



Anglican Diocese of The Murray

Grievance Policy			
Body adopting policy:	Diocesan Council	Date of adoption or last review:	10 April 2021
Related Documents:		Review schedule:	2 Years

Aim

1. The aim of this policy is to achieve reconciliation between the parties or to find ways of living with a grievance recognising that a grievance has the potential to cause relational wounds. A fundamental concern is for dignity of all people and to avoid disenfranchisement as a result of a grievance.
2. Grievances are to be addressed promptly, sensitively, in accordance with fairness with impartiality to apply throughout the process. Grievances should be resolved with the least escalation, and the involvement of the least number of people possible in the process. Everyone involved in the process, is to treat people with respect and encourage good relationships. Allegations of unacceptable behaviour should be treated seriously and sensitively.

Application

3. This policy applies to any grievances between any member of the Diocese of The Murray (church attendee, office holder, volunteer and lay and ordained ministers, employees whether paid or unpaid) in the Diocese of The Murray. This policy does not apply if the subject matter of the grievance falls under another specific policy of the Diocese. This policy does not apply to any grievance with the Bishop.
4. This policy is made subsequent to Resolution 45/14 of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia 2014.

Theological statement

5. As Christians we are to honour God, live in right relationship with each other and live our lives in accordance with Jesus' teachings. This means that we deal with grievances differently than in secular society. We seek to glorify God, strive to serve each other, and want to grow more Christ-like. When we find ourselves in disagreement, we focus on the restoration of relationships.
6. In dealing with a grievance, everyone involved will have regard to the Commandment that we are to love each other, and to biblical teachings that Christians forgive, strive for unity in the Church and act with forbearance, humility and without anger. We also will treat others as we wish to be treated. This means that in any dispute we have regard to the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. No party to this process is to be victimised.

Procedure

7. The Gospel of Matthew provides a four-step process for dispute resolution.
8. The first step is one of reflection. A complainant is asked to stop and prayerfully reflect whether they wish to raise a grievance at all or prefer to walk away. Honest differences of opinion may arise and sometimes people act thoughtlessly and do not intend to hurt others. We are to be careful not to judge each other too hastily and we know that all human beings are fallen.
9. If after reflection, you wish to raise a grievance, the first step is to raise the grievance directly with the person concerned, if you are comfortable doing so. You may decide to talk to them or if you find it difficult to do so, write a letter in which you set out your concerns calmly. If you wish, you may involve another person in this process to support you. That person is not to be your advocate but may intercede to arrange a meeting.

10. Any person against whom a grievance is made is asked to stop and prayerfully reflect carefully about what is being said. It may be that there has been a misunderstanding and/or that any hurt was unintentional and an apology may be appropriate. Indeed, if at any time you become aware that you have offended another person, being sensitive to all of the circumstances, you should apologise in person or in writing. If you wish, you may involve another person in this process to support you. That person is not to be your advocate but may intercede to arrange a meeting.
11. If the first stage is not successful, or there are reasons why you are concerned about your safety or whether it is appropriate to contact the other party, the second stage is to approach your parish priest or the Diocesan Complaints Officer (if the parish priest is a party in the grievance) and ask for their assistance. At this second stage, the parties to the grievance will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the issues involved. The meeting will also be attended by the parish priest or the Diocesan Complaints Officer or such other person as the Bishop shall appoint.
12. If the grievance is not settled at the second stage, it is to be referred to the Bishop. The Bishop will arrange for a mediation to be held between the parties using an accredited mediator appointed by the Diocese. If the parties reach a decision, it is to be reduced to writing at the mediation and a copy provided to the Bishop.
13. If a mediation is not successful, the final stage is for the grievance to be referred to the Bishop for resolution. The Bishop may either decide the matter or decide the matter is not capable of resolution. Before making his decision, the Bishop may decide to meet with the parties, have the parties write to him setting out their positions or have an investigation conducted into the complaint. Upon the request of a party or if he wishes, the Bishop may decide to refer the matter to an independent dispute resolution organisation for investigation or any other services the Bishop thinks appropriate. The Bishop's decision will be final.
14. This process is voluntary so at any stage a person can decline to take place in the process.

Parish Priests (or Members of the Clergy)

15. If you are a parish priest and someone approaches you about a grievance, you should think about whether you are a neutral party in the dispute. If not, or there is any other reason why you do not think you can help, you should refer the matter to the Diocesan Complaints Officer.

Diocesan Complaints Officer

16. The Bishop shall appoint a suitably qualified individual from time to time to act as Diocesan Complaints Officer under this Policy. The Diocesan Complaints Officer shall have all the powers necessary to give effect to this Policy. If a grievance is made against the Diocesan Complaints Officer, the Bishop shall appoint another suitably qualified individual to act as a Complaints Officer in respect of that complaint.

