 NEW NORCIA SERVICES	Policy	
	<h1>Complaints Handling Policy</h1>	
Document: Policy-10.09	Rev. 2	Effective June 2023

10.00 Safeguarding Policy

10.09 Complaints Handling Policy

Definition of a complaint

A complaint includes any allegation, suspicion, concern or report of a breach of the New Norcia Safeguarding Code of Conduct and this includes any disclosures made to New Norcia Parish or workplace that may be about or related to the abuse of a child or adult at risk in relation to the institution. Anyone can make a complaint including a child, adult survivor, parent, trusted adult independent support person, staff member, volunteer or a community person.

The primary overarching purpose of clearly outlining the steps within the Complaints Policy is to ensure the safeguarding of all children and adults at risk, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, those with disabilities and those from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- All complaints must be treated as serious and acted on promptly
- Complainants must be kept informed of the progress of their complaints
- The response should be relevant to the situation e.g. an historical report will be treated differently to where a child or adult at risk may be currently at risk of further abuse

Support Process

- Immediate response must be to ensure the safety of children and adults at risk
- As a first priority, when a child or adult at risk reports abuse or safety concerns sensitive support must be offered *immediately*
- The child or an adult at risk and their family (where appropriate) must be connected immediately with services that will assist to support them in the management of the difficult and traumatic circumstances – including pastoral care
- This care and support may need to be extended to others affected but outside of the immediate inner circle

Reporting

- Any allegation of criminal behavior against children must be reported to the Police ***whether the abuse has taken place or not***
- Any reports to other statutory bodies may be required dependent on the nature of the complaint


Risk Assessment

Risk assessments will be conducted at the following stages

- once an allegation has been made
- during the investigation
- at the end of the investigation – to enable a final decision to be reached in regard to what action if any needs to be taken

Factors to consider when undertaking the final risk assessment

- is there a risk to any other children or adults at risk?
- any other children or adults at risk the respondent may have contact with
- the respondent

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- the proper investigation of the complaint

New Norcia Grievance Procedure

- Follow standard procedure for management of a reported grievance as per the FWA (2009)
- A person may be stood down on full pay subject to the investigation being conducted
- Person must be kept informed of the developments of the investigation
- Employment may be terminated on completion of the investigation as per the FWA (2009) for gross misconduct

Factors to be considered during the investigation

- The nature and seriousness of the complaint
- The vulnerability of the children or adults at risk the respondent would be working with/providing services to
- The nature of the position held by the respondent
- The supervision/oversight available for the respondent
- The support available for the respondent on a day by day basis if their duties remained unchanged during the investigation
- The respondents previous work history (disciplinary)
- Any potential risks to the investigation

The Investigation Process

The purpose of the investigation is to establish

- Has the respondent breached the New Norcia Code of Conduct or any other policy or procedure?
- Is the respondent a risk to the safety of children or adults at risk?
- Is there any action required to prevent any harm coming to any child or adult at risk?

Who Conducts the Investigation

- The investigation must be carried out by a trained, impartial and objective investigator who may be an employee of New Norcia, a contractor or a party independent of New Norcia
- The Police should be consulted prior to commencing an internal workplace investigation

Facts considered during the investigation include:


- All relevant facts
- Documentation of these
- Establishment of a basis for a decision to be reached

Respondent

The respondent must be treated fairly and afforded procedural fairness as per the grievance procedure outlined in the FWA (2009)

This would include:

- The offer of counselling, union referrals if appropriate and a support person
- Allegations/complaints are put to the respondent in writing providing sufficient detail to enable a response
- The respondent clearly understands the investigative process and the potential findings
- The respondent is kept regularly informed of the progress of the investigation
- Outcomes/findings are reported in writing to the respondent

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- The respondent understands they have a right to a review

Objectivity and confidentiality must be afforded to all parties during the process

Implementation of Outcomes

Following the investigation, the following must occur:

- A decision is reached for the complainant
- The victim/complainant is informed of the outcome
- The respondent is advised of the outcome
- Ongoing support is offered including from New Norcia itself and in the form of access to advocacy, support, therapeutic treatment services and a safety plan for the complainant (and family if required)
- Relevant agencies are notified
- Those in the Community who are affected are notified
- All this information is disclosed to every complainant and respondent

In the case of adult complainants who suffered abuse as children from personnel associated with New Norcia:

They always deserve a compassionate response when coming forward with a complaint

This would include but not be limited to:

- A compassionate response
- Appropriate pastoral care
- An offer from the Church authority to meet with the complainant in person
- A full explanation of the process
- Respect and facilitate choices for the adult complainant in all aspects of the process

A process of continuous review of this policy should occur on a regular basis to ensure best practice occurs