

MINISTRY STANDARDS COMMISSION

Chairperson's Report for General Synod
Standing Committee

15 June 2026

CHAIRPERSON'S
REVIEW

I. Executive Summary

- The last two years have seen several changes to the processes, approach and personnel involved in the Ministry Standards Commission (MSC).
 - We have two new Registrars who are doing an amazing job of working through the outstanding cases and the new issues and concerns that are being raised.
 - Kooyoora have been appointed to carry out the often-complex role of conducting the initial investigations.
 - The Members of the Commission have changed with several people stepping down at the end of their three-year term or moving onto other roles.
 - There have been two new appointments, including the appointment of a new Chairperson.
- The Commission has been involved in the development of the changes to Title D and the National Safeguarding Standards.
- The complaints received by the MSC over the last 18 months show several patterns, themes and learnings that have informed the Registrar's practice.
- These trends have also been used to ground the proposed changes to Title D in practice and to inform our approach to the development of National Standards.

II. Overview of the Ministry Standards Commission's role

- 1) Clause 6 of Canon II, Title D, establishes the Ministry Standards Commission (MSC) as a body with the following functions, powers, and duties:
 - a) To give general advice to Bishops and the Primates as to matters of discipline;
 - b) To issue guidelines on vetting processes for candidates for ordination;
 - c) To issue codes of practice and general policy guidance to persons exercising functions in connection with ministry standards, including training required in relation to ministry standards;
 - d) To audit the approach of Episcopal Units of this Church to the training and monitoring of Ministers;
 - e) To issue regulations relating to the conduct of disciplinary proceedings and guidance on the publication of information in relation to the disciplinary processes of this Church;

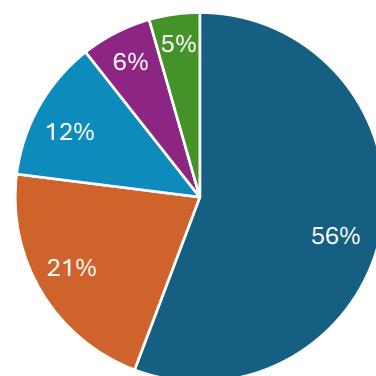
- f) To maintain a list of those qualified and prepared to act as Church Advocates and make arrangements for the provision of funding to recompense those appointed as such;
 - g) To maintain a list of those qualified to serve on tribunals;
 - h) To appoint a Registrar and agree the terms of appointment with them;
 - i) To advise the Registrar on matters of tikanga and doctrine when the Registrar is carrying out functions under this Title D;
 - j) To maintain a list of persons who can act as chaplains to provide pastoral support both to complainants and respondents; and
 - k) To report at each session of the General Synod/te Hīnota Whānui on its work.
- 2) Over the last 12 months, there have been some significant changes to the composition of the Commission.
- a) The temporary representatives on the Commission from Te Korowai have stepped down at the end of the term of their temporary appointment.
 - b) Both Dianne Cameron (Chairperson) and Beverley Burns have resigned as Commissioners at the end of the term of their appointment.
 - c) Jeremy Hema and Frances Tagaloa have left the Commission to pursue other roles.
 - d) Stephen Hooper (Chairperson) and Annabel Hawkes were appointed to the Commission.
- 3) We are currently seeking Expressions of Interest for additional Commission Members to be appointed over the coming months.
- 4) In March 2025, new Registrars were appointed to the MSC. The two Registrars have done an excellent job of working through the backlog of older cases and addressing new complaints with professionalism and sound judgment.
- 5) Kooyoora has now been involved in providing investigative support from Melbourne and, more recently, using New Zealand-based investigators.
- a) Although there have been some minor logistical issues, the overall relationship has worked well.
 - b) The experience and expertise of Kooyoora have not only assisted with the investigations but also, through our recent discussions, enabled us to review and refine our processes.

III. Investigation of complaints

6) The primary role of the Commission has been to support the Registrars in their role. Under Canon III of Title D, each complaint against a Minister or Office Bearer is initially assessed by the Registrar to determine whether the complaint has sufficient substance to warrant further investigation, and, if so, whether the allegations, if proven, would constitute misconduct or unsatisfactory conduct.

7) Over the last 18 months, the Registrars have received 113 complaints. This included several instances in which different people filed multiple complaints against the same Minister or Office Bearer.

- **63** (56%) complaints were closed because they were withdrawn, outside the scope of Title D, or resolved in another way.
- **14** (12%) complaints were dismissed.
- **7** (6%) complaints were assessed as unsatisfactory conduct.
- **5** (5%) complaints were assessed as misconduct.
- **24** (21%) complaints are still in progress (this includes 9 currently undertaking information gathering or alternative resolution processes, 13 being investigated and 2 on hold due to Police investigation).



