- Dismissal of complaint with no action taken;
- A warning to the respondent;
- A written or verbal apology to the complainant;
- A written or verbal apology to the respondent if wrongly accused;
- A public apology to the complainant or the respondent;
- An explanation and/or apology to the congregation;
- A requirement that the respondent receive counselling as determined by the PIT;
- The resignation or dismissal of the respondent from positions of leadership.

Prior to communicating the recommended course of action to all parties, the elders and minister are to be informed.

Step 8.

In the course of its investigations, the PIT may make reference to the Ministry Work Group of Churches of Christ in SA & NT for assistance in determining appropriate process, response, resolution and mediation.

Policy References

None

Review of Policy

This policy shall be reviewed every two years or as required

Further Information

If you require further information, contact the Church Office

Authorised by:

(Chair of Elders)

Signature: **Date:**