



Taking Bullying and Other Misconduct Seriously

Information for clergy and church workers



safeministry.org.au

The Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney has a **zero-tolerance** policy for bullying and other misconduct.

As Archbishop of Sydney, I have a responsibility for the ordination of men and women for holy orders and the authorisation of men and women for lay ministry in the Diocese. Whether lay or ordained, you have been called to exercise a ministry of the Holy Spirit, which requires both diligence and discipline. In your teaching you are to declare God's word winsomely and boldly. In your manner of life, you are to set the saints an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).



Sadly, not all clergy and church workers live their lives in step with the Spirit. While the Bible regularly warns leaders of the abuse of their power, the fruit of the Spirit, including patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, are sometimes sadly missing when dealing with either staff or parishioners.

This is particularly so when leaders are criticised. We tend to stand our own ground, defend our own cause and use the language of Zion to dismiss the complaint or demean the complainer. 'This should not be so among you' (Mark 10:43).

This brochure has been designed for clergy and church workers to understand the serious nature of bullying, for as leaders we may not be aware that our behaviour is seen as such by others. I hope you will read this carefully, not only as an aid to your understanding of and empathy with those who have been bullied, but also as a good health check for yourself, that you are not prey to this behaviour.

“In your teaching you are to declare God’s word winsomely and boldly. In your manner of life, you are to set the saints an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

May God lead us all to walk by the Spirit, for the good of his people and the glory of his name.

Glenn N Davies
Archbishop of Sydney

The Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney expects the highest standard of behaviour from all people who are involved in its ministries. This includes all members of the clergy and all church workers or office holders, whether paid or unpaid. They are collectively referred to in this document as *church workers*. Church workers are to be “above reproach”.

These standards are grounded in scripture and set forth in the national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers, *Faithfulness in Service*. Particular breaches of these standards are referred to in this document as *abuse* or *misconduct*.

Synod passed the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* as a means to enforce these standards. It establishes a process for receiving and dealing with allegations or complaints that particular standards have been breached. The process aims to deal thoroughly and properly with complaints while being fair to those against whom allegations are made.

This brochure contains information on that process for clergy and lay church workers.

The [Faithfulness in Service](#) and [Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017](#) documents can be found at www.safeministry.org.au.

The Diocese takes complaints of bullying and other misconduct very seriously. Bullying can take many different forms, including direct physical and verbal conduct, other more subtle and manipulative behavior, or even online ‘trolling’.

We need to recognise that verbal bullying and trolling can be just as harmful as physical assault. In fact, the psychological impacts of these forms of abuse can be deeper and longer lasting. Bullying can even lead to suicide by the victim. Another danger associated with bullying is that bullies can be blind to the extent of their impact on their victims. Misuse of power and authority is often at the heart of bullying.

Who is affected by the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017*?

A *church worker* is defined as a person who is or has been a member of the clergy, or holds or has held any position of leadership within the Diocese.¹ This includes those who are unpaid volunteers. Some examples are:

- a member of the ordained clergy
- an office-holder in the Church
- a member of a church governing body board, council, committee, Synod, Standing Committee, regional council or parish council
- a church warden, organist, choir leader, parish council secretary or parish treasurer
- leaders of Sunday Schools, Bible classes, study groups, youth fellowships or other parish organisations
- a chief executive officer of a church organisation
- a person appointed by a rector, an acting rector, church warden, parish council or by their delegate.

If the bullying or other misconduct has occurred in another diocese, state or country, the matter will be referred to the relevant authority.

¹ *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* cl 5.

What is bullying or other misconduct?

The types of behaviour defined as misconduct in the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* include:

- bullying
- emotional abuse
- harassment
- spiritual abuse
- failure to report abuse
- threatening or obstructing a person who intends to or has made a complaint
- not cooperating with or obstructing the investigation of a complaint.

Please refer to the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* for complete and detailed definitions of bullying and other misconduct.²

There is another brochure for clergy and lay church workers regarding child and sexual abuse, which can be found at www.safeministry.org.au.

² *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* cl 6.

What happens if a report of bullying or other misconduct is made to the PSU?

Documentation

1. The person who is making the complaint (the complainant) will be asked to record in writing:
 - what is alleged to have happened and the nature of the alleged bullying or other misconduct
 - the name of the person who is alleged to have experienced the bullying or other misconduct (if this is not the complainant)
 - the name of the person who it is alleged has engaged in the bullying or other misconduct
 - the parish or organisation for which the person who has engaged in the alleged bullying or other misconduct was working
 - when and where the alleged bullying or other misconduct occurred
 - any other relevant supporting information.

