Norbertine Canons	**Policy Title**	**Dispute and Complaints Policy**
	Release Date	**May 2026**
	Review Date	**December 2027**

1. Rationale:

The Norbertine Canons Incorporated shares in the Church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel and forming young people in faith. In fidelity to the Church's teaching and the rights of the Christian faithful, we are committed to addressing concerns, disputes and complaints in a manner that is just, transparent and respectful of the dignity of every person in the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus.

When conflict arises, all who are associated with St Norbert College are called to show respect for others and to act with compassion. Complaints resolution procedures provide the opportunity to promote service, develop understanding, prevent further issues and ensure just outcomes.

2. Definitions:

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with the Norbertine Canon Incorporated's policies, procedures, decisions, omissions, quality of service, staff or student behaviour.

Dispute means a conflict regarding a right, claim or demand on one side, met by contrary claims or allegations on the other.

Procedural Fairness means that a matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of Norbertine Canons Incorporated with respect to the paramount importance of the student(s).

Students are defined as children and young people enrolled at St Norbert College.

3. Scope:

These procedures apply to all members of the St Norbert College community, including visitors, contractors and members of the wider community.

This policy does not cover:

a) complaints that are of a child safeguarding nature. These complaints must be addressed in accordance with relevant child safety legislation and reporting obligations.

b) complaints about work or employment conditions at St Norbert College. Complainants should handle these matters in accordance with relevant internal policies and processes, or industrial agreements.

4. Principles:

a) As may be required by law, complaints, concerns and disclosures will be reported to the relevant authorities or law-enforcement agencies.

b) Complainants are personally responsible and liable for the content of their complaints.

c) A dispute or complaint made in accordance with this policy is a dispute or complaint about St Norbert College, notwithstanding the naming of any staff member in a dispute or complaint.

d) It is preferable that the complainant is verifiable (oral or in writing), however, if a complaint or any other information of unknown origin (i.e. anonymous) provides information that would cause the Principal concern, it should be considered by the Principal so that they can determine the appropriate course of action.

e) The Norbertine Canons Incorporated must record all complaints on their complaints register.

f) Disputes and complaints will be managed in accordance with the Principle of Subsidiarity which requires that nothing should be done by a higher authority, agency or school level that could be done as well or better by a lower one.

g) Disputes and complaints, and the resolution of such, contribute to continuous learning and improvement so that the potential and opportunity for incidents to be repeated are minimised.

h) Complaints and disputes will be managed confidentially, fairly, objectively, and in an unbiased manner, according to the rules of procedural fairness, both for complainants and any individual mentioned in the dispute or complaint raised.

i) Information in a complaint should only be disclosed to those parties who have a need to know in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.

5. Procedures:

a) A complaint or dispute may be raised by a student, parent/carer, staff member, volunteer, contractor, or other person with a legitimate concern about the provision of education or a related matter. Depending on the nature and seriousness of the matter, complaints should be made in writing. Where the complainant cannot be identified, including where the matter is anonymous or from an unverifiable source, the information will be assessed and considered to the extent reasonably possible.

b) Where there is an appropriate Norbertine Canons Incorporated policy statement that provides a specific mechanism for addressing the dispute or complaint, that policy statement shall be followed.

c) Where there is a binding legislative or regulatory mechanism (including an Enterprise Agreement) that addresses the issue raised in the dispute or complaint, that legislative or regulatory mechanism shall be followed.

d) When a dispute or complaint arises, the immediate parties involved should attempt to resolve the issue in the first instance.

e) Parties may involve a support person(s) to assist them in resolving the dispute or complaint.

f) Where individuals are confronted by inappropriate behaviour, they are entitled to discontinue the conversation and remove themselves from the situation. Inappropriate behaviour occurs when anyone feels threatened or intimidated, or when insulting or abusive language is used.

g) Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the resolution as a result of involvement of the immediate parties, or if there are unique circumstances, the matter can be referred to the next level by the complainant, for example, to the Principal.

h) The Principal is responsible for the resolution of disputes or complaints within the school referred to them by the immediate parties, in accordance with procedural fairness. However, the Principal may initially direct a dispute to be settled at a lower level. See 5(s).

i) Where a dispute or complaint is about the principal and there is no likelihood that it can be resolved directly with the Principal, the immediate parties may refer the dispute or complaint to the Prior, of the Norbertine Canons Incorporated.

j) The Principal must be mindful of managing the wider effects that a dispute or complaint may have on the workplace beyond its resolution.

k) The Principal must suspend this process if notified by a law enforcement agency that all or part of the complaint is the subject of their inquiry, and resume when that agency authorises it.

l) The Principal may request external assistance and expertise (including mediation), including the involvement of Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) to assist in the resolution of a dispute or complaint.

m) The Principal shall inform the complainant (unless anonymous) and relevant parties of the outcome of the decision, except where doing so would breach privacy, confidentiality, or other legal obligations, or disclose personal information that cannot lawfully be shared.

n) The Principal shall maintain appropriate records of the relevant particulars used to make a decision in response to any formal dispute or complaint. Where applicable this will include any statements made by the parties involved.

