

# Catholic Ladies' College



## Complaints Handling Policy

Stage	Date	Ratified
Initiated	2016	2016
Review 1	July 2017	July 2017
Review 2	September 2018	September 2018
Review 3	April 2019	May 2019
Review 4	July 2021	July 2021

[clc.vic.edu.au](http://clc.vic.edu.au)

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Under the Stewardship of  
Mary Aikenhead Ministries



MARY  
AIKENHEAD  
MINISTRIES

LOVE HOPE COMPASSION JUSTICE



## Catholic Ladies' College Ltd

# Complaints Handling Policy

Catholic Ladies' College is a Mary Aikenhead Ministry in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity. We seek to develop in each member of our community a contemporary understanding and application of the charism of Mary Aikenhead, the spirituality of the Sisters of Charity, the mission and vision of Mary Aikenhead Ministries and their values of justice, love, compassion and hope.

In responding to this call, Catholic Ladies' College is a Christ-centred community established to educate, in partnership with parents, women of faith, integrity, individuality and compassion, confident of their own worth as women and wholly involved in the transformation of society.

Catholic Ladies' College is committed to building a College community that features positive and respectful relationships. Within our College, relationships are founded in the gospel values of justice, compassion, reconciliation and kindness. Such relationships support the learning and development of students and value the innate dignity of each person. It is important that each member of the community, including staff, parents and students, are contributors to the building of the College community. A timely and professional response to complaints is an effective means of encouraging communication, building trust and resolving issues for the betterment of all concerned.

Catholic Ladies' College understands that from time to time complaints arise regarding aspects of our school's operation of programs and activities and that it is important that all members of the community have the opportunity to be heard. Catholic Ladies' College commits to ensuring procedural fairness is observed when dealing with complaints and grievances.

Positive, clear and effective procedures and processes for resolving grievances between the College and community members can assist in building strong relationships, dispelling anxiety and ultimately providing students with a settled and happy learning environment.

The College Codes of Conduct for parents and students outline the expectations of behaviour for members of our community. The following procedures relate to any concerns that members of the community may have – whether these are serious grievance issues, or relatively minor concerns. This Complaints Handling Policy should be read in conjunction with the Complaints Handling Guidelines.

### Scope

This policy does not relate to critical incidents, emergency management, criminal offences, or the conduct of the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry. This policy is not for use by staff in relation to complaints about their workplace or employment conditions.

### Principles

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will inform and direct Catholic Ladies' College actions:

- Complaints of a school-based nature are best received and managed at the school level, with the parties involved expected to act in good faith and work together with respect and openness to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties. Complaints that are unable to be resolved at the local level will be escalated to the relevant MACS Regional Office.
- Complainants can expect their concern or complaint to be responded to in a respectful and timely manner.
- Staff members will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them.
- Complainants and the person/s against whom the complaint is made have the right to be heard and to expect that procedural fairness will be observed.
- Confidentiality, protection of privacy, respect, access, dignity and impartiality will form the basis of the complaints resolution process.
- The complaints resolution process will seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships.
- The best interests of the school community together with the interests of the individual will be taken into account.



## What is a Complaint?

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue at Catholic Ladies' College.

## Providing Feedback to Catholic Ladies' College

Catholic Ladies' College has procedures and processes in place by which parents/guardians/carers and the broader College community can confidently raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be listened to and their concerns will be professionally managed in a timely, confidential and appropriate manner.

Relationships with the College community are important to us. We take complaints raised by parents/guardians/carers and the broader College community seriously. There are many avenues to provide feedback to school staff. These include:

- formal surveys
- meetings with the Principal or other staff members to express concerns

## Misconduct or serious misconduct

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher or staff member should be reported to the Principal.

Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) – the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct (including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature) of all teachers in the state of Victoria. If unsure whether the complaint constitutes serious misconduct by a teacher, contact the VIT on 1300 888 067 or [vit@vit.vic.edu.au](mailto:vit@vit.vic.edu.au).

In some cases, certain actions which involve physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by the police. Initial consultation with the Principal may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

## Child abuse (including sexual offences)

Complaints of alleged child abuse (including sexual offences) of school students should be reported to the Principal. There are legal obligations on all adults to report child abuse to police once a reasonable belief is formed that a sexual offence has been committed against a child.

