



Grievance Handling and Conflict Resolution Policy and Procedures

Implementation Date:	12 th March 2024
Adopted by:	Inspire Church
Applies to:	Employees, Volunteers, Elders, Board of Directors and Church Members of Inspire Church
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Version	6.00

1. PURPOSE

Managing grievances and conflict resolution is a transparent and proactive process for all employees, volunteers and church members to effectively resolve grievances early and confidentially.

All grievances must be treated seriously and responded to quickly, fairly, confidentially, impartially, without victimization, reprisal and/or retribution.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all current employees, volunteers and church members of Inspire Church and is applicable to any interaction or issues employees, volunteers or church managers have with each other within Inspire Church.

This policy does not apply to issues that relate to any allegations of misconduct or a breach of the Inspire Church Code of Conduct.

3. DEFINITIONS

Complaint

A concern, dissatisfaction, or frustration with an aspect of Inspire Church. This could include an issue relating to a policy or procedure or the behaviour of another individual or group of individuals.

Grievance

An alleged wrongdoing or hardship suffered, which is the ground for a complaint. It could include action or inaction from another person, behaviours or decisions which an employee, volunteer or church member feels is unjustified or unfair or a repeated course of conduct.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is the process that two or more parties use to find a cordial solution to a grievance issue.

4. PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING GRIEVANCES

Resolve locally	Wherever possible a matter should be addressed between the relevant parties through self-resolution or assisted resolution to prevent formal escalation into a more serious issue.
Act promptly	Prompt intervention can assist in resolving matters as quickly and fairly as possible.
Non-victimisation of person who reports	It is important to ensure that anyone who raises an issue is not victimised for coming forward.
Neutrality	The person in charge of a resolution should never be directly involved in the incident they are attempting to resolve. It is critical that all parties involved perceive the resolution process to be genuinely impartial.
Support for both parties	Once a grievance has been raised, the person(s) involved should be made aware of the support systems available to them.
Communication of process	All parties need to be informed of the resolution process, including an estimate of how long the process may take and what they can expect will happen during and at the end of the process. It is very important to communicate with the employee, volunteer or church member that has lodged the issue when any delays occur.

Confidentiality	All employees, volunteers, or church members involved must maintain confidentiality.
Documentation	Documentation is important to any grievance review or resolution action. Written records should be made of all meetings and decisions.
Natural justice	The principles of natural justice must be applied in all matters. These principles outlined below are designed to protect all parties involved and generally cover the rule to act fairly and avoid bias.
Procedural fairness	Procedural fairness is a legal safeguard applying to individuals whose rights are or could be affected. This applies to all parties, that is the employee, volunteer, or church member raising the concerns and also those responding to them, including being provided with sufficient information concerning what has been raised.
A safe and healthy workplace	All employees, volunteers or church members are to be mindful of their duty of care and safety of themselves and others. Employees, volunteers, or church members must comply with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW).

5. GENERAL INFORMATION

In order to maintain a harmonious, effective and safe church environment, grievances should be addressed as quickly as possible and at the local level.

Grievances regarding conflict, when not resolved in a timely manner, can create a negative impact on well-being. If issues are left unaddressed, they can be repeated, and become part of the church culture, which can be difficult to change. This can damage trust and church relationships and have a detrimental effect on the impact of the effectiveness of the church in growing people for the purposes of the kingdom and the spiritual growth of the individual person.

In any church environment, there are bound to be differences of opinions, conflicts, or interpersonal issues. Employees, volunteers, or church members should as soon as possible, at the local level, and in the first instance between the parties involved try to resolve grievances (if not misconduct or criminal in nature).

It is an expectation that all parties involved in a grievance issue actively participate and cooperate throughout the resolution process.

