

Complaints Policy

Purpose

Albany Baptist Church (ABC) is committed to effective complaints management and values the feedback that can be received via complaints from those that we serve and interact with. It is this opportunity for feedback that can help us to learn and improve in how we work with individuals and communities.

This policy ensures that we are committed to acknowledging all complaints, managing them discretely while maintaining confidentiality, and that we respond in a timely manner.

Biblical Basis

The bible gives warning about grumbling and complaining (e.g. Israel in the Desert and Philippians 2:14) and encourages us to be content and thankful. However, we also want to love each other well, and put the needs of others before ourselves. As a church we need to listen carefully to people and respond when they have a complaint. Philippians 2:1-4 says this well:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Scope

The scope of this policy covers complaints relating to all ABC employees, leadership, members, volunteers, and related ministries. This includes all external complaints or concerns raised relating to ABC or associated ministries.

Definitions

Complaint: an 'expression of dissatisfaction or concern made to or about ABC, related to its staff, leadership, members, volunteers, or related ministries where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected, or legally required.

Examples of complaints can include:

- Identifying an action or behaviour that is seen to be wrong, unfair, or in breach of policies or safe church guidelines;
- Failure to do something that should have been done;
- A concern over the quality of one of our programs or ministries;
- Identifying concerns that have been ignored;
- Identifying an action or behaviour that is illegal or potentially illegal or reportable.

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Complainant: the person making the complaint

Complaints Contact Person: the Senior Pastor of ABC unless the complaint is against the Senior Pastor or a related party in which case it will be an elder.

Policy Statement

ABC upholds the following principles when dealing with complaints:

Receipt of Complaints

ABC encourages complaints being made by any person affected by ABC or our related ministries. Complaints can be received by phone, email, in writing or via our complaints form on the ABC Church App. We are committed to supporting any person who wishes to make a complaint and requires assistance with the articulation of that complaint.

Any complaint received will be managed in accordance with our Complaints Procedures (Appendix A) and ABC will ensure that all staff are trained with clear guidelines for who will handle any complaints received. Any complaint received will be acknowledged, managed discretely and confidentially, and responded to in a timely manner.

ABC commits to following good practice in relation to any conflict of interest that may arise in the handling of complaints.

Communication

ABC will ensure that the complainant is kept informed of the complaints process and any outcomes will be communicated as soon as practicable. Wherever possible initial advice of the outcome of a complaint will be in person to provide an opportunity for discussion and the reasons for the outcome. However, all complainants will receive a formal notification detailing the outcome of their complaint.

Pastoral Care Protocol

As part of our response to a complaint or concern, ABC commits to providing an appropriate level of pastoral care to those involved, including consideration of any local church involvement. The form that pastoral care takes will be tailored to the needs of each individual approach.

Record Keeping & Confidentiality

All records and information provided will be handled in accordance with the ABC Privacy Policy. All records and communication related to a complaint assessment and/or investigation will be recorded and kept in ABC records.

ABC will seek to maintain confidentiality when completing an assessment and/or investigation of a complaint by seeking to ensure that only those with a need to know about a matter are provided with information regarding the complaint.

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ABC will, at times, be required by law to share information it holds with third parties. This includes, but is not limited to, situations where there is a risk of harm, criminal investigations, or a request for information that is governed by privacy legislation. Records may also be subpoenaed by a court of law.

ABC may also enter a Memorandum of Understanding with other third parties regarding the sharing of some information where that information may impact the safety and/or legal compliance of an associated church or overarching organisation.

Criminal Matters / Abuse Disclosure

If a complaint is made where criminal activity is alleged to have taken place it will be referred to the police. Even if the complainant does not wish to go to the Police ABC must abide by the following reporting protocols:

- a. Offence Against a Child
Always reported to police and/or Department of Communities.
- b. Historical Event:
Where an adult makes a complaint that is historical in nature (i.e., the incident occurred while they were a minor) they will be encouraged to report to police but ultimately, they make the decision. An exception to this is where it is possible that there are still children, or vulnerable persons, at risk, in which case we will report to police. We will also make a report to police where an alleged crime connected to ABC has been identified within the historical event.
- c. Additional Investigation:
After a police investigation has concluded, ABC may still choose to initiate an investigation regarding the specific impact on ABC and the complainant.

Key Contacts

Complaints Contact Person (CCP) - Senior Pastor
Elder Complaints Contact - Chairman

Responsibilities

The Elders and Pastoral Staff of ABC take responsibility for reviewing this Policy regularly and embedding it in the organisation's culture at all levels. The responsibility for the implementation of and the regular review of the implementation procedures lies with the Pastoral staff and Ministry leadership.

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Date Policy Approved: 21/03/2024	Review Date: 2026
Approved By: Elders Meeting	

To be issued to: Elders, Staff, Ministry Leaders

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APPENDIX A - Complaints Process Flowchart

The ABC Complaints Process is based off the following flowchart:

