



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: Strategic Governance Document Hierarchy		PROCEDURE REFERENCE NUMBER GEN-016
DATE APPROVED 26 February 2026 by Bishop-in-Council		REVISION NUMBER Version 1
IMPLEMENTATION DATE 26 February 2026	REVIEW DATE AND FREQUENCY 3 Yearly	RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW Bishop-in-Council

1. Purpose

This Policy establishes a clear and consistent order of precedence for all governance and operational documents across the Diocese so that decisions, guidance and practice are lawful, coherent and transparent. It gives effect to and supports best practice governance.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Diocesan bodies (Bishop-in-Council, Corporate Trustees, Registry, Committees), parishes and ministry units, schools and any other entity operating under Diocesan authority that creates, approves, uses or maintains Diocesan documents.

3. Principles

- **Primacy of law and canons** – Where instruments conflict, higher order instruments prevail.
- **Specific over general** – Within the same level of the hierarchy, a specific and valid instrument may prevail over a general one within its scope.
- **Currency and control** – Only the latest approved version of any document may be used; superseded versions are retired and archived.
- **Transparency** – Every document states its Authority/Precedence, Owner, Approver, Effective/Review dates, and Related documents.
- **Accountability** – Roles, delegations and review cycles are explicit and monitored.

4. Order of precedence

When interpreting or applying governance documents, use this order, higher prevails:

- 1) **Applicable legislation and regulations** (Commonwealth/State) and binding court/tribunal decisions. **(None – External)**
- 2) **National regulatory standards** applicable to charities (e.g., ACNC Governance Standards and, where relevant, ACNC External Conduct Standards). **(None – External)**
- 3) **Anglican Church of Australia:** Constitution and Canons (as applicable to the Diocese). **(General synod/Provincial Synod)**
- 4) **Diocese of Grafton:** Ordinances **(Synod / Bishop in Council)**.
- 5) **Diocesan:** Policies and Frameworks **(Synod / Bishop in Council)**
- 6) **Diocesan:** Bishop's Guidelines & Registrar/General Manager's Practice Notes **(Bishops Registry)**
- 7) **Diocesan:** Procedures **(Bishops Registry)**.
- 8) **Diocesan:** Guidelines **(Bishops Registry)**.
- 9) **Forms and Templates** **(Bishops Registry)**.