8) As outlined in the attached updated Registrar’s summary,

- a) There was significant variation in the nature of the complaints that were closed, and the time spent on each file.
- b) These complaints have come from a range of hui amorangi and diocese. There is a range of factors that may impact the number of complaints from each group.

9) Complaints were made about the following type of conduct:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| • Abuse: Other: 22 | • Financial misconduct: 4 |
| • Access to resources: 1 | • Harassment: 1 |
| • Bullying: 21 | • Historical child sexual abuse: 8 |
| • Child physical abuse: 1 | • Interpersonal conflict: 6 |
| • Criminal: Other: 1 | • Other: 17 |
| • Current adult sexual abuse: 1 | • Other child abuse/protection concerns: 1 |
| • Elder abuse: 3 | • Physical abuse: 1 |
| • Emotional abuse: 1 | • Professional misconduct: 7 |
| • Failure to protect: 4 | • Sexual misconduct: 10 |
| • Family violence: 2 | • Theological differences: 1 |

Tribunals and reviews

- 10) In relation to Tribunals:
- **5** complaints were assessed as misconduct, initiating the institution of disciplinary proceedings.
 - **0** Tribunal hearings were held.
 - **2** Tribunals from previous years were in the pre- and post-hearing stages.
 - **1** Special Appeal was held.
- 11) We have seen an increasing number of requests for a review of the Registrar's decisions by the Chairperson of the MSC. The number and complexity of some cases have put pressure on the review process. There were 8 reviews sought of Registrar assessments under cl 28 of Canon III, Title D. Of these:
- **4** reviews upheld the Registrar's assessment.
 - **3** reviews considered the Registrar's assessment was plainly wrong (two of these assessments were not completed by the current Registrars).
 - **1** outstanding review that involves numerous complaints by several complainants.
- 12) As you will see in the attached report, there have been several patterns, learnings and themes that have been identified from the cases received throughout the last 18 months.
- 13) Most of the cases being referred to the Registrars and the MSC do not involve matters of fitness for ministry.
- i) The issues are largely pastoral or relational.
 - ii) The investigation processes are not well-suited to these types of cases, which need a more restorative or reconciliatory approach.
 - iii) Too much of the Kooyoora and Registrar's investigation time is spent on matters that would benefit from a more pastoral approach.
 - iv) The MSC has therefore been closely involved in the design and drafting of the Title D changes to better align the practices with the issues being faced.
- 14) There has been no significant increase in complaints since the Royal Commission; we cannot comment on the reasons for this trend.
- 15) We have not received any contemporary child abuse complaints over the past 18 months. It remains critical that the church continues to ensure safeguarding policies and standards are consistently and rigorously observed.

- 16) There have been several cases of failure to maintain appropriate boundaries. Most commonly, these complaints have arisen in the context of male ministers interacting with female parishioners or subordinates, including in pastoral relationships.
- 17) Transitions in leadership within parishes have, on several occasions, led to complaints about how the parish is run and the changes that have been implemented.
- 18) There needs to be greater clarity on the scope of Title D and the trustee's obligations under the Canon.
- 19) There is a strong culture of prompt disclosure and referral of complaints among the church's senior leadership, and a demonstrated desire for a robust and transparent complaints system.

IV. Wider Policy Role

- 20) As contemplated by the MSC's role under Title D, we have had greater involvement in several of the wider policy initiatives over the last 12 months.
- 21) Several participants in the investigation processes have asked the MSC whether it is willing to receive feedback on some of the wider systemic and church/organisational cultural issues that arose during the process. The feedback will be provided to the Bishops on these issues.
- 22) The wider policy role has included reviewing the terms of Title D to adjust the process options available to the Registrar. These changes are intended to reflect the nature of the complaints received. The changes establish—
 - a) The standard of "fitness for ministry". This means that the critical matter for the Registrar to determine is whether the Minister or Officer Bearer is fit for ministry.
 - b) If the Registrar determines that the conduct complained of, even if proven, would not raise concerns about the respondent's fitness to hold office or to minister, the complaint may be referred to the Licensing Bishop for a pastoral resolution outside the Title D process. This enables a more pastoral, restorative and reconciliatory approach to relationship-based cases.

23) MSC would like to recognise the outstanding work of Sue Fordyce and the Chancellors in drafting the amendments to Title D that will be presented to this General Synod.

24) The Commissioners from the MSC have been involved in the initial stages of designing and developing the National Safeguarding Standards, alongside the team from Te Korowai and representatives from key areas and across all three tikanga within the New Zealand Anglican Church.

