

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT



Ross Stewart is the coordinator of the Professional Standards Unit for Churches of Christ in NSW and the ACT. He is experienced in dealing with very personal, sensitive and highly confidential matters. Ross is a good listener who is available to speak with you about any concerns you might have.

Contact Ross Stewart of the Professional Standards Unit:

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Professional Standards Unit
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Churches should be safe places. Each adult or child, who participates in the activities of a local church has the right to feel confident that their experience will be positive, healthy and safe.

The Australian community expects those who minister within churches to be people of integrity. To ensure this, each minister within the Fresh Hope Network (Churches of Christ in NSW and the ACT) is required to sign a Code of Conduct. The Professional Standards Unit (PSU) exists to educate churches and ministers regarding this Code, and to oversee the receiving, triaging, investigations, considerations and responses to complaints in relation to Endorsed Ministers. They are impartial in their process and deliberations. All dealings with the PSU are undertaken confidentially, with respect and sensitivity.

Making a Complaint About a Minister

The PSU deals with the following broad areas of serious misconduct by Endorsed Ministers:

- Emotional abuse;
- Financial misconduct
- Physical abuse;
- Sexual misconduct;
- Spiritual abuse; and
- Bullying.

All dealings with the PSU are undertaken confidentially, with respect and sensitivity.

Conflicts in personality, ministry styles or theological differences are not matters for the PSU, and will be directed towards the leadership of the local ministry.

Any person who has a complaint about the conduct of a minister, has the right to bring this complaint to the PSU. If you have a concern or complaint about a minister, you can call, write or email the PSU Coordinator who can advise you on the appropriate pathway forward.

If the PSU Coordinator believes that the complaint can be formalised and pursued, then they will ask you to formalise your complaint in writing. If required, the PSU Coordinator, or their delegate can assist you with this, or you may ask for another person's help. We understand that sometimes voicing a concern or complaint can be distressing and requires great courage. We will treat you with respect and sensitivity.

We understand that sometimes voicing a concern or complaint can be very difficult and requires great courage.

Once a formal complaint is received in writing, a formal investigation will be undertaken, after which the PSU will deliberate on the findings of the investigation. The PSU may convene a Hearing with you and/or the respondent for further questioning. Alternatively, the PSU may come to their own, independent conclusions. The PSU may deliver sanctions, recommendations and findings to the minister. You, as the instigator of the complaint will be informed of this outcome.

What if someone makes a complaint about me?

If an allegation is made against you (as an Endorsed Minister, who has signed the Code of Conduct), you will be contacted personally and given a written copy of the complaint for you to read and respond to in private. We understand that being the recipient of a complaint may be stressful or embarrassing, so we will offer you a care person to help you through the rest of the process. Fresh Hope approaches PSU matters with a restorative approach, rather than a punitive approach. We operate under the principle that a person is innocent until proven guilty. If you are required at any interviews, hearings or meetings, then you may invite a support person to accompany you.