



BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Approved by: Diocesan Council

23 November 2016

PREAMBLE

The Church is required by God to create a loving community that models Christian values and in which all are able to flourish and foster relationships of integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness.

However, we all have failings and may demonstrate behaviours that are inappropriate and unacceptable.

Bullying and harassment can seriously affect relationships and the life of a Parish by creating stressful, intimidating and unpleasant environments. This is unacceptable in communities that profess the belief that we are all made in the image and likeness of God and all called to share the life of Christ.

Acknowledging our human frailty is an essential first step in both preventing and managing such failures when they occur.

The Diocese is committed to promoting dignity and respect in our Parishes and there is a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment.

The Diocese with the support of Parishes is therefore committed to:

- 1 building a culture of positive relationships;
- 2 understanding what bullying and harassment are; and
- 3 eliminating bullying or harassment where it occurs;

In order to achieve these goals, the Diocese is asking all Parish Councils to read these guidelines and adopt the statement of commitment for their Parish as together we aim to prevent bullying and harassment.

- 1 THIS POLICY APPLIES TO: Clergy, Parish Councils, Parishioners and Volunteers
- 2 For Schools and Agencies refer to the relevant body.



ANNEXURE 1

1 BULLYING

Bullying is repeated behaviour directed to a person or persons which a reasonable person considers:

- 1 having regard to all the circumstances, would victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten the person or persons; and
- 2 is likely to pose a real risk to the health and safety of the person or persons;

Bullying may constitute behaviours that fall within the guidelines of the Professional Standards Statute, Worksafe or the Equal Opportunity Act in Western Australia.

Bullying can be a very covert and subtle form of abuse which can be difficult to identify. Bullying can also be overt where it is easier to identify. Constant criticism, verbal abuse, unrealistic expectations and manipulation are all examples of bullying behaviours, but it is the sustained nature of the abuse, and the context in which it happens, that turn seemingly minor incidents into abuse that is harmful to an individual.

2 BULLYING, POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

Increasingly, clergy are becoming targets of bullying and can be bullied by Parishioners or Parish Councils who want to take control. Being bullied is a devastating and intensely traumatic experience and can adversely affect their ministry and calling. However, it is crucial that clergy, whilst being ready to reflect upon their own potential for misuse of power and being open to constructive feedback, remain secure and calm in their legitimate authority affirmed by the Church.

There is a risk of bullying or harassment going unchallenged in the Church, due to:

- 1 the disparity of power and authority;
- 2 the emphasis on loyalty and obedience to the Church and authority;
- 3 lay and ordained people, stipendiary or paid and voluntary, working together, sometimes with differing expectations and responsibilities.

Lines of accountability between parish and diocesan structures can appear complex and not easily understood. As a result, it can be difficult for individuals to know where to seek assistance and clarity.

3 MENTAL HEALTH, PERSONALITY DISORDERS AND BULLYING

It is possible that people with mental health and personality disorders attend our parishes and demonstrate behaviours consistent with bullying.

Predominantly, they are characterised by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity and self-importance and the need for admiration. They overestimate their abilities and inflate their accomplishments whilst underestimating and devaluing the achievements and accomplishments of others. They present with a great charm, have a need for constant attention and expect superior entitlement but their self-esteem is fragile. Narcissists react with anger to criticism and fail to recognise the needs and feelings of others. They are dismissive, disrespectful, disinterested and impatient to other people's concerns or problems. They are oblivious to the harm that is done by their behaviour or remarks made. They exhibit envy especially when others are accorded recognition, have an arrogant, disdainful and patronising attitude, and are quick to blame and criticise others when their needs and expectations are not met.



4 HARASSMENT

Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to a relevant protected characteristic (related to sex, gender reassignment, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief systems, sexual orientation and age), which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

It may be obvious or deceptive but it is always unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual. It can take many forms, including face-to-face or written communication including email, telephone conversations and social media.

5 THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

If not addressed, bullying and harassment can make people feel anxious and humiliated, they may also feel angry and frustrated at being unable to cope. Others may become ill, frightened, stressed and/or experience a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem.

If unacceptable behaviour is not addressed effectively the consequences are likely to be:

- 1 Low morale and damaged relationships;
- 2 Loss of respect for those with responsibility for oversight;
- 3 Poor stewardship of ministry resources;
- 4 Loss of confidence, ill health, absence and resignations;
- 5 Loss of parish revenue;
- 6 Reputational damage for individuals, congregations and the wider diocesan community.

