

**Baptist Churches of Tasmania
Partners in Christian Mission**



***Grievance
Procedure***

**Guidelines for processing complaints or concerns relating to Staff and
Church workers within the Baptist Churches of Tasmania.**

Document last updated May 2004

Baptist Churches of Tasmania

Grievance Procedure

What is a Grievance?

A grievance is a complaint or concern formally expressed by an individual or group in an organization about a personal or workplace issue. It may be about any act, omission, situation or decision that is considered unfair, discriminatory or unjustified.

Note: This procedure does not apply to issues of alleged sexual harassment or misconduct. They are addressed in the *Crossing the Boundary* document available from the Baptist Union of Tasmania.

Values Statement:

At the commencement of any formal grievance process the parties involved will be required to acknowledge a list of values, based on Scriptural teaching, and to sign them as a basis for moving forward. (See list attached).

Grievance Handling Procedure:

Step 1: ***Try to sort it out directly with the person involved.***

At times people offend or hurt others intentionally, but it is far more common for people to unintentionally hurt or offend others. However, regardless of whether it was intentional or unintentional, it is not acceptable for people to behave in a way that hurts or offends others.

Therefore, if someone behaves inappropriately, it is important for you to tell the person who is acting in a hurtful or unsuitable manner that his or her behaviour is not acceptable. This gives them the chance to stop or change what they are doing.

If you find this step too difficult to take alone, you may find a trusted friend in the organization to accompany you. This person is to be a supportive companion, but not to speak for you.

Step 2: ***If Step 1 is not successful, go to the person to whom you are responsible, preferably accompanied by the other person involved.***

The person to whom you are responsible can help sort out problems related to your immediate church or organizational environment. S/he can advise about the best way to tackle the problem. All parties involved in the complaint are to handle the complaint confidentially.

If the complaint involves the person to whom you are responsible, and you have carried out Step 1 without resolution, then take your grievance to the next level of authority. (Step 3).

Step 3: ***Go to the next level of authority.***

Most grievances will have been resolved in the first or second steps. However, if this has not happened, take your grievance to the next level of authority. In a local church situation this may be the Pastor or Deacons.

In the Baptist Union, it may be the Superintendent or President, in which case the grievance will need to be submitted in writing, together with a brief outline of the process to date.

In Steps 2 and 3, once the person to whom you go decides if he or she is the right person to deal with the complaint s/he may:

- Explain the grievance handling procedure, including what may happen if there is enough evidence to support the complaint or what will happen if there is not enough evidence to support the complaint.
- Arrange for mediation between the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made, in order to seek agreement on acceptable future behaviour.
- Explain where you can go if either party is not happy with the way the complaint is being dealt with.
- Explain other places to go for more information.
- File a written record of the complaint, normally provided by the complainant.
- Ensure that whatever has been agreed/decided upon actually happens.

Step 4: ***Refer the matter to the Chairperson of Union Council.***

Very serious grievances, or those that have an unsatisfactory outcome from Steps 1-3 above, may be referred to the Chairperson of Union Council (Usually the President of the Union), who will ensure its presentation to Council. Council will normally establish a Grievance Review Panel of three of its members to adjudicate and bring formal finality to the issue. Where Council considers it advisable, it may refer the matter to a suitably qualified external adjudicator.

Responsibilities:

Each person involved in the Grievance Procedure has the responsibility:

- To take steps to resolve the issue according to these procedures.
- Not to make malicious or vexatious complaints.
- To maintain confidentiality and avoid gossiping about complaints being dealt with.
- To avoid "triangling" or involving another third party in the grievance process, other than has been outlined above.
- To minimize interference with other responsibilities in relation to the local Church or the Baptist Union.

Endorsement of Basic Values

It is important that the following values be endorsed by each party involved in a conflict or disagreement. Doing so will provide a basis for a healthy and satisfactory resolution to the situation.

- 1 I accept that people are different and will have differences with one another.
- 2 I accept that conflict or disagreement will be an experience of life and that it can be helpful and useful.
- 3 I recognize that avoiding issues or relationships solely for the reason that there may be conflict is not good.
- 4 I will seek to have conflict dealt with quickly.
- 5 I will show love, respect and self-control towards the other person/people seeking to do so in a Christlike way.
- 6 I will focus discussion on issues, relationships or descriptions of feelings. I will not resort to inappropriate behaviour including, but not limited to:
 - Name calling or labelling
 - Mind reading (attributing evil motives)
 - Guilt making ("Look how you made me feel")
 - Rejecting, disparaging or discrediting another person (rather than the person's ideas or behaviour)
- 7 I will listen well and not override or interrupt.
- 8 I will recognize that change may need to take place in me first before progress can be made.
- 9 I commit myself to honesty, openness, confession and seeking to understand.
- 10 I will work towards resolution and reconciliation, accepting differences where appropriate.
- 11 I will not gossip to others, and will seek to build the kind of trust upon which a resolution may be built.
- 12 I will not use information from confidential sources, nor indicate that such information exists.
- 13 I will always allow a person
 - To know who his or her accusers are.
 - To learn in detail what his/her accuser's concerns are.
 - To respond to those accusers.
- 14 I will pray regularly for myself and for the other person.
- 15 If I feel progress not being made I will seek competent, skilled help.

SIGNED : _____ DATE: _____