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1. Purpose

- 1.1 These procedures outline a consistent approach to the resolution of complaints across the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
- 1.2 These procedures are to be read in conjunction with the Complaint Resolution Policy 2022.

2. Scope

- 2.1 These procedures apply to:
 - a. all diocesan workers who receive or manage the response to a complaint, and
 - b. the people engaged with the life of the Diocese who wish to provide feedback or make a complaint about a service the Diocese provides.

3. The Diocesan complaints management system

- 3.1 All diocesan workers should act in accordance with the Complaints Resolution Policy 2022, the Complaints Resolution Diocesan Procedure 2022 and the Complaints Resolution Agency Procedure 2022 when receiving or managing the response to a complaint.
 - a. Diocesan workers should also consider any relevant legislation or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.
- 3.2 The key aspects of the diocesan complaint management system are set out in the points below.

4. Receipt of complaints at the agency

- 4.1 Each agency of the Diocese will have access to a centralised data system for a complaint to be logged when it is received, and thereafter for relevant documentation to be filed.
- 4.2 Each agency of the Diocese will have an internal complaints management system that will be applied to resolve the complaint in the first instance.
- 4.3 The Diocese will support the resolution of complaints in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, that is matters ought to be handled by the smallest or least centralised competent authority.
 - a. A person making a complaint should be encouraged and supported to follow the agency processes for resolution in the first instance.

5. When a complaint may be referred to the diocesan Complaints Management Service

5.1 A complaint may be referred to the diocesan Complaints Management Service when the options for resolution at the agency have been exhausted and the complaint is not resolved.

5.1.1 A complaint may be referred to the diocesan Complaints Management Service before options for resolution at the agency are exhausted where:

- a. there is a sufficiently serious actual or perceived conflict of interest involving the local leadership.
- b. the complainant has a concern of possible reprisal or belief that the complaint will not be properly addressed at the local level.
- c. the complaint is about the conduct of a senior leader in the Diocese.
- d. the involvement of the agency may present a risk to the integrity of an investigation.

5.2 Receipt of the complaint by the diocesan Complaint Management Service.

Upon receipt of the complaint the Resolution Officer will:

- 5.2.1 acknowledge receipt of the referral with both the person making the complaint and the diocesan agency,
- 5.2.2 confirm options for resolution at the agency are exhausted, and
- 5.2.3 clarify the issues in dispute.

5.3 Assessment of the complaint

After a complaint has been received by the diocesan Complaint Management Service a Resolution Officer will act promptly to:

- 5.3.1 undertake an assessment of risk, including whether diocesan and legislative reporting requirements have been met, noting that the assessment of risk will be ongoing,
- 5.3.2 identify any immediate issues that need resolution, and the appropriate decision maker,
- 5.3.3 refer any immediate issue that needs resolution to the appropriate decision maker,
- 5.3.4 identify any information gaps in the documentation received,

- 5.3.5 take steps to gather any relevant information not yet available,
- 5.3.6 liaise with relevant operational leadership where an issue in dispute may be the subject of specific direction or requirement from an external oversight body and follow the advice of operational leadership in the management of such issue,
- 5.3.7 identify whether resolution of the issues in dispute may benefit from general internal advice or external specialist advice, and
- 5.3.8 if appropriate, refer the issue to the identified advisor for advice.

5.4 Steps to address the complaint by the diocesan Complaints Management Service

After a complaint has been received and assessed the Resolution Officer will promptly:

- 5.4.1 assess whether resolution of the complaint may be assisted by a dispute resolution,
- 5.4.2 in the event the matter is assessed as appropriate for dispute resolution invite each participant to the complaint to participate in a dispute resolution conference,
- 5.4.3 where consent from each party is obtained, arrange for the dispute resolution conference to be convened, and
- 5.4.4 in the event dispute resolution is not held or dispute resolution is held and the participants do not reach agreement, refer the complaint to an Administrative Review Officer for an Administrative Inquiry to be completed to resolve the outstanding issues.

5.5 Closure of the complaint

- 5.5.1 After the completion of the steps to address the complaint an appropriate member of the Complaint Management Service will:
 - a. provide the complainant, agency and operational leadership with feedback that is relevant to them and the management of the complaint and may include external options for redress or review, and
 - b. Close and securely store the file.

6. Unreasonable conduct by a complainant

6.1 The assessment of whether a complainant's conduct is unreasonable will be made case-by-case by in accordance with the Complaints Resolution Policy.

6.2 In the event unreasonable conduct by a complainant is identified, an attempt to manage future engagement with them will be made. This may involve written correspondence to the complainant aimed at setting limits and conditions on the Diocese's continued engagement with them.

This limit setting or condition setting may include:

- a. written identification of the behaviour that is considered unreasonable,
- b. a request that this behaviour change or cease,
- c. a statement about the consequences should the behaviour continue,
- d. where possible, offering the person a choice in the request for conduct change, and
- e. providing for the enforcement of the limits set should the conditions of continued engagement not be met.

7. Continuous improvement

7.1 The Diocese may use complaints data to continuously improve its agency or complaints resolution service delivery.

7.2 The Diocese may respond to feedback arising from a complaint or Administrative Inquiry by implementing identified systemic or operational improvements.

7.3 A diocesan agency or person making a complaint may provide feedback about their experience of the complaint resolution process to operational management.

8. Document review

8.1 This Procedure will be reviewed when there is a legislative change, organisational change, delegations change or at least every 3 years to ensure it continues to be current and effective.

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