

Grievances Between Chaplains

Introduction:

Within the normal functions of human relationships there is always the potential for conflict. Conflict occurs for a variety of reasons that range from a simple misunderstanding, or misrepresentation of one's actions, to the more negative aspects of human behaviour such as manipulation, abuse, vilification, harassment or bullying. As people we usually manage the majority of our conflict informally, and when such conflict is managed constructively, it can often be a catalyst for relationship growth. However, there are occasions when conflict cannot be managed either informally or constructively by the parties concerned. When a conflict issue reaches the point where it seemingly cannot be resolved, or if it is perceived that the conflict has escalated or involves abuse, vilification, bullying or harassment, then it becomes necessary to engage a formal process with the aim of achieving as satisfactory a resolve to the issue as is possible.

The State Chaplaincy Board is hopeful that most issues that may arise amongst Chaplains can and will be resolved informally, however it is recognised that there are instances where this is simply not possible or appropriate. Hence the necessity for a formal policy relating to grievance issues that may occur between Chaplains. Such policy is intended to compliment and support the current Federal legislation that relates to Vilification and Harassment in the workplace and notes that this includes both paid staff and volunteers.

Definitions and terms:

Vilification:

This includes such behaviour as name calling, racist or culturally inappropriate comments, denigration of personal (including lifestyle choices) or spiritual beliefs. Such behaviours may be presented directly to the person concerned or to a second party.

Harassment:

This includes such behaviour as inappropriate and unwelcome sexual behaviour (including inappropriate language, innuendo, and unwelcome or inappropriate physical contact), physical abuse or assault, verbal abuse, bullying, deliberate humiliation, threats, intimidation or ostracisation from peers.

Process:

As stated above, in the first instance, it is always hoped that any such issue may be resolved between the parties. If this is not possible, then the following process should be followed:

1. The aggrieved person will, in the first instance, contact their Senior Chaplain or their SCB representative of their sponsoring body and inform them of the issue in writing. (Should the grievance be against the Senior Chaplain or Board Member then the aggrieved will contact the Chair or another Board Member)

2. The Senior Chaplain or Board Member will then notify the Chair of the Board (or the Deputy Chair if one party is the current Chair). Senior Chaplains and/or Board members involved at this point are advised to keep formal written journal notes of the matter.
3. Notified Parties will then contact each other and attempt to outline the issues and find a resolve that is satisfactory to all parties involved.
4. If a satisfactory resolve cannot be achieved, the Board Chair will then seek to appoint a suitable independent mediator who will review the situation and then make formal recommendations back to the Board Chair who will then negotiate the implementation of the recommendations with the parties involved.

Such recommendations may include the following:

- Dismissal of Chaplain/s
 - Suspension of Chaplain/s pending appropriate therapy or re-education
 - Issuing of formal apologies
5. Should the issue still remain unresolved, then the matter will be discussed by the Board or its delegated representatives. Any such decision reached by the Board at this stage will be enacted and will be considered final.

In addition to the above there is also the possibility that any such grievance may constitute a criminal offence or a Centre related security issue. Where a criminal offence has been committed, the aggrieved party has the right to press formal charges. Should this occur, such a grievance will then be deemed a Police matter and the accused party should be withdrawn from Duty until the matter is properly heard before the Courts. Where there is an issue relating to the security of a Centre, it needs to be noted that the Centre may withdraw Chaplains at their discretion. Should this occur the "Process for the Suspension, Withdrawal and Discipline of Chaplains" will also need to be followed in concurrence with the above.

Confidentiality

Throughout the process, all parties (except where a criminal matter is concerned and parties are called to give or provide evidence) will keep confidence on the matter. This will include all verbal and written communication, correspondence and documentation.