



## **Opportunity, respect, and non-discriminatory practices**

It is the policy of the Grace Communion International Australia that employees and members of the church be treated with – and treat one another with – the respect and care expressed by the Christian gospel.

The church is a place for “growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”, for being equipped for the work of ministry (service), and for living and sharing the gospel. Every person who has accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and who has been accepted into fellowship is afforded the rights – and accepts the responsibilities – of membership in the church.

The church’s policy is based upon the clear Scriptural guidelines for mutual respect:

*“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (John 15:12)*

*“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39)*

*“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:5)*

*“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:7)*

*“As believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favouritism” (James 2:1)*

To that end the church is committed to pursuing and supporting employment, administrative, and pastoral practices that:

- Respect the rights of every individual – these rights include but are not limited to:
  - The right to worship in an environment of acceptance and peace
  - The right to work without prejudice or harassment

and that:

- Do not by expression or neglect discriminate against any person with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, marital status, or impairment.

Further, the church seeks to actively and intentionally provide those who are committed to the church's mission with opportunities to express their giftedness (as validated by the church), grow in faith and knowledge, and serve the church, the community, and the broader body of Christ.

### ***Discrimination***

It is against church policy and may constitute unlawful behaviour to discriminate against another person based on the provisions contained in Federal and State legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), Equal Opportunity Act (1984) and Sex Discrimination Act (1984).

Discrimination may occur between supervisors and staff, between supervisors, between staff, between pastors and congregants, between pastors, or between congregants. Discrimination may be expressed by the church as an entity or by its representatives.

Discrimination constitutes unacceptable behaviour. The church may consider disciplinary action if an employee is found to have discriminated against another employee or member or against any other person in the course of their work for the church.

*Staff in supervisory and pastoral positions are expected to use these guidelines in taking all reasonable and appropriate steps to eliminate discrimination from the church environment.*

### ***Harassment***

Harassment, bullying, and intimidation are all forms of workplace behaviour that are inconsistent with the church's mission and values, and therefore unacceptable.

Such behaviours can take many forms. Examples of words and actions that can be construed as harassment, bullying, or intimidation include:

- Name-calling
- Aggressive behaviour or language (as distinct from assertive behaviour or language)
- Favouritism or exclusion
- Unwelcome touching
- Supervisors or peers overloading an individual with work
- Supervisors or peers continually assigning unwelcome or dirty tasks
- "Practical" jokes
- Rumours and innuendo
- Jokes or stories of a sexual tone
- Personally intrusive questions or comments
- Jokes, comments or observations about a person's appearance, culture, speech, or other personal features.

Sometimes the perpetrator may feel that such actions are "normal" or "harmless", or just as expression of "personality". However, the principle of respect for others demands that we adjust our expectations of what is acceptable when our actions or words may negatively impact others.

### ***Resolution of complaints***

Individuals who feel discrimination or harassment has occurred have available to them church procedures for the resolution of reported complaints – the Grievance Procedures – as well as the options outlined below. Individuals must also be aware

that the church's grievance procedures specifically note that frivolous or vexatious claims will not be pursued.

A number of actions are available to individuals who feel that discrimination or harassment has occurred, including:

- Resolving the issue personally
- Talking to the alleged discriminator
- Advising the appropriate pastor, ministry leader, or church administration member
- Following the provisions of the church Grievance Procedure.

### ***Awareness and responsibility***

Supervisors, pastors, pastoral team members, members of local advisory councils, and ministry leaders must be aware of the policy on the prevention of discrimination and harassment, and of their responsibilities in supporting a secure, discrimination-free environment.

Persons in such roles have particular responsibility to:

- Ensure their own conduct is above reproach and that they are aware of the behaviour of others for whom they have supervisory responsibility;
- Explain to staff or those assisting them the church's Opportunity and Non-Discriminatory Practices Policy and Grievance Procedures and their responsibilities under the policy;
- Deal promptly and confidentially with any complaints of discrimination or harassment;
- Ensure that persons making a complaint are not victimised;
- Take appropriate steps to prevent any recurrence of the behaviour.

### ***Victimisation***

Experience has shown that sometimes unfavourable treatment of the complainant, subsequent to the placing of a complaint, puts the person under further stress and can escalate the situation beyond resolution. Such treatment is termed victimisation and is against church policy and may also constitute unlawful activity in some instances.



Victimisation includes any unfavourable treatment, such as aggression, refusing to provide information, ignoring the person, refusing to renew a contract of employment, dismissal, or other unfair treatment.

Victimisation of people making complaints through this grievance procedure will be treated as seriously as the original behaviour giving rise to the complaint.

*Supervisory and pastoral staff are responsible for ensuring that victimisation of the complainant does not occur, either immediately, or any time after the complaint has been resolved.*