

06.05

Prevention of Harassment and Abuse Policy

Theological Foundation

In a harsh world all too often marked by hostility and malice, God's people are called to act with compassion, gentleness and reasonableness. (Gal 5:22–23; Eph 4:2; Matt 5:1–9)

Jesus gentle and respectful treatment of the often harassed and abused Samaritans (Luke 9:51–55; John 4) also teaches us much about how God's people are to treat others, especially the vulnerable in society.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to cultivate a lifestyle of reconciliation within the Lutheran Church of Australia (the Church) ensuring that all who engage with the Church are treated with dignity and respect in an environment free from physical, psychological, sexual or spiritual harassment or abuse or the perception of harassment or abuse of any kind.

Relevant to

The Policy and Procedures apply to:

- All ministries and activities of the Church
- All pastors, lay workers, employees, members, volunteers and visitors.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

- Those who hold positions of trust in the Church are an example of good Christian living
- Physical harassment or abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- Sexual harassment or abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- Psychological harassment or abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- Spiritual harassment or abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- A lifestyle of reconciliation is cultivated within the Church

Policy Statement

In bringing God's love to life, the Church is committed to the prevention of physical, psychological, sexual or spiritual harassment or abuse or the perception of harassment or abuse in the life of the Church.

The Church considers any form of harassment or abuse to be unacceptable and it will not be tolerated under any circumstance.

Definitions

- **Psychological Harassment or Abuse** is negative and unwanted behaviour towards a person (or group of people) which offends, humiliates, intimidates or undermines the person. Psychological harassment or abuse is often repeated or part of a pattern of behaviour, which alone may be relatively minor but which cumulatively can become a serious form of violence which can have serious psychological effects on a person. Behaviour which is a once off occurrence is considered to be abuse if it is sufficiently serious.
- **Sexual Harassment or Abuse** is where a person:
 - makes an unwelcome sexual advance, or an unwelcome request for sexual favours, to another person (the person harassed); or
 - engages in other unwelcome *conduct of a sexual nature* in relation to the person harassed,

in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Conduct of a sexual nature includes making a statement of a sexual nature to a person, or in the presence of a person, whether the statement is made orally or in writing.

- **Physical Abuse** is any incident where a person is threatened or physically attacked by direct or indirect application of force that creates a risk to health, safety and wellbeing, whether intentional or unintentional, including:
 - Striking, scratching, biting, spitting or any other type of direct physical contact
 - Throwing objects at or towards a person
 - Attacking a person with or without any type of weapon
 - Pushing, shoving, tripping or grabbing a person
- **Spiritual Abuse** occurs when a person with spiritual authority uses that authority to coerce, control or exploit another person causing spiritual wounds. Such wounding or scarring affects a person's relationship with God and they may develop a distorted image of God and of themselves.

Procedural Principles

The application of the policy will ensure an environment free from harassment or abuse of any type by:

- Providing leadership and modelling appropriate behaviour
- Encouraging people who are associated with the Church to be proactive in creating a supportive and respectful culture
- Providing a safe environment that enables people to carry out their responsibilities associated with the Church free from abuse or harassment of any type. This includes ensuring that complaints of harassment and abuse are investigated expeditiously in accordance with the LCA Complaints Handling policy and taking appropriate action against any person who breaches this Policy
- Ensuring those associated with the Church are aware of the possibility of harassment or abuse and ensuring supervisors monitor key indicators such as absenteeism and high turnover of church workers or members.
- Supervisors and senior Church members identifying training and learning needs for themselves and those for whom they are responsible.

Responsible person/s

- General Church Council (GCC) is responsible to ensure compliance with this policy across the LCA
- District Church Councils (DCC) are responsible to ensure implementation of this policy and related procedures within their respective Districts, to monitor compliance and report to GCC
- Congregation/Parish Councils are responsible for the implementation of this policy and related procedures, and report compliance to their respective District
- Governance Boards of all Church related entities are responsible for application of Prevention of Harassment and Abuse Policies and procedures that meet their particular requirements, but are consistent with the LCA Prevention of Harassment and Abuse Policy and Procedures.

Document Controls

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