Mediators

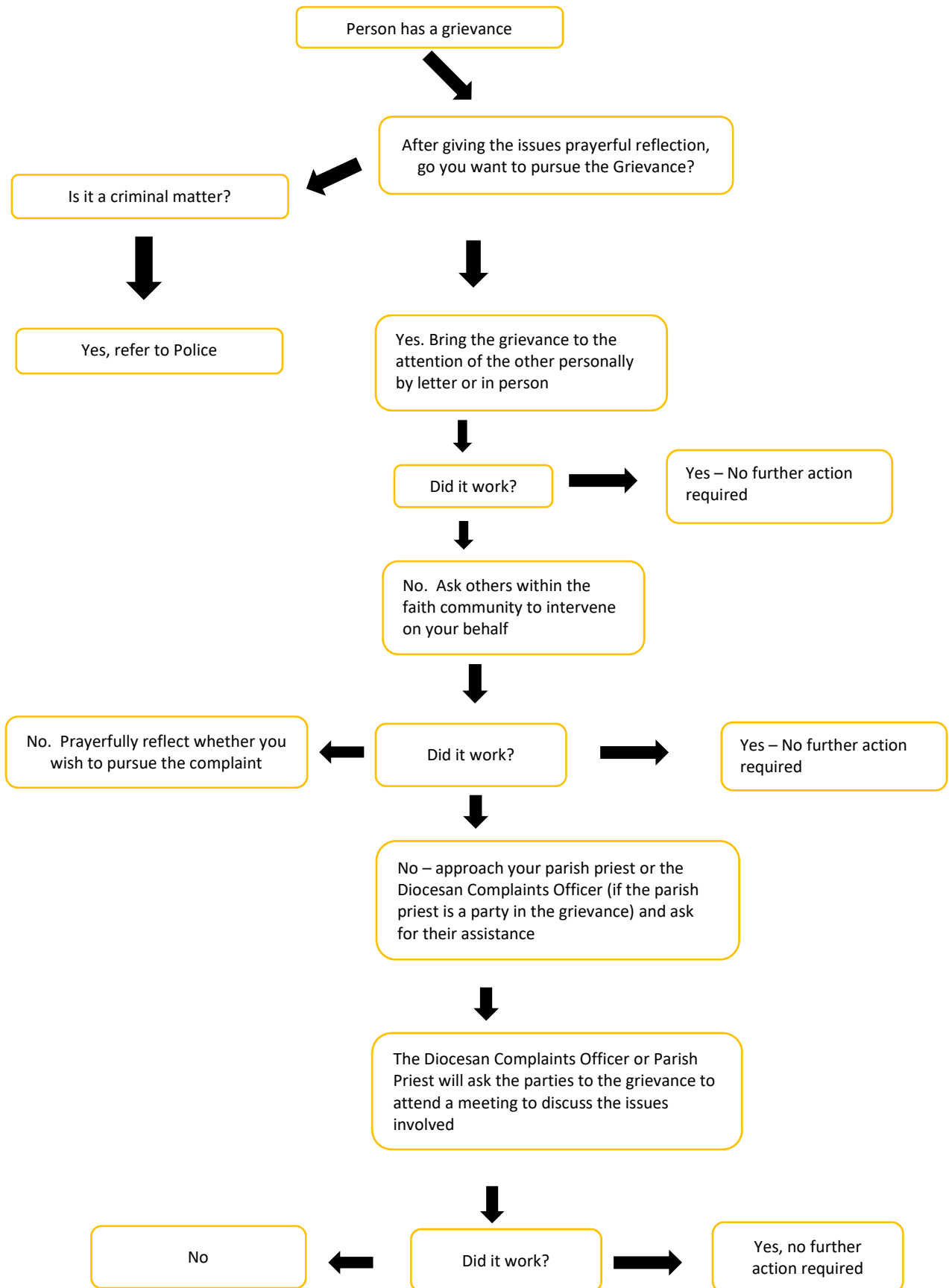
17. The Bishop shall appoint suitably qualified individuals and/or organisations to act as mediators (with the Bishop's permission) in any dispute as provided for under this Policy. Mediators may be a person in good standing in the Diocese of The Murray agreed by both the parties, an accredited mediator under the National Mediator Accreditation Scheme or a person retained through Kooyoora Limited. Where a member of clergy is involved in the dispute, the Diocese will meet the costs of the mediator. If the grievance is between two private individuals, the costs of the mediator shall be split by the parties unless otherwise agreed.

