



AUSTRALIAN  
CHRISTIAN  
CHURCHES

NEW SOUTH WALES & ACT  
Special Religious Education (Scripture)

*Conflict Resolution  
and  
Complaints Process*

9<sup>th</sup> February 2022

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For every student in NSW Government Schools to be given the opportunity to question, explore and discover the Christian faith for themselves.

## 1. Introduction

This document sets out the way ACCNSW expects our SRE teachers and school coordinators to deal with conflicts that may arise as we conduct SRE within local schools, whether this conflict is initiated by an ACC NSW SRE teacher/coordinator or by another party who may have a concern about an ACC NSW SRE teacher.

When this happens, we maintain the highest level of professional and Christian conduct in all conflict resolution processes, including both the way we speak to and about our local school, and how we represent ACC and the Church as a whole.

Often, there is the opportunity to resolve a conflict amicably between parties without the need for escalating the issue into a formal complaint. Wherever possible, this is our preferred approach.

Take time to listen to the perspective of the other person and never assume ill intent. Endeavour to resolve issues with courtesy and respectfulness, at a local level first. Be committed to open communication.

Where possible communication should be done face to face rather than via emails and notes. Face to face enables clarification and allows both parties to see body language and hear each other's tone of voice. Use positive body language and a calm, controlled voice. A written report of the conversations that is viewed and held by both parties is also recommended where appropriate.

If a conflict cannot be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the parties involved, one or both parties may choose to escalate the matter further, along the four levels of escalation available.

We abide by the Department of Education's [Complaints Handling Policy](#), as well as this document: ACC NSW SRE Complaints Procedure.

## 2. Our approach in resolving conflict

Our approach in resolving conflict may be summarised in three words – **Report**, **Resolve** or **Escalate**. In other words, we are to:

1. **Report** Reportable Conduct immediately;
2. **Resolve** non-Reportable Conduct directly wherever possible; or if not possible
3. **Escalate** the matter

The first step in understanding our guidelines for resolving a conflict that may arise between the SRE teacher and school, parent or teacher, is to determine whether or not the conflict is a serious concern.

### 2.1 Serious Concerns

Potentially serious situations need to be reported to the ACC SRE State Leader. The following are examples of a serious concern:

#### 2.1a Any Allegation of Abuse Against an SRE Teacher

Should a school or parent make an allegation of abuse against an ACC SRE teacher, ACC NSW will fully co-operate with the school and would expect the Department of Education to follow its procedures in regards to any such matter, including reporting to relevant authorities. We expect the SRE teacher and the Department of Education to immediately notify ACC NSW of any such allegation and process, so we can follow our procedures in such matters.

#### 2.1b Any Child Protection Concern

Please be sure to follow your Safer Churches reporting guidelines AND your guidelines in Essentials SRE Teacher Training Module 1 Handout. A copy of this is available by contacting:

[sre@nswacc.org.au](mailto:sre@nswacc.org.au)

## 2.2 Other Concerns

Conflicts which are not considered serious fall broadly into two categories:

1. You may have concerns about the conduct or well-being of a student, parent, or a professional classroom teacher; or about the implementation of SRE at a local school
2. A party (parent, teacher, school, the Approved Provider) may have a concern about the conduct of an SRE teacher, the curriculum they are using, classroom management or a breach of Department of Education Duty of Care.

Regardless of the category, our recommended approach is the same: Wherever possible, the parties with the conflict or concern should try to speak directly to each other in the first instance, in the hope of resolving the conflict as efficiently as possible and without involving more people than is necessary.

If the conflict cannot be resolved directly by the parties, then you may choose to escalate the matter up the following levels to support you in the resolution of the matter.

## 2.3 Escalation Levels

1. **SRE Coordinator** (either the school appointed or church appointed), whomever you feel is most appropriate
2. **School Principal**
3. **ACC SRE State Leader**  
who will, if necessary, escalate the matter to
4. **NSW Department of Education**

If you are unsure if a concern or complaint should be regarded as Serious, contact ACC SRE State Leader, or if you feel you need some support in resolving a conflict or dealing with a potential complaint, feel free to reach out to your SRE Coordinator.