Confidential to Ministry Standards Commission

Summary of Complaints: January 2025 – June 2026

To: Ministry Standards Commission
From: Registrar and Deputy Registrar
Date: 8 June 2026

Summary

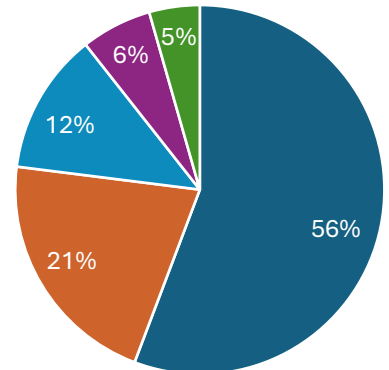
- 25) This report provides an overview of the complaints received by the Ministry Standards Commission for the 18-month period between January 2025 – June 2026.¹
- 26) At the end of the report we have set out some themes/learnings that have become apparent and we will continue to build on this analysis.

Outcome of complaints

- 27) During the time period of this report there were 113 complaints made². Of those:

- **63** (56%) complaints were closed because they were either withdrawn, they were outside the scope of Title D or the matter was resolved in another way.
- **14** (12%) complaints were dismissed.
- **7** (6%) complaints were assessed as unsatisfactory conduct.
- **5** (5%) complaints were assessed as misconduct.
- **24** (21%) complaints are still in progress (this includes 9 currently undertaking information gathering or alternative resolution processes, 13 being investigated and 2 on hold due to Police investigation).

Figure 1: Outcomes



- 28) It is notable that only 11% of complaints made within the time period resulted in an adverse assessment (of unsatisfactory conduct or misconduct). In assessing complaints, we have sought to focus on conduct that impacts on a respondent's fitness to minister. There are other complaints that, while a technical breach of the high standard set by ministry

¹ Please note there are some limitations to this data. The data set for 2025 includes some residual matters that were already with the Registrar at the beginning of the year. There was also a change in registrar in March 2025 and a subsequent change in the way complaints information is stored and recorded. While we have gone through the data manually there may be some inaccuracies as a result of this changeover period.

² In a number of instances there were multiple complaints made by different people about the same person/conduct. For example, in relation to one matter there were over 10 different complaints about one respondent. For the purposes of this report we have counted this as one 'complaint'.

standards, were either of a minor nature or more appropriately addressed in an alternative way. In these instances complaints were often dismissed.

29) 56% of the complaints were closed without being assessed. These files were closed for different reasons:

- **7** complaints did not relate to the Anglican Church.
- **8** complaints were received without sufficient information to proceed further.
- **12** complainants did not wish their complaint to proceed.
- **28** complaints did not fall within Title D.
- **4** complaints were resolved outside of the Title D process.
- **1** complaint was made relating to conduct that had previously been assessed under Title D.
- **3** complaints went to mediation facilitated by MSC and reported successful outcomes.

30) There was significant variation in the nature of the complaints that were closed, and the time spent on each file. For example:

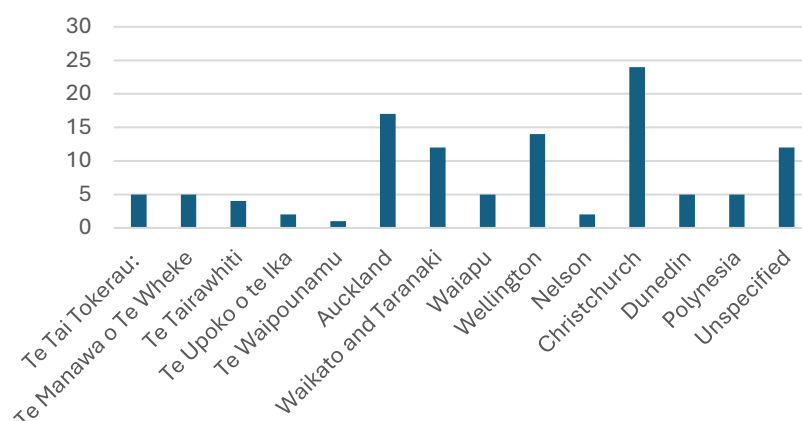
- a) One complainant was unhappy with something a vicar had said. It was immediately clear this did not allege a breach of ministry standards and should not be considered under Title D. However, it was equally clear that the complainant needed a lot of support, so a period of time was spent in attempting to direct them to appropriate services rather than immediately disengaging.
- b) One complaint was made in relation to historic conduct that could potentially have amounted to a breach of ministry standards at the unsatisfactory conduct level. During the investigation it became apparent that the underlying concern from the complainant was residual hurt from the situation, and the diocese was asked to facilitate mediation between the parties which was successful.
- c) A number of complaints were quite quickly dealt with for reasons such as the respondent not being a minister or office bearer, or the conduct clearly not amounting to a breach of ministry standards (for example, decisions about maintenance of church buildings).
- d) There will often be a period of time spent with complainants explaining to them the purpose of Title D and the outcomes that the process can achieve. For various reasons a number of complainants decided not to go any further with their complaint.