Failure to disclose a sexual offence against a child is a criminal offence under section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) (Crimes Act) and applies to all adults (18 years of age and over) in Victoria.

Communication with children under 16 years of age by teachers, staff or any other person to prepare or groom a child for future sexual activity is a criminal offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act and must be reported to the police. The offence of grooming applies to any person aged 18 years or over and does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

## Complaints against the Principal of Catholic Ladies' College

In the case of a complaint involving the Principal, the appropriate MACS Regional General Manager should be informed immediately.

MACS Regional Offices are located in the north, south, east and west of metropolitan Melbourne. Contact details are listed at the end of this policy.

## Complaints against the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry

If the complaint relates to the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry with Catholic Ladies' College, the complainant should contact and seek advice from the Professional Standards unit of the Vicar General's Office in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, 383 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Visit [www.melbournecatholic.org](http://www.melbournecatholic.org) or contact 03 9926 5677. If the person is a member of a religious order, the complainant should also contact the provincial head or professional standards office of that congregation or religious order.



## Anonymous complaints

Catholic Ladies' College endeavours to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, we may not be able to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable an inquiry or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them and be given an opportunity to respond to them. Where possible, complainants are encouraged to give their names and to be reassured that we will deal with complaints professionally and in accordance with procedural fairness and confidentiality. If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion what, if any, action will be taken. Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the same manner that all other complaints are recorded.

## Complaints in relation to Information Sharing Schemes

Catholic Ladies' College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) that may share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS).

The school, as an ISE, may receive complaints from individuals in relation to its conduct as an ISE under the CISS or FVISS. It may also receive a complaint from another ISE. The following information is recorded where a complaint is received under the CISS or FVISS:

- the date the complaint was made and received
- the nature of the complaint
- the action taken to resolve the complaint
- the action taken to lessen or prevent the issue from recurring
- the time taken to resolve the complaint
- further action taken if the complaint was not resolved.

## Complaints relating to reportable conduct

Legal obligations are imposed on the College to report to the Commission for Child and Young People (CCYP), and investigate allegations of reportable conduct, where those allegations are based on a person's reasonable belief that reportable conduct or misconduct involving reportable conduct has occurred. Reportable conduct includes the following:

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour that causes significant psychological or emotional harm
- significant neglect.

Complaints relating to a reportable conduct allegation which meets the requisite threshold and which involves an employee (which amongst others, can include a teacher, principal, volunteer or contractor) must be reported. Complaints of reportable conduct involving a Principal should be reported to the MACS Regional General Manager.

Further information can be found in the School's Reportable Conduct Policy located on the College website.

## How do I lodge a Complaint?

Reference should be made to the procedures outlined in our **Complaints Handling Procedures and Guidelines**.

## Catholic Ladies' College commitment

Catholic Ladies' College is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. Our Complaints Handling Program features online recording to facilitate the accurate recording of the complaint. Our response to a complaint will be prepared following any necessary investigation.

In the spirit of continuous improvement the register is subject to periodic review and analysis. Our response to a complaint will be prepared as quickly as possible following any necessary investigation.



### MACS Regional Office Contact Details

Eastern Regional Office  
 39 Hewish Road  
 CROYDON VIC 3136  
 Ph: 03 9427 6400  
 Email: [ero@macs.vic.edu.au](mailto:ero@macs.vic.edu.au)

Northern Regional Office  
 25 Norwood Crescent  
 MOONEE PONDS VIC 3039  
 Ph: 03 8387 3200  
 Email: [nro@macs.vic.edu.au](mailto:nro@macs.vic.edu.au)

Southern Regional Office  
 602 South Road  
 MOORABBIN EAST VIC 3189  
 Ph: 03 8301 7400  
 Email: [sro@macs.vic.edu.au](mailto:sro@macs.vic.edu.au)

Western Regional Office  
 47 Synnot Street  
 WERRIBEE VIC 3030  
 Ph: 03 8412 2400  
 Email: [wro@macs.vic.edu.au](mailto:wro@macs.vic.edu.au)

**Intended Audience** College community

**Related Documents** Complaints Handling Procedures and Guidelines  
 CLC Staff (Bullying) Policy  
 CLC Staff Grievances and Dispute Resolution Policy  
 CLC Privacy Policy  
 CLC Student Positive Relationships Policy: Bullying Prevention and Intervention