



FEEDBACK/COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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This policy deals with how we approach complaints or negative feedback about us. It is open for use by members of the public, volunteers or staff and involves five key elements:

CULTURE

Our aim is to serve our association to the best of our ability. We accept that we are not perfect. We value complaints and feedback as a means of identifying and understanding how we can do things better.

PRINCIPLES

Our complaints and feedback system is modelled on biblical principles, including humility, fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration.

PEOPLE

Our complaint handling staff will be skilled and professional.

PROCESS

Our complaints handling process involves, seven stages – acknowledgement, assessment, planning, investigation, response, review, and consideration of systemic issues.

ANALYSIS

We review information about complaints as part of a continuous process of review and improvement.

We discuss these elements in more detail below:

ELEMENT 1 - CULTURE

We are committed to achieving our Mission and Vision to further the work of local Churches of Christ faith communities through relationships and resources. We are equally committed to doing so in the most faithful way possible, and without concern or hurt for any of the people we deal with. We know that despite our best efforts, we are not perfect and that we can always do better.

Accordingly, we value complaints and feedback and recognise that effective complaint handling will benefit our association, our reputation and our administration. We affirm that complaints can highlight weaknesses in our programs, policies and service delivery, and stimulate us to improve our operations. We also affirm that good complaint handling will reassure our association that we are committed to resolving problems and improving relationships through accountability and transparency.

ELEMENT 2 - PRINCIPLES

Our complaint and feedback handling system is based on biblical principles, modelled on principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness and efficiency. Complaint handling has the same priority as our core business. All complaints will be investigated with complete impartiality by a staff member or board member who is not personally involved in the issues, or by an external consultant or adviser. Each complaint will be assessed on its own merits. As far as possible confidentiality and privacy will be maintained (see CoCWA Privacy-Statement-2021.pdf for more information), and we will be transparent in reporting back results to you as quickly as possible. For example, if they can be resolved over the phone at the time they are made, we will do so.

We will not victimise or treat any person adversely because they have made a complaint. There is no financial charge for making a complaint. If you have specific accessibility requirements and there are alternate ways we can assist you in lodging your complaint (i.e. via use of an interpreter, or alternate formats of our documentation) please let us know and we will do our best to assist you.

ELEMENT 3 – PEOPLE

We take complaints and feedback seriously. All complaints will be handled by our executive team, unless it is inappropriate for them to do so, e.g. due to absence or a lack of independence, in which case another senior member of staff or a Board member will handle it. In matters where it is deemed inappropriate for complaints to be resolved within the staff or board members, or if it is deemed that the available staff and board members lack sufficient expertise or experience due, we may outsource the handling of a complaint to an external adviser or consultant, to whom we will give complete co-operation.

ELEMENT 4 – PROCESS

Informal feedback is general input or suggestions for improvement that can usually be addressed quickly and without a formal process, whereas a formal complaint is a documented expression of dissatisfaction about actions, decisions, or conduct that requires assessment and resolution under our complaints policy.

You may initiate a complaint or feedback by email, letter or telephone call – see the contact details below. In the case of a complaint received by telephone call that may require an investigation, a written formal complaint will also be needed. If you wish to make your complaint or provide feedback anonymously, it will still receive our genuine attention, although of course we will be unable to report back or seek further information which may be able to assist us in dealing with any issue. We are happy to deal directly with you, through a parent, guardian, or if needed and you give permission designated friend.

Any feedback received regarding CoCWA will be acknowledged and/or addressed at the time of receipt with no further action.

Generally, there are three categories of complaints we can receive:

- a) Complaints against CoCWA
- b) Complaints against a member church and non-accredited ministers/leaders
- c) Code of Conduct breaches by an Accredited Chaplain or Minister

Our standard complaint handling procedures are as follows (although we reserve the right to approach a complaint more flexibly if we think it will achieve a more just and efficient outcome):

1. We will acknowledge each complaint promptly, either by phone or email and give you the contact details of the person handling the complaint, ideally within 5 working days. If we have not finalised your complaint within 7 working days after that, we will contact you to report our progress.
2. We will assess the complaint and assign it priority. Where the complaint is in relation to a member church or a non-accredited minister or leader, we will ascertain if it is safe and appropriate for the member church to handle the complaint through its own procedures and recommend that you engage with the appropriate senior person from the member church. If needed CoCWA will liaise with the appropriate person and be part of the hand over process. If the member church process is deemed unsatisfactory by CoCWA, we will handle the complaint in line with our standard complaints handling procedures.
3. If investigation is needed, we will require a written formal complaint via email or letter, ideally within 2 weeks of the initial complaint, to progress the complaint. Once we have received the written complaint, we will plan how the investigation is to be carried out. If the complaint is in reference to a code of conduct breach of an accredited minister or chaplain, the Ministry Ethics Group will at this point take over the investigation process.
4. We will investigate all relevant factual issues and then review the complaint in the light of those facts. We will then consider options for complaint resolution.
5. We will contact you to discuss the complaint. In doing so we will inform you of the relevant facts we have identified and ask you to comment and/or give us any other relevant information you may have. We will then discuss with you how we propose to resolve the complaint. If we were wrong or have acted inappropriately, we will apologise.

6. If you are not satisfied with the proposed resolution, a Board member will be appointed to review the position, and we will contact you appropriately. If you are still not satisfied, and we believe that there are genuine issues involved, we may suggest an externally facilitated mediation. Alternatively, you may pursue any other action which you believe is appropriate.
7. We will respond internally to any systemic issues that are identified because of the complaint or feedback.

(Note – if we reasonably believe that a complaint is vexatious, trivial or not genuine we will inform you accordingly as soon as we form that view. If you wish to take matters further, you may pursue any other action which you believe is appropriate.)

ELEMENT 5 – ANALYSIS

We appreciate that complaints and feedback can provide an insight into our programs and services and may show that they are not working as well as they could. We will use information brought to light by any complaint or feedback to improve our service to our stakeholders by:

- Highlighting service failings that need to be remedied and
- Revealing problems and trends that can be acted upon by management.

We will address at Board level any significant issues which are revealed by our complaints handling and feedback procedures.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Phone: 08 9471 8500 (Please note Office Hours: Tuesday to Thursday 9am - 3pm)

Email: admin@cocwa.com.au

Post: PO Box 458, Dianella WA 6059

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