## Appendix 1 – ACC NSW SRE Complaint Management Process

If a conflict still cannot be resolved amicably with the assistance of the SRE coordinator(s), begin the escalation process with Level 1, the conflict may turn into a formal complaint. In these situations, the following **ACC NSW Complaint Management Process** needs to be followed.

### 1. Acknowledge

- Acknowledge and document the complaint, ideally within 3 working days.
- This can be done in person, by telephone, email or formally in writing. Where the acknowledgement was made verbally, it should be documented in writing.
- Let the Principal know that they will be kept up to date with the progress.
- Keep the matter as confidential as possible by only sharing information with those who need to know about the complaint issues.

### 2. Gather Information

- Gather sufficient information to allow an informed assessment of the concerns as quickly as possible.
- Information gathered may include, but is not limited to:
  - Special Religious Education Implementation Procedures
  - Relevant Department of Education policies and procedures eg. Code of Conduct
  - Relevant Approved provider Policies and Procedures
  - SRE Approved curriculum content and teaching notes
  - Information from the SRE teacher/co-ordinator and/or school SRE co-ordinator and/or classroom teacher

### 3. Resolve

- Complaints and concerns should be resolved within a timely manner if at all possible. ACC would consider 20 working days a reasonable timeframe for most complaints, unless legal investigations, or Department of Education processes preclude such timeframes.
- Resolution should include reasonable suggestions from the Principal, however the Approved Provider remains solely responsible for curriculum content and SRE teacher training and Authorisation Outcomes will depend on the circumstances of each individual complaint
- If a delay is anticipated, it is expected the Principal will be informed

#### 4. Inform

- All relevant parties should be informed of the outcome of the complaint and any actions to be taken with reasons given where necessary and alternate options where applicable
- Records of the complaint resolution process, outcomes and actions should be kept ensuring that privacy policies are adhered to

#### 5. Implement

- All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure the identified actions to resolve the complaint are implemented
- Where the outcomes involve a combined arrangement, other providers should be given the same information as the principal