6 ACTIONS

It is recommended that all Clergy and Parish Councils;

- 1 Read through these guidelines and the statement of Commitment
- 2 Ratify the statement of I commitment for your parish, circulate its contents and display in a prominent position to promote awareness
- 3 Ensure that where negative behaviours occur that these are challenged

For further guidance in identifying and addressing bullying and harassment contact the Director of Professional Standards.



ANNEXURE 2

PREVENTION OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT BY THE PARISH OF _____

DATED: _____

In keeping with the guidelines of this policy, clergy, wardens and Parish Council will seek to ensure that the working environments within their scope of control are supportive towards all our clergy, employed staff (including honorariums), volunteers and laity. This includes adoption and implementation of this statement of commitment, and being prepared to challenge inappropriate behaviour and take action if such behaviour is evidenced or observed.

Our Parish has adopted the following principles:

- 1 A commitment to promoting dignity and respect for all;
- 2 Zero tolerance of bullying and harassment;
- 3 That nobody should be made to feel unwelcome or alone.

The following behaviours identify what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in our community. These lists are not exhaustive.

The behaviours that we wish to model in our parish are:

- 1 Offering an environment that is reflective of God's love and peace;
- 2 Respecting the authority of Clergy and Leadership within the Parish;
- 3 Treating others with dignity and respect;
- 4 Demonstrating a willingness to co-operate and work together;
- 5 Valuing the opinions of others;
- 6 Providing support and assistance to others;
- 7 Speaking up for others;
- 8 Being non-judgmental;
- 9 Thanking and recognising the effort and contribution of others;
- 10 Actively listening to others;
- 11 Acknowledgement of the failings and weaknesses of others;
- 12 Apologising when appropriate to do so;
- 13 A willingness to forgive;
- 14 Dealing with conflict constructively.

The behaviours which are not welcome in our parish are:

- 1 Being disrespectful;
- 2 Being aggressive or abusive to others;
- 3 Causing distress, offence or humiliation to others;
- 4 Constantly criticising others' work or efforts;
- 5 Constantly highlighting mistakes made by others;
- 6 Ignoring or excluding individuals and making people feel unwelcome;
- 7 Making false allegations and spreading rumours or gossip about others;
- 8 Demonstrating body language that is threatening;
- 9 Physical violence;
- 10 Unwelcome sexual advances;



- 11 Using offensive language;
- 12 Using social media to threaten, insult or intimidate others;
- 13 Withholding information from others to isolate them.

Everyone in the Parish is charged with the following responsibilities in order to ensure the prevention and of bullying and harassment in our parish:

- 1 Behaving in ways which support a non-aggressive environment for ourselves and those around us;
- 2 Being supportive of others;
- 3 Challenging inappropriate behaviour and speaking up for others;
- 4 Taking action where we observe or have evidence that someone is being bullied or harassed.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PARISH MEETINGS

- 1 We will treat each other with respect and dignity and we will be aware of how our behaviour affects others;
- 2 We will act with integrity and honesty in our interactions with each other;
- 3 We listen and seek to understand the beliefs, opinions and practices of others, even when we do not share their views;
- 4 We recognise there may be a need to engage in robust discussion from time to time but will refrain from using raised voices or behaviour that is threatening or intimidating.

If someone feels they are being subjected to inappropriate behaviour they should:

- 1 Speak with the individual who they feel is behaving inappropriately and who may be unaware of the effect the behaviour is having;
- 2 Be assertive, calm and tactful;
- 3 Provide a concise description of the behaviour that is of concern;
- 4 Express the feeling that this behaviour evokes, for example:
 - 'I feel upset' or 'I feel hurt';
 - 'I feel threatened by the way you are speaking to me';
 - 'I want to feel included';
 - 'I want to be respected';
 - 'When we're in meetings, I would like you to listen to and respect my point of view';

Where this is difficult or doesn't resolve the issue you may wish to get someone else to act on your behalf, for example by speaking to the priest or churchwarden or lay pastoral minister if appropriate. Mediation involving a third neutral person can help to resolve conflict and concerns at an early stage to prevent matters escalating by attempting to reach an agreement about how those involved will interact in the future which might include an agreement to modify behaviour.

If a member of clergy is the perpetrator and it has not been possible to resolve the matter at a local Parish level, you should contact the Director of Professional Standards.