At an appropriate time a response will be obtained from the person against whom allegations are made.³ This person is also known as the respondent. This will usually require the disclosure of the complainant's name to the respondent.

Facilitated Conversations and Conciliation

2. If appropriate, the respondent will have the assistance of a chaplain or a facilitator to help to resolve the issues with the complainant, instead of going immediately to the formal processes of the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017*. The chaplain or facilitator can meet with the respondent to discuss a way forward. The chaplain or facilitator will also have spoken with the complainant and will make recommendations on next steps.

³ *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* cls 25, 26.

Next steps may involve facilitated conversations between the respondent and the complainant if it is appropriate in all of the circumstances. This process depends upon the voluntary consent of the complainant.

Mentoring

3. The respondent may be offered ongoing support from a chaplain or facilitator who can act as a mentor for the respondent where appropriate.

Counselling

4. The respondent may choose to have the support of a counsellor to process what is alleged to have happened. The counsellor may help the respondent to assess whether there is a need to grow in insight and empathy through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Investigation

5. If all of the matters raised by the formal complaint cannot be resolved by other means and proceeds under *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* then the allegations may be independently investigated.

This will include obtaining a formal response from the respondent.

The investigation may include the Investigator asking the complainant to clarify the circumstances surrounding the allegations and provide any further information which may be needed as a result of the investigation. It will require the complainant's name and any statements or material they provide to the Investigator to be disclosed to the respondent.

The respondent will be given an opportunity to respond to the investigator's report.

Consideration

6. If the respondent is an unpaid lay church worker, an independent Adjudicator may be appointed who will review the complaint and make recommendation(s) in relation to the respondent.

If the respondent is a member of the clergy or a paid lay church worker, the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) will review the complaint and make recommendation(s) in relation to the respondent.⁴

7. The Adjudicator or PSC will take into account the matters raised by both the complainant and the respondent as well as all the circumstances of the case as revealed by any investigation. A detailed list of what they must consider is contained in the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017*.⁵

The process, up to and including the consideration of the matter by the Adjudicator or PSC, is not adversarial in nature but involves a review of all documentation provided.

Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the respondent may be stood down from their position during the process.

If the complaint raises matters of complexity, it can take a considerable period of time for the PSC or adjudicator to deal with the complaint.

⁴ *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* cls 27, 34.

⁵ *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* cls 28, 29, 35(2).

