

PARISH COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION POLICY

This policy reflects the parish's commitment to practice the Gospel values of justice and hope. Its purpose is to provide parishioners with the principles and procedures to be used in responding to complaints and resolving disputes. This process is designed to ensure that complaints are treated seriously, respectfully, and sensitively and that an honest dialogue can occur in the community.

The parish welcomes open and transparent discussion and urges parishioners with genuine concerns to deal directly with the issue so that it can be resolved fairly and quickly.

What is a complaint?

For the purposes of this policy a complaint is a concern, grievance or issue that is raised by a member of the parish, and which requires a resolution.

If a parish member/s believes that another parish member/s (including the parish priest, staff of the Parish Office, or a volunteer) has engaged in conduct that is inappropriate, they are encouraged to make a complaint in accordance with this procedure.

Principles

The parish will:

- a) respect the rights and responsibilities of all members of the community.
- b) treat all complaints seriously and sensitively, having due regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality, and privacy.
- c) provide support to the person making the complaint and any person against whom a complaint is made.
- d) seek to resolve a complaint as early as possible and directly with the people involved.
- e) acknowledge the expectations of all parishioners to act in a courteous, respectful, supportive, and constructive manner towards one another.
- f) if necessary, seek external support or involvement of relevant agencies in the resolution of a complaint.
- g) facilitate any changes deemed to be necessary which arise from the resolution of a complaint.

Preference for direct communication between parties

Our parish values direct communication and expects that individuals will, if possible, bring a complaint directly to the parties involved, and that those involved will make every effort to resolve the complaint.

Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved by a process of discussion, cooperation, and conciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome which restores and maintains good relationships.

Complaints to be made in writing

If initial direct contact between the parties does not resolve the complaint, or the complainant does not wish to address the party directly, then the complainant should make a formal written complaint in accordance with this policy. Verbal complaints will not be accepted.

Complaints must be made in writing (email or postal) and addressed to the person / agency identified below.

Please note that there are separate arrangements for urgent complaints about alleged sexual or other type of abuse, as outlined below.

If the complaint is about:	Address the complaint to:
A Parishioner, including volunteers (excluding Parish Office staff and Parish Priest) from either Our Lady of Nativity or St Therese's	Parish Office – essendon@cam.org.au 48A Lincoln Road Essendon VIC 3040 Please note the complaint will be referred to and managed by the Parish Priest.
Staff in Parish Office	Parish Priest – john.hannon@cam.org.au
Parish Priest	Vicar General, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne – vicar.general@cam.org.au 03 9926 5638
Alleged sexual or other type of abuse	Victoria Police – call 131444 or call or visit a police station or call a local SOCIT - Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams North-West Metropolitan 03 9624 3781

What to include in a complaint

- the name of the person against whom the complaint is made;
- the nature of the behaviour complained of;
- date(s) and time(s) when the behaviour complained of occurred;
- names of witnesses to any incidence of the behaviour complained of (if any);
- what outcome(s) the complainant is seeking (e.g. an apology, a change of behaviour or change of policy or process, or acknowledgement of their feelings with no further action required);
- your name and contact details. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

Complaint Handling

The Parish Priest will:

- respond in a timely manner.
- keep all discussions confidential in limiting it to those directly involved.
- fully document the complaint.
- if necessary, enable the person making the complaint to have a support person.
- inform the person about whom the complaint was made and the nature of the complaint.
- organize a process of mediation, including use of an independent facilitator, if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the parish.

Policy to be reviewed April 2027