



COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY & PROCEDURE

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COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

Purpose

Frankston & District Netball Association (FDNA) (including Peninsula Waves) is committed to receiving and managing complaints in a fair, accessible, timely, confidential and child-safe manner. Complaints are an important opportunity to resolve concerns, improve our services and strengthen a safe, inclusive and respectful netball & stadium environment.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints made to or about FDNA, including complaints involving staff, volunteers, clubs, members, players, parent/carers, officials, spectators and other stakeholders.

The policy covers both internal complaints, such as staff or volunteer grievances and workplace-related concerns, and external complaints, such as member, participant, club, competition, conduct, service or public complaints. The same complaint handling principles apply to all matters, although different procedures, decision-makers or escalation pathways may be required depending on the nature of the complaint.

Guiding Principles

- **Accessibility:** people will be supported to raise concerns in a way that is easy to understand and appropriate to their needs.
- **Respect and safety:** all parties will be treated respectfully, and any immediate safety risks will be prioritised.
- **Child safety:** every complaint will be assessed for child safety concerns, and child safety matters will be escalated immediately under FDNA's Child Safety framework.
- **Fairness and natural justice:** complaints will be handled impartially, conflicts of interest will be managed, and relevant parties will have a fair opportunity to be heard.
- **Timeliness:** complaints will be acknowledged and progressed as promptly as possible, with updates provided where there are delays.
- **Confidentiality and privacy:** information will be shared only with those who need to know, subject to legal, reporting, child safety and procedural fairness obligations.
- **Proportionality:** the response will reflect the seriousness, complexity and risk of the complaint.
- **Accountability and learning:** complaint outcomes and trends will be reviewed to improve FDNA's systems, culture, services and conduct.

Child Safety Complaints

Complaints, disclosures or concerns involving child safety, child wellbeing, abuse, grooming, neglect, reportable conduct, inappropriate behaviour towards a child, or risk of harm to a child must be treated as child safety matters first. These matters must be managed under FDNA's Child Safety framework and any applicable legal reporting obligations.

This policy does not replace FDNA's Child Safety policies, reporting obligations or procedures. If there is any inconsistency, the Child Safety framework and legal reporting obligations take priority. The general complaints process must never delay urgent action to protect a child or report a concern to Police, child protection, the Commission for Children and Young People or another relevant authority where required.

Complaint Pathways

We will assess each complaint and direct it to the most appropriate pathway. This may include informal resolution, internal review, formal investigation, mediation, referral to another organisation, or escalation under a specific framework such as Child Safety, Member Protection, Netball Victoria regulations, FDNA's By-laws or Constitution, employment obligations or relevant legislation.

Complaint type	Examples	Likely pathway
Child safety	Risk of harm, abuse, grooming, reportable conduct, unsafe behaviour involving children	Immediate escalation under FDNA Child Safety framework and legal reporting obligations
Internal staff or volunteer matter	Workplace grievance, conduct concern, interpersonal conflict, internal communication issue	Internal Complaints and/or Grievance Procedure
External member or participant complaint	Competition, club, coaching, officiating, sideline behaviour, member conduct or service concern	External Member, Participant and Public Complaints Procedure
Serious misconduct or integrity matter	Discrimination, harassment, bullying, violence, corruption, criminal conduct or sport integrity issue	Formal investigation, referral or escalation to the appropriate authority or governing body

Receiving and Assessing Complaints

Complaints may be made by email, through FDNA's usual contact channels, or verbally where a person requires support to make a complaint. FDNA may ask for a written summary where this is needed to clarify the issues, record the complaint accurately or manage the matter fairly.

When a complaint is received, FDNA will consider the seriousness, urgency, safety risks, child safety implications, people involved, outcome sought, whether FDNA has authority to deal with the matter, whether another policy or organisation should manage the matter, and whether informal or formal resolution is appropriate.

Managing Complaints

Where appropriate, FDNA will aim to resolve complaints early and informally. This may include providing information, clarifying expectations, offering an explanation or apology, correcting an error, facilitating a respectful conversation, or taking practical action to prevent the issue continuing.

Formal complaint handling may be required where a matter is serious, repeated, disputed, complex, involves potential misconduct, raises safety or child safety risks, or cannot be resolved informally. Formal handling may include gathering information, interviewing relevant people, reviewing documents, seeking advice, making findings and deciding appropriate outcomes.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The General Manager is responsible for oversight of the complaints system and ensuring serious or systemic issues are addressed.
- The Operations Manager, or another authorised person, is responsible for coordinating complaint handling, record keeping, escalation and reporting.
- Complaint handlers must act fairly, maintain confidentiality, manage conflicts of interest and follow the relevant procedure.
- Staff and volunteers must listen respectfully, identify safety or child safety risks, refer complaints to the appropriate person and not discourage anyone from making a complaint.
- Member Protection Information Officers (where appointed) may provide information and referral support but are not responsible for deciding or investigating complaints unless separately authorised.