Complaints by location

31) The number of complaints received from each hui amorangi and diocese are as follows:

- Te Pihopatanga o Te Tai Tokerau: **5**
- Te Pihopatanga o Te Manawa o Te Wheke: **5**
- Te Pihopatanga o Te Tairāwhiti: **4**
- Te Pihopatanga o Te Upoko o te Ika: **2**
- Te Pihopatanga o Te Waipounamu: **1**
- Diocese of Auckland: **17**
- Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki: **12**
- Diocese of Waiapu: **5**
- Diocese of Wellington: **14**
- Diocese of Nelson: **2**
- Diocese of Christchurch: **24**
- Diocese of Dunedin: **5**
- Diocese of Polynesia: **5**
- Unspecified: **12**

Figure 2: Compliants by hui amorangi / diocese



32) Bishops may not be aware of all of these complaints. A bishop is notified when a complaint is made that is going to be investigated and assessed. If a complaint is considered to be out of scope or is withdrawn or resolved at an early stage, a bishop will likely not be notified.

33) The number of complaints made within each hui amorangi/diocese may not reflect the amount of work undertaken for complaints within each diocese. The amount of time spent on individual complaints can vary significantly. To understand the amount of time spent within each diocese this data should be viewed in conjunction with the relevant invoices.

Types of complaints

34) We have also broken down the complaints by the type of conduct that was alleged. This is a rough measure as a number of complaints will allege different types of abuse or breaches of ministry standards and only the 'main' type is recorded against a file.

35) Complaints were made about the following type of conduct:

- Abuse: Other: 22
- Access to resources: 1
- Bullying: 21
- Child physical abuse: 1
- Criminal: Other: 1
- Current adult sexual abuse: 1
- Elder abuse: 3
- Emotional abuse: 1
- Failure to protect: 4
- Family violence: 2
- Financial misconduct: 4
- Harassment: 1
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Tribunals and reviews

36) In relation to Tribunals:

- **5** complaints were assessed as a misconduct initiating institution of disciplinary proceedings.
- **0** Tribunal hearings were held.
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- **1** Special Appeal was held.

37) There were 7 reviews sought of registrar assessments under cl 28 of Canon III, Title D. Of these:

- **4** reviews upheld the registrar's assessment.
- **3** reviews considered the registrar's assessment was plainly wrong (two of these assessments were not completed by the current registrars).

Learnings

38) We have identified the following themes that have arisen throughout the period:

- a) **No significant influx of complaints post-Royal Commission:** There has not been a significant influx of historical child abuse allegations following the Royal Commission. We cannot comment on the reason for this but remain alive to the possibility that such complainants may still come forward.
- b) **No contemporary child abuse complaints:** We have also not received any contemporary child abuse complaints during this period. While this is positive, we are cognisant that such complaints often have a long tail between the incident occurring and it being reported. It is critical the Church continues to ensure robust safeguarding processes are consistent and observed.

- c) **Failure to maintain appropriate boundaries:** When considering complaints involving sexual abuse/misconduct, a number of these have arisen in large part due to a failure to maintain appropriate boundaries. Most commonly these complaints have arisen within the context of male ministers interacting with female parishioners or subordinates, including in pastoral relationships. Some have involved a minister meeting by themselves with a parishioner. This suggests that continued education about maintaining appropriate boundaries in ministry and pastoral relationships is necessary.
- d) **Transitions are a risk factor for complaints:** While there are a number of complaints of bullying, from the matters that we are aware of there does not appear to be a systemic issue of bullying within the church. However a number of these complaints, and other interpersonal issues that have arisen, have occurred within the context of a transition in leadership within a particular parish. On a number of occasions it appears that Title D allegations of this nature have been made due to unhappiness and frustration with decisions that are being made about how the parish is run and changes that have been made. In other contexts, ministers new to the area have discovered irregularities from their predecessor. We consider that transitions are risk points for complaints, both against the incoming leaders and those moving on. There may be value in ensuring there is appropriate support for vicars and parishioners during times of transition.
- e) **Need for clarity about governance obligations under Title D:** We have received a number of complaints against governance bodies within the Church. While it is important that trustees are held to account under Title D we consider it is necessary to be clear about the scope to which this applies and the purpose of including trustee obligations within Title D. It appears that Title D has been engaged when an individual disagrees with a particular decision of the church which is more of a political than misconduct issue.
- f) **Strong culture of disclosure within senior church leadership:** We have observed a strong culture of disclosure within the senior leadership of the church. Bishops and Archbishops have promptly referred complaints to us and have demonstrated their desire for a robust and transparent complaints system. We have encountered instances where complaints have not been referred to us within lower levels but we do not know how widespread this is. It does however suggest that further education about Title D across the entire church would be of value.