

Got a COMPLAINT or GRIEVANCE?

HERE'S HOW TO RESOLVE IT

1. Seek to talk it over with the person or persons concerned. Be respectful, positive and constructive – try and see the other person's perspective.
2. If that doesn't work ask to speak to the school Principal or the person's manager. See if their assistance can help resolve the matter.
3. Still no resolution? You can lodge a formal grievance/complaint. To begin the formal process call the Diocesan Professional Standards Unit on 4050 9705. Note that in a small number of cases the matter might be so serious or sensitive that the first two steps are dispensed with and direct contact with the Professional Standards Unit is warranted.
4. You will be asked to make your complaint/grievance in writing. Your statement should contain:
 - Your contact details
 - Nature of the matter including the details of the particular allegations (what is the problem, who is involved, when it happened, where it happened, any contextual information, names of witnesses or confidants). This is best provided in numbered paragraphs
 - Resolution that is sought (for example an apology or an assurance that certain behaviour will not be repeated)
5. Your complaint/grievance will then be referred to a senior Catholic Education Services staff member to manage. In certain circumstances an external person may be appointed to manage the process. They will keep you and the person(s) who is/are the subject of the complaint informed about the progress of the process.
6. The person managing the process will:
 - Review all relevant material/evidence
 - Make further enquiries if necessary
 - Assess whether the findings reflect the evidence
 - Make a determination and advise the parties of the decision and the reasons
 - Determine what further action (if any) is necessary
7. Not happy with the outcome? You have a right of appeal within 30 days to the Catholic Education Services Executive Director.

Remember:

- You always have recourse through the **legal process**.
- All parties have a right to expect strict confidentiality in the management of grievance and complaint processes.
- If the matter relates to the commission of a crime, you should report the matter to the **Police**.
- If the matter involves child abuse or reportable conduct there are processes outlined in the **Student Protection Manual**.
- There are also separate policies on **sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination**.

Our process for resolving complaints and grievances does not replace, alter or limit your access to legal or police processes or the processes outlined in the documents above.

Policy statement:

Catholic Education in the Diocese of Cairns is committed to developing an educational and organizational culture based on mutual trust and respect. We are committed to providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all employees and students.

We acknowledge that employees, students and parents may sometimes have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unacceptable. While most issues can be resolved through direct discussion between the parties concerned, there may be instances in which this is not possible. This is one of a series of three posters to provide guidance on a process for grievance resolution.



**Catholic
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Diocese of Cairns

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Has someone made a **COMPLAINT** about you?



HERE'S HOW TO RESPOND

- 1.** The person making the complaint may ask to talk it over with you. You are encouraged to meet with the person, understand the nature of their grievance, and try and reach an amicable settlement. Often complaints are based on a misunderstanding and can be resolved through clarification, and if appropriate, an apology.
- 2.** If the issue is not resolved the complainant may seek the involvement of your Principal or line manager, who will raise the matter with you. Again, you are encouraged to positively engage in this discussion.
- 3.** If these two steps do not resolve the matter the complainant may make a formal written complaint and an independent person (a senior Catholic Education Services (CES) staff member) will be assigned to manage the process. You will be asked to respond with a written statement and may be asked to attend a meeting with or without the complainant.
- 4.** Your statement will be your version of events – who is involved, when it happened, where it happened, any contextual information, names of witnesses or confidants. This is best provided in numbered paragraphs. If you regard the complaint as frivolous or vexatious you should outline your reasons.
- 5.** Once a formal process has begun you should not have contact with the complainant without the endorsement of the process manager.
- 6.** Having investigated the matter the independent person will make a determination on the complaint. If you are not happy with the outcome you may appeal, in writing, to the Catholic Education Services Executive Director, within 30 days.

Remember:

- You are entitled to seek independent legal advice and separate recourse through the legal process, at any stage.
- All parties have a right to expect strict confidentiality in the management of grievance and complaint processes.
- Our processes do not tolerate frivolous or vexatious complaints.
- If a complaint is upheld there could be consequences under the Catholic Education Codes of Conduct for staff and for parents and volunteers.

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Are you managing a **COMPLAINTS** or **GRIEVANCE** process?



THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND...

- 1. Be independent, be fair.** Treat both the complainant and respondent with respect and seek to understand their perspective. Do not take sides.
- 2. Encourage** the complainant and respondent to resolve the grievance to their mutual satisfaction.
- 3. Document the process.** You will have statements from the complainant and respondent, possibly witness statements, and records of meetings. These should be kept on a confidential file – at the end of the process this file should be forwarded to the Diocesan Professional Standards Unit.
- 4.** Ensure the **confidentiality** of the process.
- 5. Communicate!** Keep the complainant and respondent informed of the progress in managing the grievance/complaint.
- 6. Prepare a report** outlining your findings. This will include:
 - A summary of the nature of the grievance
 - A summary of the process findings
 - Actions required
- 7.** Advise the complainant and respondent of their **rights of appeal**, within 30 days, to the Catholic Education Services Executive Director.

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