



# PeaceWise

building peacemakers for life

## Complaints Policy

Version	Change Description	Author	Approver	Approval Date
1.0	Initial Policy		PeaceWise Board	30/06/2017
2.0		Bruce Burgess and Li Ai Gamble	PeaceWise Board	29/11/2019
3.0	Update	Li Ai Oh		

## 1. Policy statement

PeaceWise commits to being an organisation whose working environment is safe, enjoyable and productive, where our resources are stewarded appropriately, and where there is a formal process for issues to be raised and addressed in a manner that reflects our values.

## 2. Scope and purpose

This Policy deals with how we approach and work through complaints about us, as an organisation, or concerning PeaceWise staff, trainers, conciliators or volunteers. It is open for use by members of the public, volunteers, trainers, conciliators or staff and involves five key elements:

- (a) *Culture*. Our aim is to serve our stakeholders to the best of our ability. We accept that we do not always do things as well as we could and are always open to suggestions for how we can improve. We value complaints as a means of identifying and understanding how we can do things better.
- (b) *Principles*. Our complaints handling process is modelled on biblical principles, including humility, fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, peacemaking and efficiency.
- (c) *People*. Our complaints handling staff will be skilled and professional.
- (d) *Process*. Our complaints handling process involves seven stages - acknowledgment, assessment, planning, investigation, response, review, and consideration of systemic issues.
- (e) *Analysis*. We review information about complaints as part of a continuous process of review and improvement.

We discuss these elements in more detail below.

## 3. Connection to our values

The key PeaceWise core values relevant to this policy are:

### **Accountability**

As the Church has been granted the ministry of reconciliation, we promote mutual accountability within the body of believers.

Relevance:

- All people associated with PeaceWise are accountable for their actions, and in particular, for a complaint, which may lead to a distressful conflict.

### **Wisdom**

As the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, we ground all that we do in prayer as we seek God leading and direction

Relevance:

- We will prayerfully seek God's help in responding wisely to any complaint made.

### **Integrity**

We are open, honest and honour our commitments.

Relevance:

- We will maintain the highest ethical standards and do what we say.

### **Example**

We strive to live out what we teach about peacemaking, and especially in the conflicts we face in our own lives and in our ministry.

Relevance:

- If we receive any complaint in relation to our conduct or services, we will seek to model and apply the biblical peacemaking principles in our approach to resolving the issue.

#### 4. Element 1—Culture

We are committed to achieving our Mission. We are also committed to seeking to do so in the best way possible, with care and without hurting any of the people we deal with. We know that despite our best efforts, we do not always do things as well as we could and we are always open to suggestions on how we can improve.

Accordingly, we value complaints and recognise that effective handling of these will benefit our stakeholders, our ministry, our reputation and our administration. We affirm that complaints can highlight weaknesses in our programs, policies and service delivery, and are opportunities to improve our operations, ministry and service.

We also affirm that good handling of complaints will reassure stakeholders that we are committed to resolving problems, improving and building relationships, and to improving our accountability and transparency.

#### 5. Element 2—Principles

Our complaints handling process is based on biblical principles, modelled on principles of fairness, peacemaking, transparency, accessibility, responsiveness and efficiency.

In addition, as one of our [Core Values](#) is, “Example – We strive to live out what we teach about peacemaking”, we see our complaints handling process as an opportunity to ‘practise what we preach’.

All complaints will be investigated with impartiality by a staff member or Board member who is not personally involved in the issues, or, if required, by an external consultant or adviser.

Each complaint will be assessed on its own merits. As far as reasonably possible confidentiality and privacy will be maintained and we will be transparent in reporting back results to the person making a complaint as quickly as reasonably possible. It is our aim to resolve all complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible. For example, if a complaint can be resolved over the phone at the time it is made, we will do so.

We will not victimise or treat any person adversely because they have made a complaint.

There is no financial charge for making a complaint.

If a person who wishes to make a complaint has special needs (e.g., non-English speaking background or a physical impairment), they are encouraged to let us know and we will do our best to assist them in lodging the complaint.

Anyone may initiate a complaint via our website, email, letter or telephone call - see the contact details below. If someone wishes to make a complaint anonymously, this will still receive our genuine attention, although of course we will be unable to report back or seek further information which may be able to assist us in dealing with any issue. We are happy to deal directly with the person who makes a complaint, or through their nominated person (such as: parent, guardian, friend or adviser).

Policy Name:	PeaceWise Complaints Policy	Version:	3.0
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## 6. Element 3—People

We deeply value our stakeholders, staff, trainers and conciliators and volunteers and we take complaints seriously.

All complaints will be handled by our Complaints Officer, unless it is inappropriate for him or her to do so (e.g., due to absence or a lack of independence) in which case another senior member of staff or a Board member will handle it.

In matters of great significance, we may outsource the handling of a complaint to an external adviser or consultant.

## 7. Element 4—Process

Our standard complaint handling process is as follows (although we reserve the right to approach a complaint more flexibly if we think it will achieve a more just, restorative or efficient outcome):

1. We will **acknowledge** each complaint promptly and give the person making the complaint (or nominated person) the contact details of the person handling the matter, ideally within 2 business days. If we have not finalised the complaint within 7 days after that, we will make contact to report our progress
2. We will open a confidential complaint file, **assess** and assign it priority
3. If some form of further enquiry or investigation is required, we will **plan** how the enquiry or the investigation is to be carried out
4. We will **investigate** all relevant factual issues and then review the complaint in light of those facts. We will then consider options for complaint resolution and any reconciliation of relationship required.
5. We will **respond** to the person by contacting them (or their nominated person) to discuss the complaint. In doing so we will inform on key relevant facts we have identified and ask for to comment or any other relevant information. We will then discuss with how we propose to resolve the complaint. If we were wrong or have acted inappropriately, we will apologise and ask for forgiveness. We will be guided by biblical peacemaking principles and tools, such as the 4Gs process, the 7 A's of apology and the PAUSE principle, as appropriate.
6. If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, our Chair or CEO (as appropriate) will **review** the matter, and make contact. If the matter in question involves the actions of a Board member acting in that capacity, the review will always be undertaken by the Chair. If the person making a complaint believes there has not been a satisfactory outcome, we may suggest that together we follow a Christian mediation process. Alternatively, the person making the complaint may pursue any other action which they believe is appropriate.

We will consider and act as soon as reasonably possible on any **systemic issues** that are identified as a result of the complaint

Note – if we reasonably believe that a complaint is vexatious, trivial or not genuine we will inform the person making the complaint accordingly as soon as we form that view. If the person making the complaint wishes to take matters further, they may pursue any other action which they believe is appropriate.

Policy Name:	PeaceWise Complaints Policy	Version:	3.0
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## 8. Element 5—Analysis

We appreciate that complaints can provide an insight into our programs and services, and may show that they are not working as well as they might by:

- highlighting service failings that need to be remedied; or
- revealing problems and trends that should be acted on by management.

We will seek to:

- use information brought to light by any complaints and feedback to improve our service to our stakeholders; and
- address at Board level any significant issues which are revealed by our complaints handling process.

## 9. Complaints contact details:

Complaints are to be submitted to the Complaints Officer via:

- <https://peacewise.org.au/contact/> - select, “Register a complaint” (in dropdown menu under “contact purpose”)
- Email: [complaints@peacewise.org.au](mailto:complaints@peacewise.org.au)
- Telephone: 1300 1PEACE (1300 173 223) – please ask for the Complaints Officer
- Post: PO Box 2442 North Parramatta, NWS 2151 (Attention: Complaints Officer)

Policy Name:	PeaceWise Complaints Policy	Version:	3.0
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