



TASMANIAN  
**CATHOLIC**  
education commission

# POLICY (TACTICAL) COMPLAINTS PROCESSING

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

Taking Care  
Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

## COMPAINTS PROCESSING POLICY (at a System level)

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RELATED POLICIES  
Taking Care  
Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

### **RATIONALE**

The Catholic Education System is committed to the development of an educational and organisational culture based on mutual respect and trust; one which assists all stakeholders recognise and develop their personal capabilities and provides for them a safe and supportive educational and spiritual environment.

The Complaints Processing Policy reflects the desire of the Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission (TCEC) and the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO) to resolve complaints promptly, justly and in accordance with relevant legislation, policies and current industrial awards or enterprise agreements. It is grounded in the TCEC's commitment to the dignity and merit of all, and aims to contribute to a harmonious, positive and productive educational environment.

This Complaints Processing Policy is primarily designed to address issues and complaints arising from the policies and procedures applicable to the Catholic system of schools across Tasmania. The policy does not apply to the management of performance and industrial issues (see relevant industrial agreements) or allegations of misconduct on the part of Archdiocesan employees (see *Taking Care* Policy).

The Complaints Processing Policy is premised on the principles articulated in the ***Archdiocesan Vision and Mission Statement*** to:

*"respond to human need with compassion, fairness and justice that respects the dignity of all; and*

*"formulate and manage our structures and policies in accord with our Catholic ethos and tradition."*

Any policies or circumstances, which undermine the intrinsic dignity of the individual person or impinge upon the respect due to them, must be addressed because they may adversely affect the overall welfare and development of individuals or corporate groups and impinge upon the effectiveness of the mission of Catholic education.

*"If people possess truly human values and sound moral principles, they will be enabled to find 'solutions which are truly human' for the problems of their lives. Christians know that their faith helps them to contribute more effectively to the good of the society in which they live".*

*(#2 John Paul II: Opening of the Catholic Education Centre, Western Australia, November 1986)*

## **POLICY**

The imperative for all members of the Catholic education system to work positively to resolve complaints flows from the Gospel values of justice, compassion, reconciliation, truth and love, which are integral to the Catholic ethos of the entire Catholic system of schools.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Complaint**

A complaint expresses the dissatisfaction of an individual or group about an action or decision that has been taken, or not taken, by the school or system, which a person or corporate group believes to be in

breach of established policies, in contradiction with the Archdiocesan or School's Vision and Mission Statement or infringes upon the principles of justice, merit or equity.

**Governing Body** The body established by the Church Trust Corporation of the Archdiocese of Hobart or a specific Religious Institute to assume the overall authority and responsibility for an individual school or College (see Appendix 2).

**Executive Officer** The person with the delegated authority to act on behalf of the school, the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office, Governing Body or the TCEC (e.g. Principals, Regional Director, Executive Director of Catholic Education).

## **PRINCIPLES**

1. All stakeholders, either individuals or groups, in Catholic education have the right to have complaints addressed and a resolution rigorously sought.
2. The resolution of complaints should be premised on a sound and fair basis of information dissemination, conciliation, investigation and decision-making, which involve the principles of due process and natural justice.
3. All Catholic schools and colleges are administered by a governing body that has the ultimate authority for the conduct and well-being of the school or college (see list of Governing Bodies in Appendix 2). The TCEC does not have governance authority over any individual school.
4. When complaints initially arise they are best dealt within the context of the local school community in accordance with the established Grievance Policy of the school.
5. The resolution of complaints is dependent on all relevant stakeholders having the opportunity and authority to engage in dialogue and make decisions that will lead to the resolution of a grievance. In this context the Executive Officer of the relevant

Governing Body is best placed to process most complaints that have not been resolved at the local school level.

6. It is incumbent upon the Executive Officer to process complaints in a prompt and timely manner when a grievance has been brought to his/her attention. In doing so the Executive Officer, in the first instance, will seek information and advice regarding the complaint from the school's Principal, if appropriate.
7. The TCEC will consider and address complaints in respect to individual or corporate concerns with regards to system-wide policy statements formulated by the TCEC. The TCEC is not the appropriate body to address complaints related to specific school based policies or management issues.
8. The prompt resolution of complaints at a school or system level with the mutual co-operation of all parties concerned is the desired outcome.

## **PROCEDURES**

1. In accordance with School's Registration Board requirements all Catholic schools have a Grievance Policy relevant to their local school community. Complaints should be addressed in accordance with established protocols at a local level.
2. It is assumed that prior to being addressed at a system level the local school based grievance process has been followed. Except in special circumstances, if the school-based protocol has not been followed, the complaint would initially be referred back to the local level for resolution.
3. The Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO) is generally the first point of contact for complaints from the wider community. Initial contact may be by telephone or email however formal complaints should be lodged with the TCEO in writing.
4. The TCEO, in consultation with the relevant Executive Officer of a Governing Body, would decide upon the appropriate pathway for processing a particular complaint. The attached Complaints Processing Flowchart (Appendix 1) outlines the

communication and procedural steps involved in processing a complaint at the system level. Generally if appropriate, the Executive Officer, in the first instance, will seek information and advice regarding the complaint from the school's Principal.

5. In accordance with the understanding that most complaint issues are best addressed as a matter of Governance (see Principle #3), the TCEO will generally refer a complaint to the relevant Governing Body, via the appropriate Executive Officer, in accordance with established protocols.
6. Formal complaints regarding TCEC policy matters should be lodged with the TCEC in writing. The Executive Officer of the TCEC will undertake to record and document the relevant concerns and ensure appropriate processes are followed and outcomes achieved.
7. Where the complaint involving a TCEC policy is related to a specific school context, the TCEC will liaise with the relevant Executive Officer and/or the Governing Body in an endeavour to seek a resolution.
8. If a complaint involving a TCEC Policy is not resolved by the TCEC's Executive Officer it will be referred to the TCEC Executive committee via the Chairperson of the TCEC.
9. If the complaint is subsequently unresolved it will be referred to a full meeting of TCEC, who, after due consideration, will make final decisions regarding the matter.

## REFERENCES

Nil


## FORMS

Nil

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1                      Complaints Processing Flowchart  
APPENDIX 2                      School / College Governing Bodies

**SIGNED:**



TCEC Chairperson

**DATE:**

3.10.2007

Approved by:	TCEC
Issuing Group:	Policy and Executive Services
Implementation Date:	October 2007
Supersedes Policy Dated:	New Policy
Revision Date:	2011
TCEO Contact Officer:	Head of Policy