

NEW CITY CHURCH GRIEVANCE POLICY

Adopted by the board on: 24/2/24

New City Church recognises the importance of listening and responding to grievances.

It is important to speak up when something isn't right or when you see concerning conduct.

This is why the Grievance Policy (the "Policy") has been created, so that grievances may be received where a grievance concerns pastoral leadership, ministry leadership, or Board Members.

This Policy will also be applied where a grievance is of a serious nature, including:

- Harassment
- Sexual misconduct
- Financial mismanagement
- Regards a child
- Regards a person in leadership

Grievances of this nature will be governed by this Policy in order to reduce conflicts of interests, ensure confidentiality and non-retaliation. We are open to receiving feedback and grievances from individuals covered in the Scope of this policy as defined below, and will do our best to address and resolve issues raised.

NCC's grievance policy is consistent with our governance framework, and places a high value on accountability and partnership. We are committed to effectiveness, a high standard of conduct, and ongoing learning. Confidentiality in these matters is of the utmost importance and will be addressed as described below.

This policy also represents the minimum standard for our processes. The NCC board adopts these minimum standards and any additional standards as required by national or state laws and regulations.

2. PURPOSE

This Policy is created to ensure that grievances are handled fairly, effectively and in accordance with NCC's governance framework. This policy provides guidance for individuals covered in the Scope of this policy wishing to file a grievance as to the key principles, concepts, and processes within our grievance management system laid out in this policy and corresponding procedure.

3. SCOPE

This policy specifically applies to all those who attend NCC, whether in person or online, as well as volunteers and staff members, that have a grievance in accordance with Section 2 above.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

All staff responsible for instituting this Policy or who are otherwise directly approached with a grievance will understand and comply with the Grievance Policy, by:

- Being aware of the Grievance Policy and corresponding procedures;
- Handling all grievances with confidentiality and timeliness as required below;
- Treating all stakeholders with respect, including those who file grievances, committing not to engage in any retaliatory or harassing behaviour individually or organisationally;
- Assisting people who wish to file grievances to access our grievance process; and
- Being alert to grievances and assisting staff handling them to resolve matters promptly.

Staff and volunteers who hold responsibility for managing the grievance process will demonstrate quality grievance handling practices, by:

- Ensuring the Grievance Policy and procedures are accessible to all relevant stakeholders;
- Treating all people with respect, including those who file grievances;
- Assisting people to file grievances, as required;
- Complying with the procedures outlined in this Grievance Policy to effectively respond to grievances;
- Respecting confidentiality and privacy and behaving in a respectful and cooperative manner; and
- Providing feedback to Leadership and the Board on recommended improvements to the grievance management system and implementing changes arising from any grievances for review.

NCC will promote a culture that values feedback and the effective resolution of grievances, by:

- Reviewing all grievances and always seeking to refine and improve its grievance handling;
- Supporting and providing direction to key staff handling grievances; and
- Inviting and supporting recommendations for improving the grievance handling system from those that may file a grievance utilising this policy.

Confidentiality: All grievance information will be handled sensitively, treating all aspects of the procedure confidentially to the extent necessary, and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Reporting: NCC may have reporting obligations to authorities in certain circumstances. For example, grievances involving a child will be referred to the relevant authorities. Grievances involving health and safety will be referred to the appropriate Health & Safety Officer and must follow the Health and Safety incident reporting process. Where a grievance involves a claim of any illegal activity or a protected class, NCC will immediately report the same to the proper legal authorities as may be required by law.

Grievance Procedure: NCC will have an electronic mail address for an individual to file a grievance. The grievance procedure will detail what information is to be collected, and the process to Acknowledge, Review, Investigate, Respond and Escalate the grievance as appropriate.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY

NCC will ensure that grievances are recorded, reported to the board, and are easily accessible for reporting and reviewed by the NCC Board. Information recorded will include:

- the number of grievances received;
- the outcome of grievances;
- issues arising from grievances;
- all parties, including staff, leaders, or volunteers identified in grievances;
- any systemic issues identified; and
- the number of requests for review of how we handled a grievance.

We are committed to implementing appropriate system changes arising out of the review and analysis of systems and grievance data. Reports and analysis of grievance data will be anonymised and will not identify an individual to the extent possible.

Reports and their analysis will be provided to the Board for review. Our grievance management system will be monitored to ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving grievances and identifying and correcting deficiencies in operation. If a grievance concerns anyone in pastoral leadership or on the board, they will be excluded from any correspondence regarding the report.

GRIEVANCE HANDLING PROCEDURE

Introduction

All NCC personnel involved at any level in the implementation of this Grievance Handling Procedure are to act in accordance with the Grievance Policy. The handling of any grievances shall also consider any other relevant policies and procedures pertaining to the specific grievance.