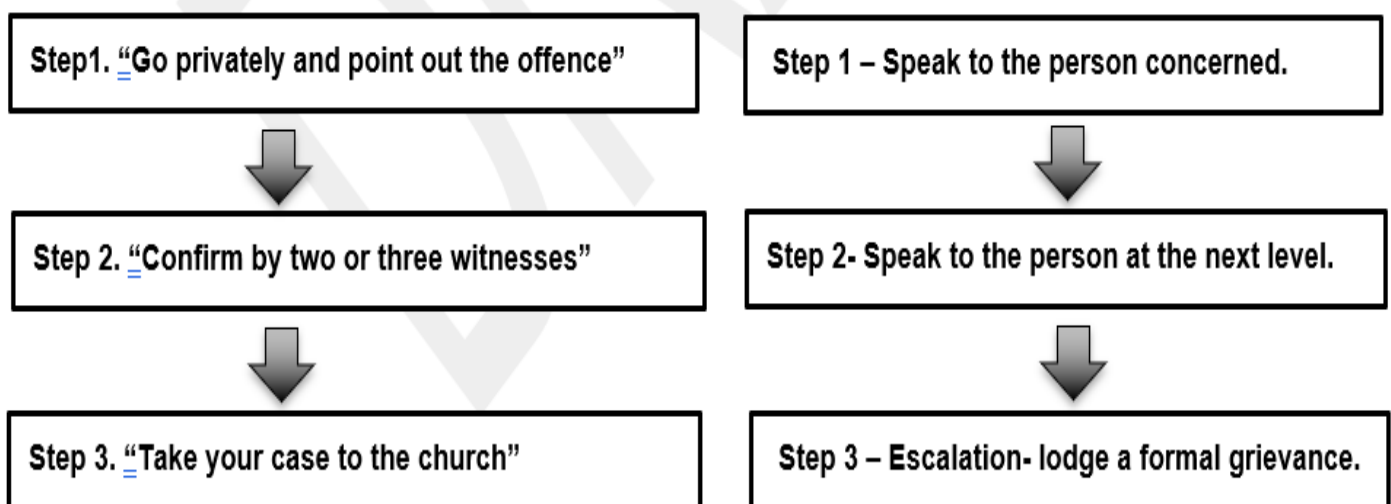
6. THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE FOR MANAGING A GRIEVANCE

Conflict resolution in the body of Christ is crucial for several reasons. Avoidance of conflict, with no effort to resolve it, postpones a proper response and exacerbates the problem because conflicts that are allowed to fester unaddressed will always increase and have negative effects on relationships within the body. The goal of conflict resolution is unity, and unity in the church poses a threat to the devil who will use every opportunity to take advantage of unresolved issues, especially those involving anger, bitterness, self-pity, and envy. Scripture tells us that we're to "let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from [us], along with all malice" (Ephesians 4:31). A collapse in obeying this command can result in division in the body of Christ and grief to the Holy Spirit. We are told not to allow a "root of bitterness" to spring up among us, leading to trouble and defilement (Hebrews 12:15).

The biblical principle for resolving conflict is outlined in Matthew 18:15-17

"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector."

The Biblical principles for managing a grievance and resolving conflict firmly support the following procedures for managing grievances and resolving conflict for employees, volunteers and church members working or attending Inspire Church.



7. PROCEDURE – 3 STEPS

Step 1 – Speak to the person concerned (self-resolution)

Self-resolution is where the employee, volunteer, church member attempts to resolve the grievance directly with the person they are in conflict with.

Take this step as soon as possible whilst the conflict is “little and light” rather than waiting until it is “large and heavy”. This may be the hardest step, but it is the most important step.

Try to approach the conversation with an attitude of understanding placing greater importance on gaining information and insight rather than accusation. It’s important that if someone brings up a grievance with you that you receive their approach in the same way.

As the scripture says, you’ll most probably win a friend, and you can both move on from your concern. Either party may feel the need to have additional “one on one” meeting.

Step 2 – Speak with the person at the next level

If self-resolution is not achievable or feasible, the employee, volunteer, or church member should discuss this with either their supervisor, team leader, pastor, elder or the business manager (which one is relevant) to consider the option of assisted resolution whereby the relevant person can facilitate an informal discussion with the other party. This is a standard strategy for managing employee, volunteer, or church member concerns.

Step 3 – Escalation (lodge a formal grievance)

When an issue cannot be resolved locally, the employee, volunteer or church member should lodge a formal grievance as soon as possible after the employee, volunteer or church member has:

- a. attempted to resolve the issue locally without success and the behaviour continues or
- b. decided that they feel it is not possible to resolve the issue locally and the behaviour continues.

