



2023 EDITION

BREAKING THE SILENCE

SPEAK OUT & SEEK HELP

IT'S OK TO SPEAK OUT · IT'S OK TO SEEK HELP

All **allegations** and **disclosures** of **abuse** will be treated seriously. All **aggrieved persons** will be treated with respect, and disclosures will be dealt with sensitively, promptly, confidentially and within the terms of **Breaking the Silence**.

It is important to note that not all disclosures will be allegations and some disclosures will be made that cannot rightly be dealt with under Breaking the Silence. We will endeavour to deal with all disclosures carefully and with consideration for the **pastoral care** of the person making the disclosure.

Who can you call?

- a.) You can ring the Conduct Protocol Unit (**CPU**) on (02) 9690 9325 or email cpu@pcnsw.org.au. Ask to speak to the Director.
- b.) If you wish to speak to someone who is independent of **the church**, you may request to speak to a **Contact Person** when you contact the CPU. You do not necessarily need to provide details of the complaint, but the CPU may require your contact number to provide you with the details of a Contact Person. The Contact Person will listen to you without blame or bias, and provide information about relevant support services, the right to seek legal advice and the possible need for reporting to appropriate authorities.
- c.) The CPU can provide access to a counselling referral service if appropriate. This service works with a number of experienced Christian counsellors with professional expertise.

What will we do?

- Listen to you.
- Arrange the services of a Contact Person if requested.
- Determine if a report needs to be made to the appropriate authorities. Further general information about external processes can be obtained from the Director, CPU.
- Assist with responding to allegations and disclosures: The process of handling allegations and disclosures varies depending upon the exact circumstances of the situation. Information about internal church disciplinary processes can be obtained from the Director, CPU or the Clerk of Assembly.
- For more details, see the info sheet "Making a Complaint or Allegation About Abuse" available at breakingthesilence.org.au.



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What support can we provide?

The provision of support is part of our commitment to those who make an allegation or disclosure. Where an allegation is being dealt with by the church, in order to make the process rigorous and fair, it can be a trying and difficult time for those involved. As far as possible, we minimise the impact of the process upon the individuals involved and acknowledge the need to provide support for all concerned.

Where a disclosure is made that cannot rightly be dealt with under Breaking the Silence we will provide as much pastoral care and support as possible to those concerned.

Where an allegation of abuse is made under Breaking the Silence, we will offer support through:

- access to a contact person;
- provision of a support person;
- provision of pastoral care; and
- access to counselling services.

In appropriate circumstances the church may cover the cost of counselling services but does not accept any liability for the costs, fees or charges incurred by a person obtaining counselling services unless specific arrangements have been made with the CPU.

Any legal advice obtained by the aggrieved person will be at his/her own cost. The church will take into consideration a request to reimburse reasonable legal expenses if the aggrieved person is unable to obtain legal advice within his/her own means. This should be requested in writing to the Director, CPU.

What do these words mean?

- **Aggrieved person:** The person making the complaint, whether they present as a victim, survivor or complainant.
- **Allegation:** A complaint, incident, allegation, or allegation – reportable conduct includes any matter brought to the church by an aggrieved person that may be rightly dealt with under Breaking the Silence.
- **The church:** The Presbyterian Church of Australia in those States or Territories where Breaking the Silence has been formally adopted by the appropriate State General Assembly, including all congregations, organisations, committees, associations, groups, schools, hospitals and other institutions.
- **Contact persons:** The CPU can appoint a contact person so that if an aggrieved person wishes to make a complaint to a person who is independent of the church they may do so.



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- **CPU:** Conduct Protocol Unit of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales, acting on behalf of the church.
- **Disclosure:** A disclosure occurs when someone informs a person in authority within the church that they have been subject to abuse or know of abuse. A disclosure may or may not be an allegation or a notifiable circumstance.
- **Pastoral care or pastoral support:** The provision of care, counsel and education to persons who seek the support of the church, including:
 - guiding to make decisions concerning spiritual matters by means of Biblical teaching,
 - prayer,
 - provision of practical support, such as medical care or counselling,
 - reconciling someone to God and/or other people,
 - spiritual guidance, and
 - sustaining through a period of hardship and/or crisis.
- **Supervising body or bodies:** The body with direct supervision and jurisdiction over a person or person/s. For example, the supervising body for an ordained minister would be the presbytery. The supervising body for a school Principal would be the Board or Council.

Remember, you are not on your own in these matters.

Breaking the Silence covers child abuse, children at risk of harm, reportable conduct, sexual misconduct, and conduct that breaches the Breaking the Silence Code of Conduct including domestic violence.

It does not extend to other forms of abuse and does not cover any other forms of grievance or personal injury. Words appearing in bold have a specific meaning as defined in Breaking the Silence.

This document is a summary only. As a guideline it should not be solely relied upon for advice. Those in a position of authority within the church should consult Breaking the Silence full policy and obtain professional advice in each situation and every individual case.



Information & Assistance

National

Kids Help Line ... 1800 55 1800

Lifeline ... 13 11 14

1800RESPECT ... 1800 73 77 32

New South Wales

Child Protection Helpline ... 13 21 11

NSW Domestic Violence Line ... 1800 656 463

Australian Capital Territory

Child and Youth Protection Services ... 1300 556 729

Tasmania

Child Safety Service ... 1800 000 123

Western Australia

Department for Child Protection ... 1800 273 889



For more information or assistance
about anything within this document please contact:

Conduct Protocol Unit | Jericho Road
02 9690 9325
cpu@pcnsw.org.au
PO Box 2196, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012