



FACT SHEET: COMPLAINT HANDLING BY CHARITIES AND NOT-FOR-PROFITS

Complaints to charities and not-for-profits

Charities and other not-for-profits should provide a safe and effective service to those who wish to make a complaint to or about a charity, whether regarding mismanagement of people's information and data, use of donations, costs of fundraising or fundraising methods, the provision of services or the quality of the service. Many complaints happen because of alleged services failures, relevant information is not readily available, is difficult to understand, incomplete or misleading, does not appropriately address common concerns or frequently asked questions, is not provided or made available within a reasonable period of time.

Complaints and compliments are best viewed as a positive interaction with the people and communities which charities serve.

Benefits of handling complaints well

Good complaint handling can provide you with knowledge which can be used to:

- Improve products and services
- Build better relationships with your donors and those you serve
- Improve your bottom line
- Empower your staff to resolve issues fairly and efficiently

Bad complaint handling can cost your organisation

- Donor and customer loyalty
- The lifetime value of a donor
- The public reputation of your organisation
- Direct financial expenses in relation to the complaint

Consider the following:

- Is it easy to make a complaint to your organisation? For example:
 - Is the information about who to contact easy to find?
 - Do you have feedback or complaint forms in print and electronic formats?
- Consider whether it is possible to resolve a complaint informally by talking to the individual and providing an explanation or apology.
- Are there regular reviews of the issues raised by complaints to or about your organisation?



How to use these model documents

These documents – Model Policy and Model Procedure – are intended to provide guidance to organisations on the key principles and concepts of an effective and efficient complaint management system.

The **Model Policy** is designed to be used as a guide for the development or update of your organisation’s complaint handling policy.

The **Model Procedure** accompanies the complaint handling policy. Such a document provides guidance to staff on how complaints will be managed by the organisation in accordance with its documented policy.

The documents can be used as a template for adaption and then adoption by your organisation. You need to consider your organisation’s particular circumstances such as ensuring the documents fit with your organisation’s constitution (or other governing document), any accreditation standards or contract obligations as well as calibrating these documents for you size, nature, style, character and program delivery structure. You may wish to consider details such as time frames when modifying the policy and procedure to suit your particular needs.

Your CEO (or President) and your governing body (your Board or Management Committee, for example) should formally consider and adopt your organisation’s complaint handling policy and ensure that staff (paid and volunteer) and contractors adhere to it through regular reporting and reviews.

Proportional to size and risk

Your complaint policy should reflect your organisation’s size, nature, style, character and program delivery structure. The size of the policy may therefore vary between organisations, dependent on these factors and the level and type of risk factors faced by each organisation. The complaint policy should refer to, and link with, your other organisational charters, policies, codes and procedure manuals in order to ensure that the complaint policy is relevant and integrated into your organisational culture.

Acknowledgements

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This work has been informed by the following:

- Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint handling in organizations AS/NZS 10002:2014
- ‘Handling Privacy Complaints’ Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (October 2016)
- NSW Ombudsman Complaint Handling Model Policy 2015
- ‘Building better relationships through complaints’ The Society for Consumer Affairs Professionals Australia (SOCAP)



and The Australian Centre for Justice Innovation (ACJ), Monash University

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FDNA COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and our governing body (Board), receiving or managing complaints from members made to or about us, regarding our competitions and staff, or our complaint handling process.

Care will be taken to ensure that the complaint handling policy and procedure fits with other requirements that might be in the Constitution, Codes of Behaviour, Netball Victoria regulations or legislation. If a matter escalates to a member dispute there will be a mechanism for mediation etc.

1.3 Organisational commitment

This organisation expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
Board of Management	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	Report to the governing body on our complaint handling. Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints. Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints. Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly. Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements. Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.

<p>Key Staff: Business Manager, Hearings Officer, VNL Administrator</p>	<p>Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices</p>	<p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Assist people to make a complaint, if needed.</p> <p>Comply with our policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve our complaints management system.</p> <p>Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.</p>
<p>All staff</p>	<p>Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.</p>	<p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures.</p> <p>Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process.</p> <p>Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.</p>

2. Terms and Definitions

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our competitions, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. (AS/NZ 10002:2014)

As well as complaints being made directly to our organisation, remember that some complaints (or at least negative comments) may be made on social media.