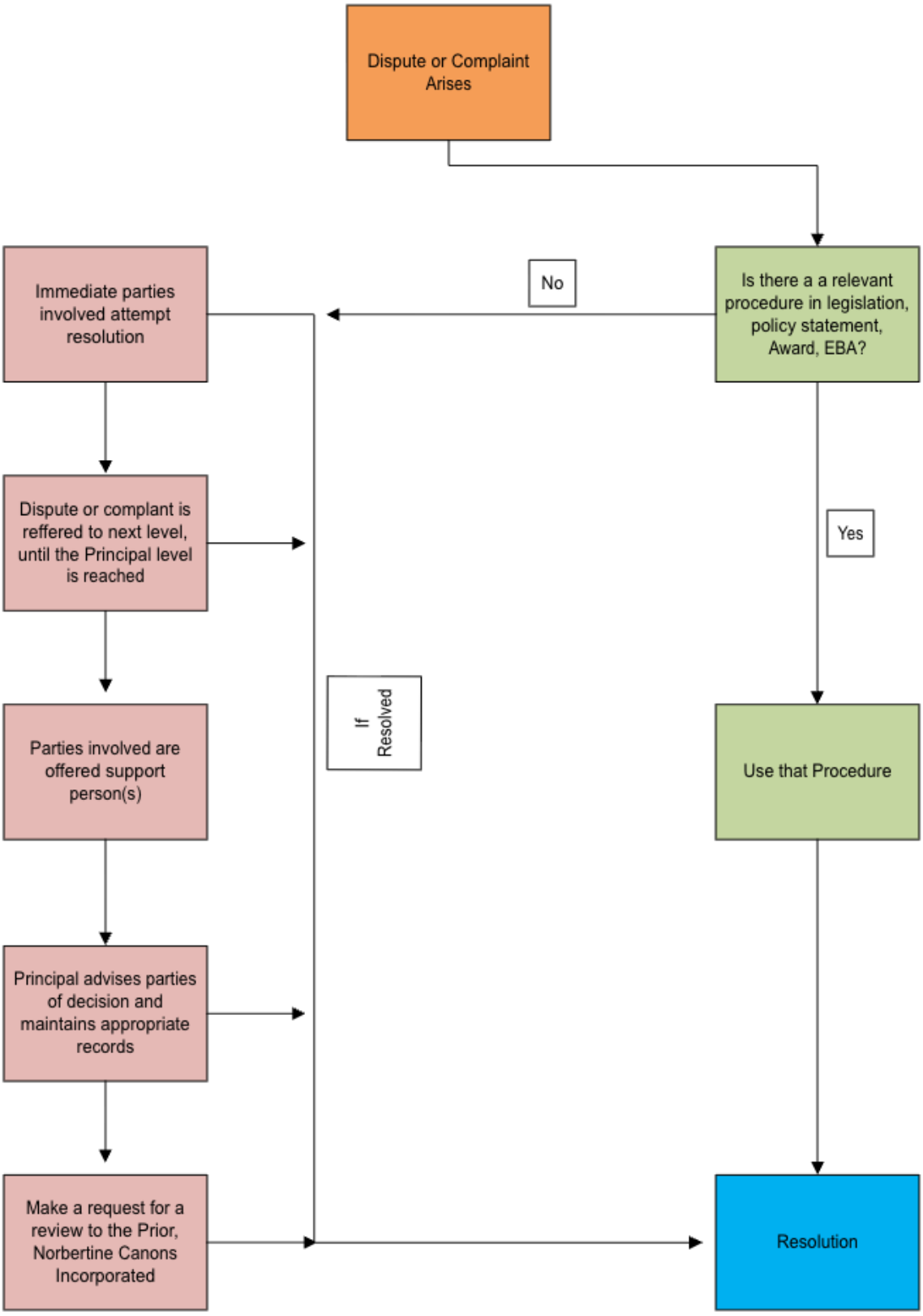
o) Any party may request a review of the Principal's decision, in writing, to the Prior, Norbertine Canons Incorporated.

p) The dispute or complaint shall be promptly acknowledged in writing within three school days, unless the complainant is anonymous and cannot be identified.

q) The Principal must suspend this process if continuing may put at risk the safety and wellbeing of a student, and resume when it is safe to do so.

r) The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the Norbertine Canons Incorporated observes the Registration Standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. You are entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how Norbertine Canons Incorporated has dealt with a complaint. While the Director General may consider whether Norbertine Canons Incorporated has breached the registration standards, they do not have power to intervene in a complaint or override Norbertine Canons Incorporated's decision. More information is available here: https://www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-school-concerns

s) School Complaint Levels. Complainants should start at the lowest possible level:

I. Employee or Teacher
II. Head of Learning or Head of House
III. Deputy Principal or Business Manager
IV. Principal

Flowchart for Dealing with Disputes and Complaints