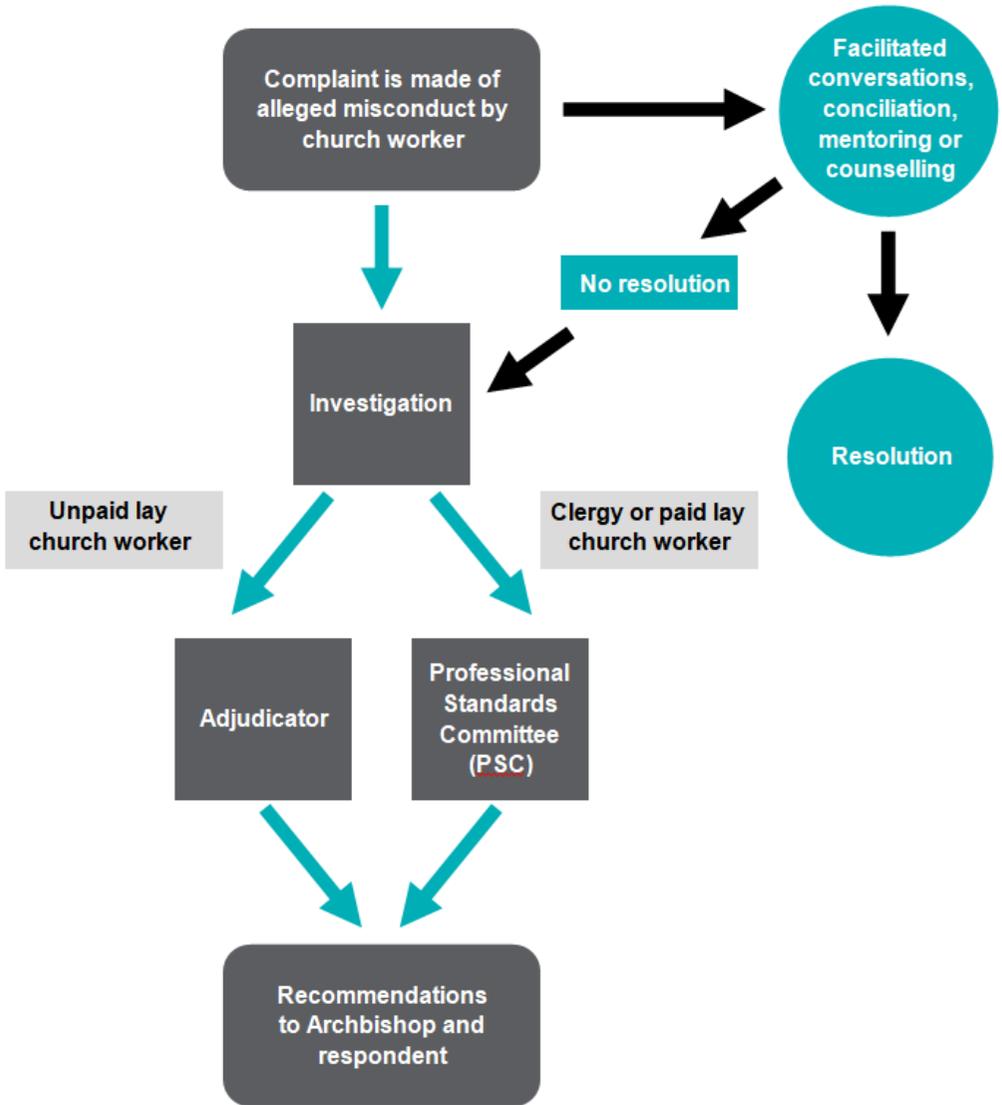
Outcomes

8. The aims of the process are that:
 - complainants have every opportunity to bring forward allegations of bullying or other misconduct and they are heard
 - complainants have every assistance to deal with the issues that arise for them, including their need for affirmation and support
 - complainants have a chance, where appropriate, to consider whether forgiveness of the respondent is possible, while never overlooking or forgetting the consequences of the bullying or other misconduct
 - respondents have every opportunity to bring forward their response to allegations of bullying and other misconduct
 - respondents are brought to account, are challenged to apologise, and are encouraged to seek to make amends and to face up to the consequences of their behaviour
 - vulnerable people are protected.

9. Possible outcomes of the complaints process include the Adjudicator or PSC recommending to the Archbishop that the respondent:
- make an apology
 - make reparation
 - undertake training
 - undertake counselling
 - participate in facilitated conversations with complainant
 - participate in a 360 Review Survey
 - work with a qualified professional to grow in insight and empathy
 - undertake group therapy
 - undertake professional supervision
 - engage an approved mentor for discipleship
 - be suspended
 - have their authority revoked
 - have their employment terminated
 - resign from office or employment
 - not accept nominations or appointments
 - request relinquishment of holy orders (where the respondent is a member of the clergy)
 - consent to a prohibition order
 - enter into a safety plan
 - have no further action taken against them with respect to the complaint.⁶

⁶ *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* cls 30, 41.

Summary of the complaints process



Please note: this diagram merely summarises steps and actions that may be taken under and outside of the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017* and is not comprehensive.

Complaints regarding clergy or paid lay church workers that are not resolved at the Professional Standards Committee stage may be referred to the Professional Standards Board for final determination.

How will we support respondents?

The process may take a significant amount of time to be resolved and can be difficult and upsetting for all those involved.

Counselling is available at the cost of the PSU to respondents during the complaints process. Counselling may also be available to the family of a respondent if this is appropriate. Respondents are also encouraged to seek a support person who can attend meetings and interviews alongside the respondent. The PSU can assist in finding an appropriate person for this role.

Important sources of further information

Professional Standards Unit (PSU)

www.safeministry.org.au

(02) 9265 1604

info@safeministry.org.au

Abuse Report Line: 1800 774 945 or abusereport@safeministry.org.au

Lifeline – crisis support and suicide prevention

www.lifeline.org.au

24-hour Helpline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service

www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

24-hour Helpline: 1300 659 467

MensLine – telephone and online counselling for men

www.mensline.org.au

1300 78 99 78

Anglicare Counselling

www.anglicare.org.au/what-we-offer/counselling

1300 651 728

Clergy Assistance Program – support for clergy and spouses

www.anglicare.org.au/what-we-offer/counselling/clergy-assistance-program

1300 094 587

Relationships Australia NSW & ACT – individual and family counselling

www.nsw.relationships.com.au

1800 025 441