Complaint handling/management system

All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

Dispute

An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

Feedback

Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our competitions or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Grievance

A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

Policy

A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.

Procedure

A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

3.Guiding principles

An effective complaint handling system must be modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into organisational culture.



3.1 Facilitate complaints

People focus

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our competitions, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame.

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it
- listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and



- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

No detriment to people making complaints

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anonymous complaints

We accept anonymous complaints if there is an exceptional reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

Accessibility

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, on our website (if available). We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or support them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish.

No charge

Complaining to us is free.

3.2 Respond to complaints

Early resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us.

Note: We will recording complaints resolved at first point of contact, the frontline. Such record keeping will add to the pool of data we will regularly analyse to identify system issues and track more accurately the complaint handling activities of staff.

When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

Responsiveness

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process



- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Responding flexibly

Our staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints.

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints in the process as far as possible.

Confidentiality

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

3.3 Manage the parties to a complaint

Complaints involving multiple agencies

Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between relevant parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response to the complaint.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas within our organisation, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint will be coordinated.

Empowerment of staff

All staff managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

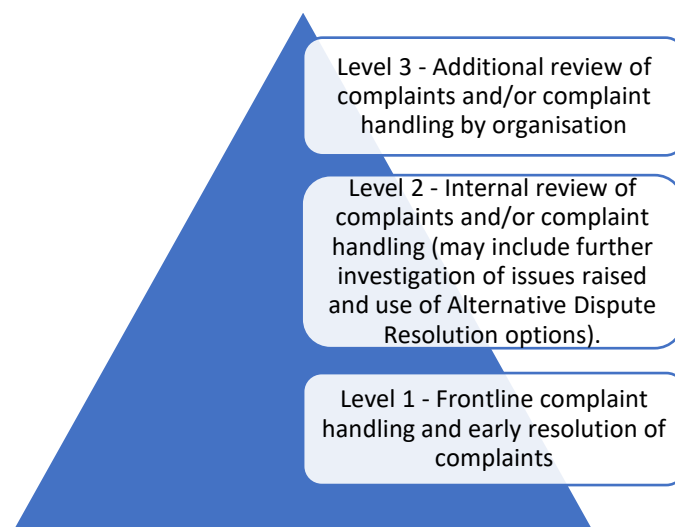
- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety and security of our staff, and
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant oversight regulatory bodies).

The three levels of complaint handling



Level 1

We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Level 2

Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint to a more senior officer within our organisation. This second level of complaint handling will provide for assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made.

Level 3

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their complaint, they may seek a further review of our decision (by an Appeal Panel, Board of Management or other relevant body).

4 Accountability and learning

4.1 Analysis and evaluation of complaints

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the Board of Management.

We will run reports on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided at least annually.

4.2 Monitoring of the complaint management system

We will monitor our complaint management system to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system, and
- monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

4.3 Continuous improvement

We are committed to improving the way our organisation operates, including our management of the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:

- support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- implement best practices in complaint handling
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff
- review the complaint management system and complaint data, and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and monitoring of the system.

FDNA COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

Introduction

When responding to complaints, staff (paid and volunteer) act in accordance with complaint handling procedures as well as any other relevant documents providing guidance on the management of complaints.

Staff should also consider Netball Victoria Regulations, Fair Play Code and any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below



1 Receive

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information.

The record of the complaint will document:

- Contact information of the person making a complaint and the date received
- Issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want
- Any other relevant information, and
- Any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

2 Acknowledge

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within 5 working days. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint.

3 Assess and investigate

3.1 Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed. When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety



- Whether the complaint should be addressed using Netball Victoria Regulations, Fair play Code or other specific framework
- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

3.2 Investigating the complaint

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. We may:

- Give the person making a complaint information or an explanation
- Gather information about the issue, person or area that the complaint is about, or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

We will inform the person making the complaint of the process and provide updates if there any significant delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any regulatory requirements.

4 Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action we took
- The reason/s for our decision
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an further review or appeal.

5 Close the complaint: document and analyse data

5.1 Document

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes

5.2 Analyse data

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported.

Policy endorsed by: Board of Management

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Review: Bi-annually