

<b>Document:</b>	<b>Complaints Management Policy</b>
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<b>Area(s):</b>	<b>The Institute and Corporate Entities (as listed below)</b>
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## Scope

This Policy applies to all sisters, staff, volunteers and long-term contractors of the Institute and its Corporate Entities. It does not apply to the Institute ministries which have their own complaints and protected disclosure policies.

This Policy describes the manner in which the Institute receives and applies principles to the acceptance and management of complaints.

This Policy does not address workplace complaints or related issues concerning staff. These are handled according to the Grievance Handling Policy.

The Institute is committed to receiving and responding to expressions of concern and complaints from stakeholders, volunteers, members of the community and others whom we encounter. We view feedback as an opportunity to learn and improve and we welcome these opportunities as we seek to live out our mission of mercy in the world today.

We have a number of ways that feedback and complaints can be made:

- The feedback hotline service: 1800 019 625
- Directly to the Safeguarding Office, for safe reporting of risks to children and adults at risk: [safeguardingofficer@ismapng.org.au](mailto:safeguardingofficer@ismapng.org.au) .

We strive to ensure that those who provide feedback or make complaints are treated fairly, not discriminated against or denied any services as a result of making a complaint. The person making a complaint is also entitled to have a support person present in any meeting where their complaint is discussed.

## 1. Complaints

Depending on the nature of the complaint, we may investigate the circumstances which gave rise to the complaint, following our [Investigations Procedure](#).

The complaint is recorded, and steps taken to resolve it as quickly as possible. If the person is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, they may take it to an appropriate external body (Australian Catholic

Safeguarding Limited) for review.

The following protocols apply:

1. Where a disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse or harm is made, the priority in responding is always the safety and wellbeing of the child. To ensure this, on receipt of a complaint, there will be an immediate assessment to identify and minimise any risk to children or adults at risk. Where a complaint is plausible and there is a risk that the alleged perpetrator might come into contact with children or adults at risk, that person is stood down from their role or ministry while the complaint is investigated.
2. Everyone engaged with the Institute has a moral obligation to report any disclosure, complaint, allegation or suspicion of child abuse or harm to the Safeguarding office within 24 hours of becoming aware of it. Where a child is in imminent danger, a report must be made to police immediately.
3. All incidents of child abuse are to be viewed as damaging to children. Forms of child abuse include physical abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, cultural/spiritual abuse, on-line abuse, grooming.
4. Safeguarding complaints occurring within the Institute are reported to the appropriate statutory authority regardless of whether the reporting is mandated or not.
5. All relevant reporting, privacy and employment obligations are met.
6. The Institute personnel cooperate with law enforcement procedures and directives.

The Institute will maintain the confidentiality of any complaint made. Access to complaints records will only be provided on receipt of a written request and in line with the terms of the Institute's Privacy Policy and relevant state and federal legislation on personal information and disclosure.

## **2. Historical Claims**

We also acknowledge that regrettably there have been times, during the history of the previous congregations which formed the Institute in December 2011, when children and adults at risk in our ministries were not treated with care and respect.

We are committed to resolving claims brought by those people with compassion, and in a claimant-centred and trauma-informed way. In the context of this Policy, the justice we desire is restorative: it is primarily about restoring right relationships between the Institute and those whom its members, employees, contractors or volunteers have harmed by conduct which has caused pain and suffering.

We commit unreservedly to the Church Protocols and Guidelines which provide the basis for responding with justice to persons who may have a complaint against the Institute. Complaints regarding historical claims are managed according to our [Procedure for Claims Resolution](#).

## **3. Protected Disclosures**

In line with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS Standard 6), the Institute extends protection for those who report suspected child abuse or other reportable incidents.

Through this policy, the Institute ensures that all personnel are made aware of their rights and protections in reporting any child safety or other concerns.

When a person makes a Protected Disclosure:

- their identity must remain confidential according to their wishes;
- they will be protected from reprisal, discrimination, harassment or victimisation for making the disclosure;
- an independent internal inquiry or investigation will be conducted using the Investigations Procedure;
- issues identified from the inquiry/investigation will seek to be resolved and/or rectified; and
- they will be informed about the outcomes (so far as practicable).

## **4. Barriers to disclosure**

Personnel should be alert to individuals who might require additional assistance or different approaches to make a complaint, such as people with disability, children, young people, people living in regional or remote areas, the aged and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In children, these characteristics may lead to barriers that prevent children from disclosing abuse and/or barriers for adults recognising and responding to disclosures.

## **Definitions**

**Adult at risk** refers to any person aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

**Child** means any person under the age of 18 years.

**Church Protocols and Guidelines** means the protocols established in the Catholic Church in place from time to time such as Integrity in Ministry, Integrity in the Service of the Church and Protocol for Right Relationships in Ministry (Papua New Guinea).

**Corporate Entities** means Institute Property Association Limited, McAuley Property Limited, Mercy Sisters Ltd, Mercy Support Ltd, McAuley Ministries Ltd, Catherine McAuley Services Ltd and The Sisters of Mercy of Papua New Guinea Inc.

**The Institute** means Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, a religious institute of pontifical right and a public juridic person within the Catholic Church.

**Protected Disclosure** means a disclosure of information relating to a material risk of substantial harm to any child or adult at risk within the care of the Institute or its sisters or staff, suspected misconduct (including fraud, negligence, default, breach of trust or breach of duty) or an improper state of affairs or circumstances concerning the Institute or its Corporate Entities.

## **Related Documents**

[Investigations Procedure](#)

[Complaints Management Procedure](#)

[Pastoral Care Policy](#)

[Procedure for Claims Resolution](#)

[Mandatory Reporting Policy](#)

## Version Control

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