ST MARY'S COMMUNITY LTD

Process for Dealing with Concerns and Conflicts		
Policy number: 3.0	Version number: 5	Date proposed: November 2016
Authorised by: Board		
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Policy context: This policy relates to:	
Standard/Indicator/Category	Organisational – Conflicts
Relevant policies	• Anti-Discrimination and Harassment • Code of Conduct
Legislation or other requirements	Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Act 2012 (C'th)

Introduction

According to the Terms of Reference of the Community Faith Council of SMX, one of the Council's roles is to *provide an on-going forum for community member's ideas; for action to be taken or information forwarded as appropriate and a response to be provided to the community member*.

It is expected that in carrying out this role Community Faith Council members will be addressing concerns and conflict. The following is a guideline for proactively managing concerns/conflicts brought to the Community Faith Council.

Constructive Conflict

Conflict is part of the human experience and it is inevitable that a community like SMX that fosters inclusivity, will have people with differing viewpoints on many issues. Handled positively, conflict can be a positive force for advancing the goals of SMX. It is not conflict itself that presents the problem, but the way conflict is handled that determines a positive or negative outcome.

Conflict is not only functional for an organisation, it is essential to the organisation's very existence. SMX has been borne out of questioning and

innovating so it is important that this is seen as a positive aspect of the community.

Conflict is healthy when used to reach a collaborative agreement or new alternative. It becomes unhealthy when used to vent anger, fear and frustration or to control others. Trust and respect reduce unhealthy conflict and increase the potential for collaboration and agreement.

Proactively Managing Conflict

It is important to continue to create an environment that encourages SMX community members to interact with one another and to build relationships so that trust and respect are developed and individuals can have a better understanding of the different perspectives of each other.

The Community Faith Council has a special role in building a framework and environment in which expression of ideas or concerns is appreciated. This can be done by role modelling in interpersonal communication and by ensuring policies and procedures encourage dynamic interaction and creativity.

Everyone at SMX has a right to be heard. It is necessary to conduct regular community forums and provide opportunities for people to have a say about issues that will directly impact on them.

It is also important to provide opportunities for members of the community to hear what others have to say and to be involved in exploring mutually beneficial solutions that consider the well-being of one another.

The Community Faith Council should continue to invite people to offer suggestions and express their views on issues. Every person's ideas and concerns should be acknowledged, respected and discussed as per the Council's Terms of Reference.

The attitude Community Faith Council members have towards those who disagree is important.
Mahatma Gandhi says, "We must be ever courteous and patient with those who do not see eye to eye with us. We must resolutely refuse to consider our opponents as enemies".
Being respectful, humble and truly listening to other points of view are important principles.

Ensuring that people have a right to be heard does not guarantee getting what one wants. Members of the Community Faith Council will need to make decisions that some members of the community are opposed to. Communication to those who have expressed concern is important as well as efforts to maintain relationships.

Effective communication is essential. Changes and reasons for changes need to be explained to the community and where necessary, education/information provided.

It is important that members of the Community Faith Council reflect on their individual and collective performance, admit mistakes and apologise where appropriate and continually seek to maintain a positive relationship with all members of the SMX community.

Process for Community Members to Raise Concerns/ Provide Feedback or Ideas

As a member of the SMX community, you are encouraged to raise concerns, provide feedback or suggest ideas directly with the person(s) who are responsible for the activity. Those co-ordinating SMX activities are very keen to receive feedback from the community and welcome suggestions for improvement. It is important that these conversations are conducted in a way that enhances relationships and builds community.

If it is not possible for you to approach those responsible directly, or if you are not satisfied with the response you have been given, you are encouraged to speak to or communicate in writing to a member of the Community Faith Council. The names of Community Faith Council members are included at the end of the e-bulletin. Or you can send an email to <maureen_hennigan@yahoo.com.au>

The member of the Community Faith Council will encourage you to put your concerns/ideas in writing so that this information can be forwarded to other members of the Community Faith Council for careful consideration. It is important to include in the explanation what you are hoping to achieve by raising this matter with the Community Faith Council.

The Community Faith Council may decide that two of its members will meet with you before the next Community Faith Council Meeting so as to gain a fuller understanding of your perspective and to clarify any issues of privacy and confidentiality. The Community Faith Council may also decide to invite you to attend the next Community Faith Council meeting to present your suggestions.

Your concerns/feedback will be tabled at a Community Faith Council meeting and discussed in a respectful manner with the intent of attempting to fully understand your perspective and how you wish your suggestion to be accommodated. If members of the Community Faith Council have met with you prior to the Meeting, they will present any additional information and ensure that confidentiality/privacy issues that were agreed to are respected.

The Community Faith Council will consider and reach a consensus on what action is most appropriate for the concern/idea you have raised. This may

include communicating the concern to the SMX Board or the appropriate SMX Committee or person(s) responsible for an activity; taking direct action as a Community Faith Council; seeking more information from you or other persons involved; if appropriate, checking out how other members of the community are feeling about this issue or making a commitment to future monitor this issue.

The Community Faith Council will provide feedback to you as soon as possible after the Council Meeting.

If you are not satisfied with the action that has been taken you can communicate this by writing to the Chair of the Community Faith Council explaining what future action you would like considered.

If you are not satisfied with how the Community Faith Council has addressed your concerns you can communicate this to the Chair of the SMX Board. Names of Board members are included at the bottom of the e-bulletin.

It is important to note that the above process does not apply to matters related to the immediate health or safety of a person. Such matters must be reported to person(s) organising event and dealt with immediately.

Complaints about sexual or physical assault should be made to the police.

Conclusion

Many of the Roles and Responsibilities outlined in the Terms of Reference for the Community Faith Council are concerned with providing opportunities for community member's voices to be heard and facilitating communication between the various groups. Therefore, providing an atmosphere in which concerns and conflicts can be aired, discussed and resolved is an important role of the Community Faith Council.

Effective processes and communication can lead to a positive response to conflict, which in turn can lead to healthier relationships and can more readily assist SMX to achieve its vision.