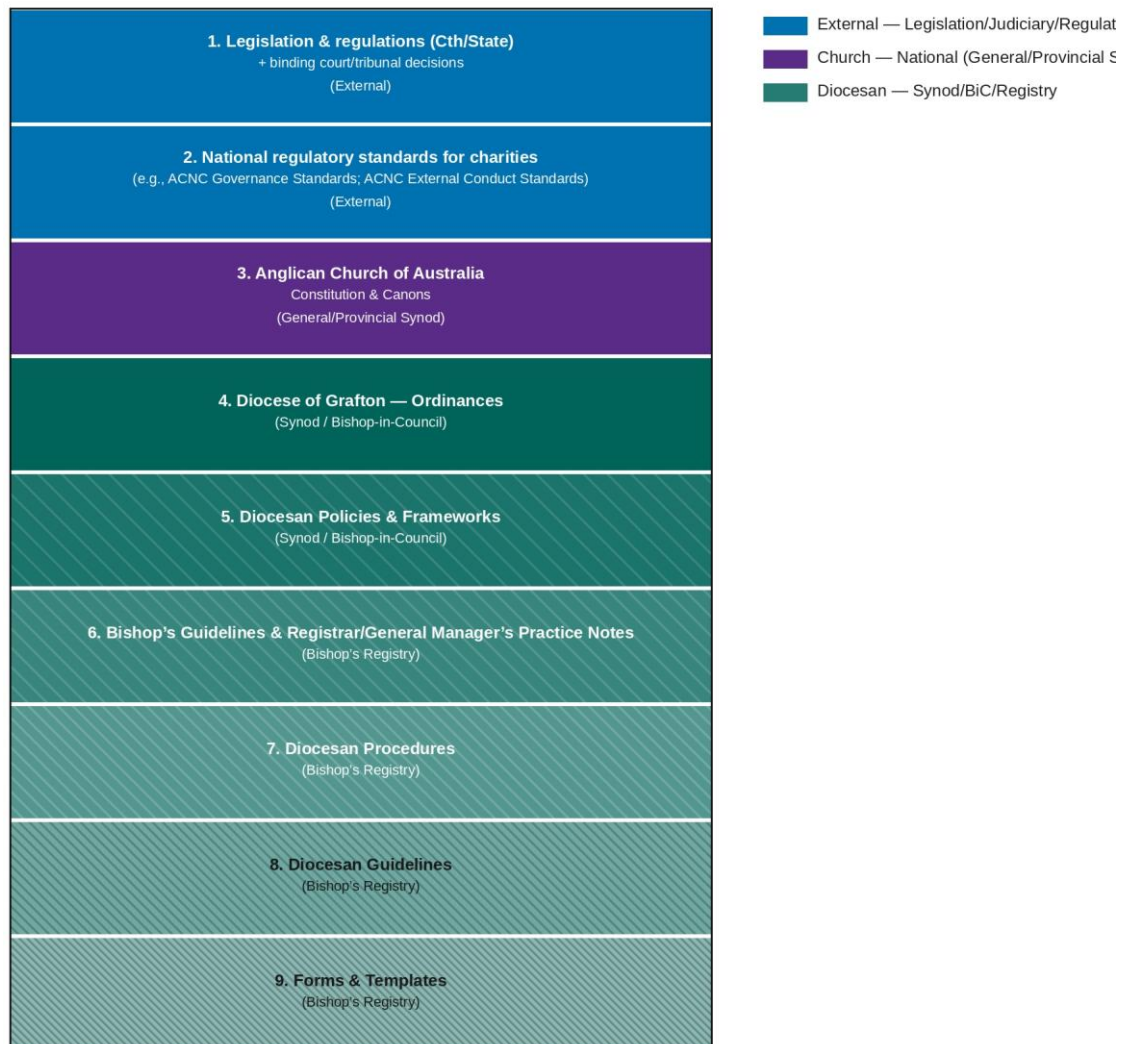


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Order of Precedence — Higher prevails

Anglican Diocese of Grafton (influence decreases downward)



Visual guide — refer to the Policy for authoritative wording.

Note — Conflicts at the same level: If two documents at the same level conflict, the later dated and/or more specific instrument prevails within its stated scope, provided it is consistent with higher order instruments.



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5. Governance intent

- Provides role clarity and reduces contradictory guidance.
- Strengthens risk management and compliance by ensuring staff, clergy and volunteers use the authoritative version.
- Supports efficient decision making, transparent accountability, and smoother policy reviews and audits.

6. Document types

- **Policy** – What we must do and why (mandatory rules, principles and responsibilities).
- **Framework** – An organising structure that connects multiple policies/processes (e.g., Risk, Safeguarding, ICT/Cyber, Records).
- **Ordinance** – A legislative instrument made under the authority of Synod (and sometimes Bishop-in-Council)
- It functions like a *local law* for the Diocese. Ordinances sit below Church canons but above diocesan policies and procedures in the governance hierarchy
- **Canons** form the national legal framework of the Anglican Church of Australia. They sit below the Constitution of the Church but above diocesan ordinances and local policies.
- **Procedure** – Step-by-step operational instructions implementing a Policy/Standard.
- **Guideline** – Recommended methods or good practice;
- **Form / Template** – Tools that capture data or drive consistency
- **Practice Note** – Interim/clarifying guidance issued by the Registrar; timebound and superseded once the underlying document is updated.
- **Delegations of Authority** – Instruments specifying decision rights and financial/operational limits.