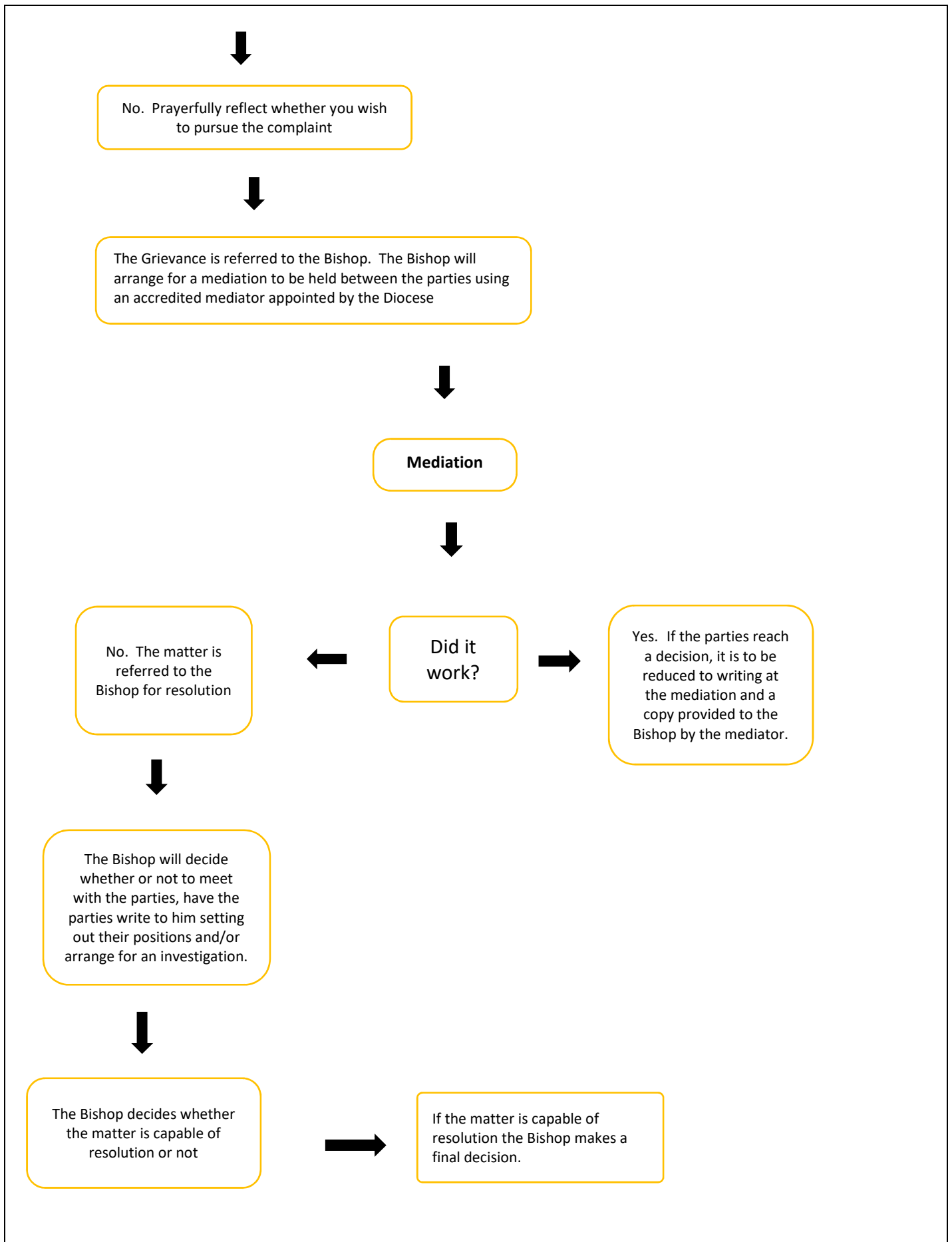
Support persons and pastoral care

18. The Diocese recognises that a grievance can be distressing for the parties involved and can result in significant emotional wounds. Usually, the parties will have support from friends or family members. If not, the Diocese can arrange for a support person to be assigned. A support person cannot act as an advocate for the party.
19. A party may wish to meet with a member of clergy for pastoral support during the grievance process. Parties need to feel safe, be listened to and have their feelings acknowledged. The Diocese will take steps to arrange such a meeting if necessary.

FLOWCHART

The following flowchart identifies the steps to be followed to resolve grievances.







Being Together

Expectations of behaviour in our church community

Jesus told us to love one another as he loves us.
As Christians we know our life together is strengthened when our behaviour is consistent with our faith.

However, our experience of being together can be difficult, particularly when there are differences. So, it is important to be clear about how we will behave towards each other.



Being a community



Relating to each other



Communicating with each other



Acknowledging difference



Responding to conflict

- ✓ We will value the wellbeing and safety of others, especially children and other vulnerable people.
- ✓ We will encourage each other to participate in the life of the church.
- ✓ We will consider the impact of our behaviour on others.

- ✓ We will protect the safety of all, especially children and other vulnerable people.
- ✓ We will treat each other with respect and dignity, irrespective of ability, gender, sexuality, race, age or contribution to the church.
- ✓ We will act with integrity and honesty in our interactions with each other.

- ✓ We will communicate respectfully with others, and not in a way that threatens, belittles or humiliates.
- ✓ We will speak with integrity and honesty, and refrain from speculation and gossip.

- ✓ We will respect those who are different from us and not isolate or ridicule them.
- ✓ We will listen to and seek to understand the beliefs, opinions and practices of others, even when we do not share their views.

- ✓ We will accept responsibility for our part in a conflict.
- ✓ We will be willing to play our part in resolving a conflict.



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

(Adopted by General Synod 2014, 45/14, revised by Standing Committee in April 2021, SC2021/2/27)