



Prevention of Harassment and Abuse Policy

Policy

2013 v1.00

Background

In a harsh world all too often marked by hostility and malice, God's people are called to act with compassion, gentleness and reasonableness. (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:2; Mathew 5:1-9)

Jesus gentle and respectful treatment of the often harassed and abused Samaritans (Luke 9:51-55; John 4) also teaches us much about how God's people are to treat others, especially the vulnerable in society.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to cultivate a lifestyle of reconciliation within the Lutheran Church of Australia SA/NT District (the Church) ensuring that all who engage with the Church are treated with dignity and respect in an environment free of physical, sexual, psychological or spiritual harassment and abuse or the perception of harassment and abuse.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

- Those who hold positions of trust are an example of good Christian living
- Physical harassment and abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- Sexual harassment and abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- Psychological harassment and abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- Spiritual harassment and abuse is not tolerated anywhere in the Church
- A lifestyle of reconciliation is cultivated within the Church

Policy Statement

The Church is committed to the prevention of physical, sexual, psychological or spiritual harassment and abuse or the perception of harassment and abuse in the life of the Church.

Definitions

The following definitions relate to behaviour which is directed at a Pastor, Layworker, employee, member, volunteer or visitor, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran:

Harassment

Harassment is unwelcomed, unreciprocated and often repetitive conduct of an annoying or pestering nature that is reasonably likely in the circumstances to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person. It may be of a sexual nature and includes stalking.

Bullying

Bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour that creates a risk to health, safety and wellbeing. Bullying can be both obvious (direct) or subtle (indirect). The following types of behaviour, where repeated or occurring as part of a pattern of behaviour, would be considered bullying:

- Verbal abuse, including swearing or shouting
- Abusive or intimidating emails, letters or other forms of electronic or written communication
- Psychological harassment

- Excluding or isolating a person
- Deliberately changing rosters or other arrangements to inconvenience a particular person or persons
- Deliberately withholding information or resources that are vital for effective completion of tasks
- Constant criticism or criticizing people in front of others

Providing guidance, conducting performance counselling, invoking unsatisfactory performance procedures or misconduct procedures do not constitute bullying. Supervisors and decision makers are expected to offer constructive comment and allocate duties in a caring manner which does not demean or humiliate.

Abuse

Abuse is behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, threaten, degrade, offend or intimidate another person

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any incident where a person is threatened or physically attacked by direct or indirect application of force that creates a risk to health, safety and wellbeing with or without consideration of the attackers intent including:

- Striking, scratching, biting, spitting or any other type of direct physical contact
- Throwing objects
- Attacking with or without any type of weapon
- Pushing, shoving, tripping or grabbing

Spiritual abuse

Spiritual abuse occurs when a person with spiritual authority uses that authority to coerce, control or exploit another person causing spiritual wounds. Such wounding or scarring affects a person's relationship with God and they may develop a distorted image of God and of themselves.

Effects of Harassment and Abuse

Harassment and abuse can result in a lack of motivation and loss of experienced personnel through resignation. Abuse and harassment may have significant social and health costs for individuals, including loss of confidence, increased anxiety, depression, loss of sleep, headaches and increased blood pressure.

When this abuse comes from the words and actions of those who are seen to be representatives of God, or part of his loving family, it can have a devastating effect on people's faith and spiritual health.

Harassment and abuse can also affect others close by in a similar way even when they are only witnesses to the abusive and harassing behaviour and are not the subject of the behaviour themselves.

Cultivating a Lifestyle of Reconciliation

All Pastors, Layworkers and decision makers have the responsibility to be an example of a good Christian lifestyle free from harassment and abuse by:

- Providing leadership and modelling appropriate behaviour
- Being proactive in creating a supportive and respectful culture
- Providing a safe environment that enables people to carry out their responsibilities free from harassment and abuse. This includes ensuring that complaints of harassment and abuse are investigated expeditiously in accordance with the LCA SA/NT District Complaints Handling policy

- Being alert to the possibility of harassment and abuse and monitoring key indicators such as absenteeism and high turnover of personnel
- Identify training and learning needs for themselves and those for whom they are responsible.

Compliance Reporting

For the purposes of good governance, and to demonstrate to internal agencies and external bodies that the LCA SA/NT District takes this policy seriously, it is necessary to report and demonstrate compliance with this policy on a periodic basis to District Church Council.

To this end:

- a. Departments and Congregations that already have a Prevention of Harassment and Abuse Policy are to submit a copy of their policy to the LCA SA/NT District Professional Standards Officer. The Professional Standards Officer will review the policy to ensure compliance.
- b. Departments and Congregations without a policy may develop a policy within the framework of this policy and submit it to the LCA SA/NT District Professional Standards Officer for review or may adopt this policy as their policy.

All Congregations and Departments are to submit to the Professional Standard Officer a report certifying compliance with the requirements of this policy on an annual basis.

Training

Training of personnel in how to comply with this policy may be provided through a number of training events undertaken by the Professional Standards Unit or by Congregations and Departments that have complying policies in place.

Relevant to

All Pastors, Lay Workers, employees, members and volunteers

Responsibilities

- DCC is responsible to ensure compliance with this policy
- Agencies, Departments and congregations are responsible for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of compliance to the relevant DCC

Related Documents

- LCA SA/NT WHS Policy
- LCA SA/NT Child Protection Policy
- LCA Safe Place Policy and Procedures
- LCA SA/NT Sex Offender Policy
- LCA Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures
- Guide for Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying (Safe Work Australia)

Version Control

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