8. LODGING A FORMAL GRIEVANCE

In the event the issue or concern continues to escalate following the application of self-resolution or assisted resolution, the employee, volunteer, or church member should lodge the matter in writing using the Grievance Lodgment Form.

The employee, volunteer or congregant should include as much detail as

possible in the form including relevant evidence, witnesses to inappropriate behaviour and dates and times the incidents occurred. The form should be lodged with a Pastor/the Department Head and/or Business Manager

1. What to expect after lodging a formal grievance.

- have the matter dealt with in accordance with the principles of managing a grievance and the biblical principles stated
- where possible, have the person managing the grievance conduct an initial assessment within five working days of lodging the grievance
- be offered a support person at meetings related to managing/resolving the issue,
- be informed they can seek advice and support
- be protected against any victimisation
- to have the issue dealt with confidentiality
- be advised of the resolution outcomes generally within four to six weeks of lodging the issue (where possible)
- pursue the matter through external agencies/ processes if they are not satisfied with the internal resolution and review process
- be assisted with understanding the process and be provided with applicable, and supporting policies and procedures that may apply.

2. Expectation of employee, volunteer or congregant lodging a grievance

- take prompt action in accordance with the grievance procedures,
- themselves available to meet with the person assessing/ resolving the matter,
- maintain confidentiality about the issue
- to cooperate promptly with processes undertaken, requests for clarification etc.
- act with honesty, transparency and genuinely, ensuring disclosure of all relevant information and/or supporting materials
- where possible, it is good practice for employees, volunteer, or church member to keep notes of any incidents that have occurred contribute to the management of the issue and resolution process
- seek realistic outcomes.

9. RESOLVING THE GRIEVANCE

1. Initial assessment

The Executive Leadership or the Business Manager of Inspire Church will assign a person to assess the lodged grievance.

The person assessing the grievance will complete an initial assessment using the Inspire Church Assessment Template, which includes viewing all the information provided within five working days of receipt of the grievance lodgment form.

The initial assessment determines:

- if this matter is to be managed in accordance with this procedure
- if the matter needs to be referred back to Executive Leadership Team or Business Manager
- whether any immediate action needs to be taken e.g., when there is a significant risk to an individual's wellbeing.
- If the complaint is against a member of the ELT, this should be referred to the Eldership, who is to follow the process outlined in this policy.

Where concerns may relate to misconduct, unlawful behaviour, bullying and/or harassment, the person managing the grievance must seek advice from the Church Leadership or Business Manager.

2. Steps to be taken by the person managing the grievance.

- the person managing the grievance must provide a written acknowledgement to the employee, volunteer or congregant lodging the grievance
- notify the other party in writing that a matter has been lodged, inform them of the process to be followed and that a meeting will be organised to discuss the matter at an appropriate time
- either party can raise their concerns about a possible conflict of interest.

3. Meeting with the employee, volunteer, church member who lodged the grievance.

The person managing the grievance may meet more than once with any relevant employee, volunteer, or congregant.

The person managing the grievance should confirm the details in the grievance lodgment form and provide:

- an opportunity for the party involved to explain the basis and details/allegations of their issue
- a copy of the applicable policies and procedures
- confirmation that a meeting will be arranged with the other party to explore the concerns contained in the grievance, and that, consistent with the principles of procedural fairness, the other party must know all the allegations made in relation to the grievance and the person who is lodging the matter
- reinforcement of the need for confidentiality
- explanation of available support services and their contact details, and
- details of the communication strategy to be used and confirmation that the employee, volunteer, or church member will be kept informed throughout the process.

4. Meeting with the other party

During the meeting with the other party, the person assessing the grievance must provide:

- the other party with the substance of the matter. (A summary of issues is helpful in focusing on the behaviours)
- be given a reasonable opportunity to respond to the concerns and any such response must be considered in an objective and impartial manner, and
- have the opportunity to provide a written response to the grievance within **two weeks** of the meeting.

The absence of a written response or the other party's failure to participate in the grievance resolution process will result in the person assessing the grievance making a decision based only on the information available.

If there is a need to meet with other relevant employees, volunteers or congregant, separate meetings are to be arranged.