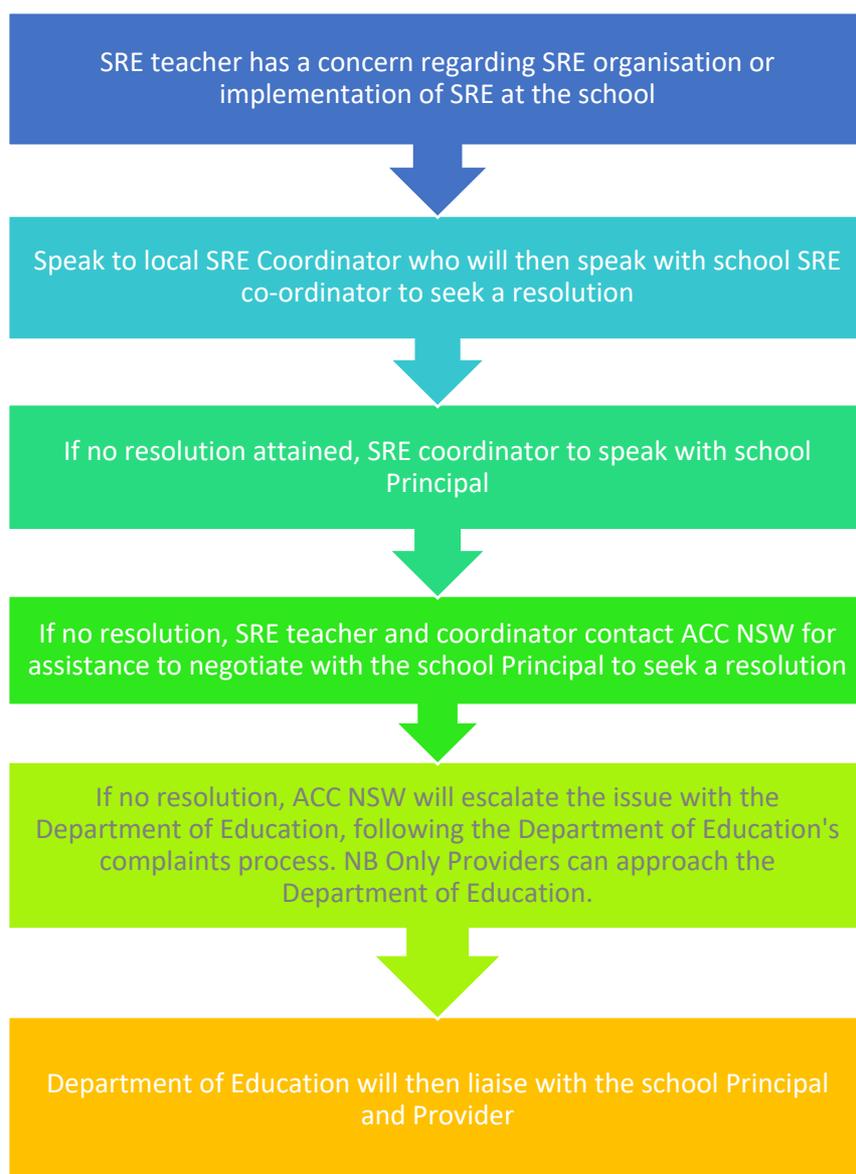
#### 6. Ongoing responsibilities

- Approved Provider will maintain confidential records of the complaint, resolution and actions taken, unless this is a minor issue resolved at a local level
- Approved Provider will take reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints continue to be treated fairly and provide support to parties involved or impacted by the complaint
- Approved Provider will take steps to improve processes identified requiring action by the complaint and/or work with the Department of Education in regards to ensuring Religious Education Implementation Procedures
- Information is to be restricted to those who genuinely need to know. (Local church prayer chain/groups are not included in the 'need to know' definition.)

NB. If the complaint is in regard to an activity the SRE teacher is involved in within the school, that is NOT SRE, then this should be resolved within the school with the school Principal (who should have approved a job description for any activity the SRE teacher has been invited to do) AND with the local church or SRE teacher's employer for that role.

## Appendix 2 – Where SRE teachers may have a concern about the implementation of SRE at a local school

If you have a concern about the implementation of SRE at a local school, please try to resolve issues at a local level first, with courtesy and respect. However, should you continue to find that the Department of Education's Implementation procedures are not followed, please refer to and follow the Department of Education Complaints Policy as well ACC NSW Complaints Policy. NB. All ACC Generate employees are expected to also abide by the following process.



For an issue to be escalated to the Department of Education there needs to be good documentation and dated evidence of attempts to resolve the issue. Please take notes, time and date all interactions.

## Appendix 3 Sample Complaint Form

The following complaint form may be used if required.

1. General Information:						
Please select from the following. This is a:						
Complaint <input type="checkbox"/>		Suggestion <input type="checkbox"/>				
Please select from the following. I am a/an:						
Parent		Student		Member of the Public	DoE employee	SRE teacher
2. Personal Information:						
Title:	Mr	Mrs	Ms	Miss	Other	
Surname:						
Given Name/s:						
3. Contact Information:						
Residential Address					Postcode	
					Postcode	
Mailing address					Postcode	
					Postcode	
Mobile number						
Home number						
Email						
Your preferred contact method	Mobile	Home Phone	Email	Letter		
4. Details of Complaint:						
Have you lodged a complaint about this issue previously?	Yes		No			
	If yes, when:					
	With Whom:					
	Outcome:					
5. Complaint Summary:						
Date and Time of Complaint						

Where it happened			
Who was involved (please include full names and, contact details if you have them)			
What happened (please include only exact details of complaint, not personal opinion)			
What would you like to happen to resolve your complaint?			
Please attach any documents to support your complaint.			
<b>6. Acknowledgement:</b>			
All information provided by me in this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.			
Signature:		Date:	
<b>7. Privacy Notice:</b>			
This information will only be used to resolve your complaint and access will only be provided to authorised personnel involved in resolving this issue. This information will be securely stored by ACC NSW once this complaint has been resolved.			
<b>8. Office Use Only:</b>			
Person receiving Complaint:			
Position:			
Date Complaint received:			
Complaint Lodged by:	Phone	In person	In writing
Contact complainant by:	Date:		
<b>Please attach all documentation pertaining to the resolution of this complaint</b>			