UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND OCEANIA

Complaints Handling Policy 2026

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COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

"How precious is your unfailing love, O God!

All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings."

Psalm 36:7-8

INTRODUCTION

Our Eparchy is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all, with particular care for the wellbeing and rights of children and adults at risk. We recognise that listening to concerns and responding appropriately is essential to maintaining trust, improving our services, and upholding our safeguarding responsibilities. People may contact our organisation for all sorts of reasons: service related, actions or inactions, decision making, policies or processes.
These are not defined as complaints for the purposes of this policy but may be breaches of the Eparchial Code of Conduct.
Some contact with the Eparchy may be comments, suggestions or feedback where a formal response is not sought or expected. Nevertheless, these should be handled sensitively and respectfully.

This policy concerns itself with complaints about alleged abuse of children or adults at risk.
The Eparchy has a zero-tolerance stance towards any form of abuse.

A complaint can be said to be an implied or express statement of dissatisfaction where a response is sought, is reasonable to expect or is legally required. This definition is consistent with Australian Standards and matches the definition used by the Commonwealth Ombudsman. Abuse of children and adults at risk is the most serious of complaints our Eparchy can receive, and carries strict legal reporting obligations, which may vary State by State, in Australia. Such complaints can be:

- **Current or Historical Sexual Abuse & Misconduct:** allegations of sexual abuse committed against children or adults at risk by clergy, staff or volunteers.
- **Physical & Emotional Harm**: physical violence, significant emotional or psychological harm, or neglect.
- **Reportable Conduct:** Behaviours that breach safeguarding standards, including grooming, psychological harm, or boundary violations by clergy, workers or volunteers.

Breaches of the Eparchial Code of Conduct by clergy, Eparchy personnel and volunteers- allegations regarding a member of the clergy or religious order that violates their ministry standards or vows, Eparchy personnel, or volunteers but that do not necessarily meet the threshold of criminal abuse, however, breach church ethics or codes of conduct should be referred to processes outlined in the Eparchial Code of Conduct.

General Eparchial & Parish Operations & Administration - complaints regarding the day-to-day operations of the Eparchy or parish, regarding service delivery- dissatisfaction with how parish services, sacraments, or pastoral care are provided; administrative decisions- disagreement with decisions made by the parish priest, school principal, or eparchial/parish leadership (clergy & volunteers); financial matters - concerns regarding the handling of church funds, donations or Eparchial or parish assets - these type of complaints, concerns, suggestions or feedback should be made to the Eparchial Office or the Parish Administrator.

Workplace Staff and Volunteer grievances should be handled through HR policies and procedures of the Eparchy/parish and relevant industrial legislation.

Conflict of Interest - the current Statutes of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy in Australia define conflict of interest as a 'factual circumstance where there is either an actual, potential or perceived divergence between the individual interests of the individual and the Eparchy or Parish Council or Committee in which the individual serves such that an independent observer might reasonably question that the volunteer, office holder or employee conduct, may have been influenced by their own private interests or personal circumstances'.

However, everyone must be aware of the inherent power imbalance that exists in the provision of ministry and services between members of the Clergy and members of the Church community and at all times respond to that power imbalance with understanding, respect and integrity.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

NAME OF POLICY	**COMPLAINTS HANDLING**
DESCRIPTION	To assist in creating a safe environment for children and adults at risk by setting a clear process for reporting of abuse.
POLICY SCOPE (applies to)	Applies to all personnel engaged by the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy in Australia and should be read in conjunction with its safeguarding documents.
POLICY STATUS	New
POLICY CATEGORY	Standard 1 NCSS Committed leadership, governance and culture Standard 6 - Effective Complaints Management Standard 8- Safe Physical and Online Environments Standard 10- Policies and Procedures support the Safety of Children and Adults
POLICY SUB- CATEGORY	Legal and moral and ethical obligations
APPROVAL AUTHORITY	Eparch Ukrainian Catholic Church in Australia, New Zealand & Oceania
GOVERNING AUTHORITY	Eparchial Safeguarding Committee
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Chair Eparchial Safeguarding Committee
APPROVAL DATE	18th July 2026
DATE OF POLICY REVIEW	12 monthly

1. PURPOSE

To assist in creating a safe environment for children, and adults at risk by setting a process for reporting of abuse. The application of the process extends to all Eparchial environments and interactions with children, young people and adults at risk, including physical and face -to-face contact, contact by post or other written communication, contact by telephone or other oral communication, contact by email or other electronic communication such as online seminars, prayer groups or liturgies.

2. WHO CAN REPORT

Any person, including a child, young person, adult at risk, a parent, clergy or religious person, staff members, volunteers, or parishioners can make a report or disclosure if they hold a concern that a child, young person or adult has been, or is, at risk of abuse or harm.

3. WHEN TO ACT

2.1 If a Person forms a 'reasonable belief' that a child or adult has experienced abuse, is experiencing abuse or is at risk of harm, they must act.

2.1.1 What does 'reasonable belief' mean?

- A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the same belief on the same grounds. Definitive proof or evidence that abuse has occurred or is occurring or that a child or adult is at risk is not required - i.e. the person is not required to undertake an investigation, nor is it appropriate to do so.
- A reasonable belief may be formed when one or more of the following occurs:
  - A child or adult discloses abuse.

- A child or adult shows indicators of harm.
- One or more physical and or behavioural indicators of abuse occur.
- A complaint or allegation is made about behaviour that compromises the safety, health or well-being of children or adults.
- Behaviour is witnessed that suggests that a child or adult is being harmed or is at risk of abuse.
- A perpetrator discloses that they are harming a child or adult.
- A child or adult creates drawings or stories that involve themes or events involving abuse.
- An adult discloses historical abuse that occurred when they were a child.

4. REPORTING ABUSE

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STEP 1- Who Can Report?	**Anyone:** *Child or adult or their parent or career *Staff member/volunteer/parishioner *Clergy or religious person *Any other person e.g. witnesses to an incident
STEP 2 - What to Report	**Abuse or safety-related misconduct:** *Current or historical disclosures of abuse or harm *Current or historical allegations, suspicions or observations
STEP 3 - How?	*Verbal Report in person or by phone *Written Report via email or mail
STEP 4 - Who to?	**There are a number of different pathways:** •If the child or adult is in immediate danger, report should be made by an individual directly to the Police calling 000, and Child Protection Agency in your State - check legislation in your State for compliance requirements, particularly mandatory reporting. •In almost all circumstances when the person making the complaint is an adult bringing forward abuse suffered as a child, he or she should be referred to the agency set up specifically to address these matters, the Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL). •Report the matter to the Eparchial Safeguarding Officer safeguarding@catholicukes.org.au
STEP 5 - What happens Next?	**The Eparchial Safeguarding officer will:** *Clarify the nature of the complaint and if necessary, initiate risk-management processes to ensure the safety of the person and others *Contact the relevant Parish Safeguarding Officer, ensure that the relevant statutory authority in the State is notified and offer support *An independent investigation may occur

For further information about Complaints contact the Eparchial Vicar General:
Phone: (03) 9320 2560
Email: eparchy@catholicukes.org.au

To make a complaint, email or write to:
Email: safeguarding@catholicukes.org.au
Address: 35 Canning Street, North Melbourne, VIC 305