The person assessing the grievance may need to meet with relevant employees, volunteers or congregants who may have witnessed alleged incidents/behaviour.

In the meeting, the person assessing the grievance will:

- provide copies or inform them where they can access the relevant policy and this procedure
- explain their role in the grievance resolution process
- reinforce the need for confidentiality regarding the matter and
- limit the discussion to the incidents they have personally and directly witnessed.

It should be noted that while a relevant employee, volunteer or church member may be identified by either of the parties as having observed inappropriate behaviour, she/he cannot be compelled to participate in this process.

However, they can be strongly encouraged to provide information about what they may or may not have witnessed in relation to the grievance.

5. Obligations of the person managing the grievance.

- if any of the parties identify a legitimate reason why the person assessing the grievance is not the most appropriate authority to take role it needs to be referred to the Executive Leadership/Business Manager
- ensure confidentiality of the process for all parties
- work to the suggested timeframes below for the finalisation of the grievance and arrange to inform the parties if any delays are encountered
- ensure that all parties are aware of the support that is available and their choice and to have a support person involved in the grievance issues, and
- be responsible for keeping all documentation in the relevant record management system with appropriate security systems and restricted access

10. FINALISING THE GRIEVANCE

1. Finalising the grievance

Once the facts have been established, the person assessing the grievance must prepare a grievance resolution report, outlining the nature of the matter, the process followed, the reasons for arriving at the conclusions and any appropriate management strategies to resolve the grievance.

2. Reviewing the grievance

If the employee, volunteer, or church member lodging the grievance issue or other party believes the appropriate process has not been followed, either party can request that the Executive Leadership/Business Manager conduct an internal review within **two weeks** of being notified of the outcome.

The request must be in writing and include specific reasons identifying how the application of the person managing the grievance and resolution procedure was not followed.

If the employee, volunteer, or church member is not satisfied with this internal review, they can refer their matter to other external agencies.

11. TIMEFRAMES

Provide written acknowledgment of receipt of the grievance lodgment.	Within 5 working days of receiving the grievance.
Meeting with employee, volunteer or church member who lodged the complaint.	Within 7 working days of receiving the grievance.
Provide written notification to the other party advising them of the issue.	Within 9 working days of receiving the grievance.
Meet with the other party.	Within 12 working days of receiving the grievance.
Meet with any witnesses	Within 3-4 weeks of receiving the grievance.
Assess information and determine an outcome	Within 4-6 weeks of receiving the grievance.
Inform both parties of the outcome	Within 8 weeks of receiving the grievance.
Request for review	Must be submitted to the Executive Leadership/Business Manager within 2 weeks of being notified of the outcome.
Unresolved grievance	External agencies can be requested.

12. RELATED FORMS

- Inspire Church Grievance Lodgment Form
- Inspire Church Grievance Assessment Form
- Inspire Church Grievance Resolution Form

13. REFERENCES

- Bible – Matthew 18:15-17
- Inspire Church Code of Conduct
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (NSW)
- Safe Work Australia: Guide for Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1997 (NSW) and corresponding Federal Legislation Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Commonwealth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)

14. SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Where can people go for advice?

APPENDIX

1. Inspire Church Grievance Lodgment Form
2. Inspire Church Grievance Assessment Form
3. Inspire Church Grievance Conflict Resolution Form



GRIEVANCE LODGMENT FORM

PERSONAL DETAILS

Employee, Volunteer, Church Member Name	
Email	
Contact Number	

RESOLUTION STEPS

Have you tried to resolve the grievance locally?

Step 1 -	Yes	No
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What was the outcome:

Step 2 -	Yes	No
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What was the outcome:

Have you sought assistance from:

- Pastor
- Elder
- Team Leader
- Business Manager

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE GRIEVANCE?

Name of Person	Contact Number	Email Address

WHAT IS THE GRIEVANCE?

Where possible, be specific- dates, times, location, is it repeated behaviour.

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WHAT OUTCOME DO YOU SEEK?

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Name	Signature	Date



GRIEVANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

PERSONAL DETAILS

Employee, Volunteer, Church Member Name	
Email	
Contact Number	
Has the grievance been lodged	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Step 1 – What is the context of the grievance?