The six stages for handling any grievances received are:



Emails shall be directed to grievances@newcitychurch.com.au

- **No Retaliation:** NCC does not tolerate retaliation. If you are filing a grievance, you should not suffer adverse consequences for doing so, nor for refusing to do something that is against NCC's policies or the law. Anyone who retaliates against another person because of their grievance report or investigation of a grievance will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination and/or requirement to stand down from volunteering activities.

Grievance Handling Procedure

1. RECEIVE

All grievances will be recorded along with supporting information, and the report will be assigned with an identifying code. Information recorded will include contact information for the person filing the grievance (if the individual has provided their contact details), the date the grievance was received, all parties including staff, leaders and volunteers involved, issues raised by the individual and their desired outcome/s, other relevant information provided by the individual, and any additional support the person filing the grievance requires.

2. ACKNOWLEDGE

NCC shall acknowledge receipt of any written grievance ***no later than 7 working days*** via a medium selected by the reporter. Verbal grievances received by NCC staff members and volunteers should be acknowledged immediately, and the same shall be communicated to grievances@newcitychurch.com.au within 48 hours of receipt of the same, and the corresponding response time for acknowledgement above shall be reduced by the time taken between receipt of the grievance and communication of the same as required hereunder.

Communication should include all information; including contact information for the person filing the grievance, the date the grievance was received, all parties including staff, leaders and volunteers involved, issues raised by the individual and their desired outcome/s, other relevant information, and any additional support the person filing the grievance requires. If a grievance is acceptably resolved upon receipt, it will be documented in accordance with the above, additionally there will be no additional steps taken to resolve the grievance by NCC.

Anonymous Reports

Anonymous grievances will not be acknowledged due to the lack of identifying information but will be logged for statistical purposes. However, individuals that stipulate they would like their identity to not be disclosed, will need to identify themselves in the initial complaint, and NCC will maintain the confidentiality of the individuals identity to the fullest extent possible. Some allegations that require investigation of conduct from an individual that requires procedural fairness, may require the identity of the individual being disclosed to fulfil legal obligations.

3. ASSESS

NCC will review the information provided related to the grievance and communicate with the reporter filing the grievance to clarify any facts and underlying issues. In doing so, NCC shall consider the outcome being sought by the individual and whether there are separate issues that also need to be addressed. When determining how a grievance will be managed, NCC will consider:

- How serious, complicated, or urgent the grievance is;
- Whether the individual raises concerns about health and safety or an illegality;
- How the individual is being affected; and
- The risks involved if resolution of the grievance is delayed.

NCC shall complete this initial assessment process as quickly as reasonable, but in no event shall the same take longer than 30 business days. Within such time period, NCC shall communicate with the individual filing the grievance what specific action is to be taken in regard to the same and in accordance with section 4 (Investigate) below. In the event the grievance is of such a nature that its assessment cannot be achieved within such time period, or where the grievance requires reporting the same to local authorities for further handling, this also shall be communicated to the individual lodging the grievance.

Anonymous Reports

If an anonymous report is received which does not provide sufficient information to substantiate a claim NCC may have limited options on how to proceed.

4. INVESTIGATE

In considering how to resolve the grievance, NCC may:

- Give the individual information or an explanation;
- Gather additional information about the issue, person(s), or areas related to the grievance;
- Report the grievance to local authorities as may be required by the nature of the grievance; and/or
- Investigate the claims made in the grievance (NCC reserves the right to externalise the investigation process if it deems appropriate).

An investigation will be conducted as required. Any actions to be taken will be tailored for each grievance and consider any statutory requirements. The individual filing the grievance will be kept up-to-date on progress and any delays. The investigation stage may take up to 60 days and an investigation report will be prepared within that time period.

Should the investigation require longer, the individual will be notified. Where an investigation reveals serious or willful misconduct, steps taken will follow other relevant policy responses to the behaviours identified, including the Employee and/or Volunteer Codes of Conduct and including any external obligations to report.

5. DETERMINE OUTCOME & RESPOND

The individual filing the grievance will be contacted through an appropriate medium and advised of:

- The outcome of the grievance handling process and any action taken, if doing so would not constitute a violation of privacy or confidentiality,
- The reason/s for the decision made or action taken,
- The proposed remedy or resolutions, and
- Any available options for the individual to review, if there are multiple potential resolutions that the individual can be offered to choose from.

6. CLOSE - DOCUMENT & REVIEW

Documentation will be kept regarding how we managed the grievance, the outcome, and any outstanding actions to be followed up on. Any systemic issues that become clear pertaining to repeated grievances requiring action will be considered. This policy is meant to ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored, and reported to appropriate management within NCC.