7. Roles and responsibilities

- **Bishop-in-Council (BiC)**
 - Approves this Policy and all Diocesan Policies/Frameworks; sets reserved matters and delegations; receives monitoring reports.
- **Bishop/Chancellor (as applicable)**
 - Advises on canonical/constitutional interpretation; resolves escalation where required.
- **Synod/Bishop in Council (Policy Owner)**
 - Approval of policy: Monitors the Diocesan Document Register; assures version control; coordinates consultation and review cycles; initiate reviews and improvements.
- **Registrar/General Manager**



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- Draft, consult and maintain documents; issues templates; ensure alignment to higher order instruments; publishes approved documents; records retirements; can issue Practice Notes when needed; provide training materials.
- **Committee Chairs (e.g., Audit & Risk; People/Safeguarding; Property & Investment)**
 - Review domain drafts, confirm risk/assurance implications and recommend updates/approval to BiC where relevant.
- **Parishes/Ministry Units/Schools/Registry**
 - Use current approved documents; retire local versions when superseded; raise conflicts/inconsistencies with the Registrar.

8. Document Controls

Every document covered by this Policy **must include** a metadata header block showing:

Title | Document Type | Authority/Precedence statement | Owner | Approver | Version | Effective date | Next review | Related documents | File ID.

- **Versioning** – Use semantic versioning: **v1.0** (new policy), **v1.1** (minor edit), **v2.0** (material change).
- **Authoritative copy** – The **Register location** (path/link) is the only authoritative copy; all other copies are uncontrolled.
- **Retirement** – Superseded documents are marked **Retired**, removed from circulation, and archived with version history in the Register.

9. Creation, Consultation, Approval & Review

- 1) **Drafting** – Use Diocesan templates; include an **Authority/Precedence** statement (see §10).
- 2) **Consultation** – Engage affected stakeholders (e.g., Rectors/Wardens/Treasurers for parish facing policies; Audit & Risk for risk bearing policies; People/Safeguarding for safeguarding).
- 3) **Quality checks** – Bishops Registry verifies hierarchy alignment, versioning, naming, delegations and cross-references.
- 4) **Approval** –
 - a. **Policies/Frameworks**: BiC (or delegated committee where explicitly authorised).
 - b. **Procedures/Guidelines/Forms**: Registrar under operational delegation, unless BiC requires approval for high-risk procedures.
- 5) **Publication** – Registrar updates the **Register** and publishes the authoritative copy.
- 6) **Review cycles** –
 - a. **High-risk domains** (e.g., Safeguarding, Finance, ICT/Cyber): **every 1–2 years** or on trigger (law/canon change, incident).
 - b. **All other domains**: **every 2–3 years** or on trigger.

10. Authority/Precedence clause

The below clause must be placed in every document covered by this policy:



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Authority/Precedence:

"This [Policy/Framework] is authorised by the **Bishop-in-Council** (or delegated authority) of the **Anglican Diocese of Grafton**. In the event of inconsistency, applicable **Australian law/regulation** and **national charity standards** prevail, followed by **Anglican Church of Australia** Constitution and Canons, then the **Diocese of Grafton** Constitution/Ordinances/Rules. This document must be read and applied accordingly."

11. Managing inconsistencies and conflicts

- **Identify & notify** – Anyone identifying a conflict between documents must notify the **Registrar** and provide a short description, risk assessment and impacted activities.
- **Triage & advice** – Registrar checks against the hierarchy, consults **Chancellor/Bishop** as needed and recommends a rectification path.
- **Interim control** – Where risk is material (e.g., legal, safeguarding, financial), the Registrar may issue a **Practice Note** pending formal correction.
- **Rectification** – Document Owner drafts amendments; obtains approvals; Registrar updates the **Register** and communicates the change.

12. Exceptions (Temporary Departures)

A documented Exception may be approved by the Registrar (or by BiC for policies) where strict adherence would cause disproportionate risk/cost or frustrate lawful obligations. Each Exception must state: the clause(s) exempted, reason, controls in place, expiry (≤ 6 months) and a plan to return to compliance.

13. Training and communication

- The Registrar is to provide briefing notes and toolkits/templates to Ministry units and secretaries.
- Key changes are communicated through Registry update and posted with the authoritative copy.
- Parish officers receive practical "how-to" guides (e.g., where to find the authoritative copy; what to do with old versions).

14. Monitoring and assurance

- **Annual sampling** of selected parishes/ministries to verify correct version use.
- **Annual report** to BiC on Register health: upcoming review deadlines, exceptions issued, retirements, and any recurring inconsistency themes.