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Step 2 – Risk Assessment

If there is a risk to the well being and safety of the person lodging the grievance refer to the Executive Leadership or the Business Manager.

If there is a risk of the grievance being an issue of misconduct or breach of Inspire Church's code of conduct refer to the Executive Leadership or the Business Manager.

Step 3 – Conflict of Interest

Is there a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest?

Yes No

If, yes refer to the Executive Leadership and the Business Manager.

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Step 4 – Send notification to the person who lodged the grievance.

Within **five working days** of receiving the grievance, notify the person lodging the grievance that:

- the grievance has been received,
- who will be the person managing the grievance, and
- when and where the meeting will take place to discuss the matter.

written acknowledgement of grievance has been provide to person who lodged the grievance.

Step 5 – Meet with the person who lodged the grievance.

When required, within **seven working days** of receiving the grievance meet with the person lodging the grievance.

Date of Meeting	Time	Location

Questions to ask:

1. Explain the issue of your concern form your perspective?

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2. Provide specific examples of your concerns? Please use dates, specific behaviours and any witnesses.

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3. Describe the impact these issues have had on you?

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4. Have you attempted to resolve this locally?

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5. What do you feel are some options available to address the issue?

6. What outcome are you seeking?

Step 5 – Send notification to the other party.

Within **five working days** of receiving the grievance, notify the other party that a grievance has been lodged:

- a grievance has been lodged,
- the context of the issue,
- who will be the person managing the grievance, and
- when and where the meeting will take place to discuss the matter.

written acknowledgement of grievance has been provided to the other party.

Step 6 – Meet with the other party.

When required, within **seven working days** of receiving the grievance meet with the person lodging the grievance.

Date of Meeting	Time	Location

Questions to ask:

1. Provide details of the grievance raised from your perspective?

2. How do you think your behaviours might have been perceived by the other party?

3. What do you feel are some of the options available to address the matter?

In closing provide:

- an outline of the process
- ongoing communication
- available supports
- reinforce confidentiality

Step 7 – Meet with other relevant parties if required.

When required, within **three to four weeks** of receiving the grievance, meet with the other relevant parties who have been listed as witnesses. (Note they are not obligated to participate in the process)

Briefly explain the grievance raised by the person who lodged the grievance.

Name of Witness

Date of Meeting	Time	Location

Provide brief details of when the incident occurred and what the witness observed.

Name of Witness

Date of Meeting

Time

Location

Provide brief details of when the incident occurred and what the witness observed.

In closing: Reinforce confidentiality.

Step 9 – Assessment of outcome and proposed resolution strategy.

Within four to six weeks of receiving the grievance, complete an assessment of the grievance and indicate how the issue may be resolved.

Details of the strategy:

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Reasons for recommendation:

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Step 10 – Complete the resolution report.

Complete a resolution report and forward to the Executive Leadership and the Business Manager.

Acknowledgment of resolution report sent.

Step 11 – Acknowledgement

I have completed the grievance assessment and resolution report based on information provide to me by relevant parties and in accordance with the Inspire Church Grievance and Conflict Resolution Policy and Procedures.

Name	Role	Date	Signature

Step 12 – Endorsement by Executive Leadership/Business Manager

We have received the grievance assessment and conflict resolution report and **agree** with the proposed course of action to seek resolution.

Name	Role	Date	Signature

We have received the grievance assessment and conflict resolution report and **disagree** with the proposed course of action to seek resolution.

Name	Role	Date	Signature

Step 13 – Notify all parties concerned with the grievance.

Within eight weeks of receiving the grievance, provide a copy of the resolution report to:

The person who lodged the grievance	Date:
The other party	Date:

Step 14 – Documentation

All documentation relating to the grievance must be filed in a secure and confidential place.



Resolution Report

Person who lodged the grievance.		
Name of Other Party		
Summary of Grievance		
Summary of Findings		
Proposed Resolution Strategies		
Process Review		
<p>Either party may lodge a request to have the process reviewed within 2 weeks of the date of this report.</p>		
Acknowledgement		
<p>The resolution report has been completed based on the information provided to me by the relevant parties and in accordance with Inspire Church Grievance and Conflict Handling Policy and Procedures.</p>		
Name	Role	Date