Outcomes and Review

At the conclusion of a complaint, we will advise the complainant of the outcome where appropriate, including the reasons for the decision, any action to be taken, and any available review or appeal options. The level of detail provided may depend on confidentiality, privacy, child safety, employment, legal or procedural fairness considerations.

Possible outcomes may include no further action, an explanation, apology, correction, agreement between parties, education or training, change to process, referral to another body, disciplinary action, safety action, child safety action, or another proportionate response.

Record Keeping, Reporting and Continuous Improvement

We will keep appropriate records of complaints, actions taken, outcomes, review requests and any follow-up required. Complaint records will be stored securely and managed in accordance with privacy, confidentiality, child safety, employment and legal obligations.

Complaint information may be reported to the Board of Management in a de-identified or confidential form to identify trends, systemic issues, safety risks, training needs and opportunities for improvement. Serious matters may be reported more urgently where required.

Supporting Procedures

This policy is supported by a more detailed Complaints Procedure. We will endeavour to use one procedure with two complaint pathways.

The recommended structure is:

- **Internal Complaints and Grievance Procedure:** for staff, volunteers, Board members and workplace-related concerns.
- **Member, Participant and Public Complaints Procedure:** for clubs, members, players, parents, guardians, officials, coaches, spectators, participants and public complaints.
- **Child Safety Procedure:** for all child safety complaints, disclosures, reportable conduct, risks or concerns. This procedure should remain separate and take priority where child safety is involved.

Complaints Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure explains how FDNA receives, assesses and manages complaints under the Complaint Handling Policy. It provides one consistent process with two pathways: internal complaints and grievances, and external member, participant and public complaints.

2. First Response and Safety Triage

When any complaint or concern is received, the first step is to consider safety. The person receiving the complaint must listen respectfully, thank the person for raising the concern, avoid making promises about the outcome, and identify whether urgent action is required.

- If anyone is in immediate danger, contact emergency services immediately.
- If the complaint involves a child or young person, consider whether it raises a child safety concern, disclosure, allegation, reportable conduct issue or risk of harm.
- If child safety is involved, escalate immediately under FDNA's Child Safety framework. Do not wait for this procedure to be completed.
- If the matter may involve criminal conduct, seek advice and report to Police or another relevant authority where required.
- If the complaint involves serious misconduct, discrimination, harassment, bullying, violence or integrity concerns, consider whether it should be referred to Netball Victoria, Sport Integrity Australia, Police or another appropriate body.

Examples of matters that must be considered for child safety escalation include: a child saying they feel unsafe with an adult or older participant; concerns about inappropriate messages or online contact with a child; an allegation of physical, emotional or sexual harm; suspected grooming; a child being left unsupervised in unsafe circumstances; repeated bullying of a child where there is a risk of harm; or any conduct that may be reportable conduct or require external reporting.

3. Receiving a Complaint

Complaints may be made by email, letter, online form, phone, in person, or through another accessible method. A person may ask for support to make a complaint, including help from a parent, guardian, support person, interpreter, advocate or Member Protection Information Officer where appropriate.

Where a complaint is made verbally, FDNA may record a written summary and ask the complainant to confirm that it accurately reflects their concern. A complaint should include, where possible, what happened, when and where it happened, who was

involved, any witnesses, any steps already taken, and what outcome the complainant is seeking.

4. Acknowledgement

FDNA will acknowledge receipt of a complaint as soon as practicable, usually within five business days. The acknowledgement should confirm that the complaint has been received, identify the person managing the complaint where known, explain the next step, and provide expected timeframes where possible.

5. Assessment and Pathway Decision

The Complaints Officer, Operations Manager, or other authorised person, will assess the complaint and decide the most appropriate pathway. The assessment should consider the nature of the complaint, seriousness, urgency, child safety implications, safety risks, relevant policies, people involved, conflicts of interest, whether FDNA has authority to deal with the matter, and whether another body is better placed to respond.

Decision point	Action
Child safety concern	Refer immediately to FDNA Child Safety framework and any legal reporting obligations.
Internal workplace, staff, volunteer or Board-related grievance	Manage under Pathway A: Internal Complaints and Grievances.
Member, participant, parent, club, competition, official, coach, spectator or public complaint	Manage under Pathway B: External Member, Participant and Public Complaints.
Serious misconduct, integrity, discrimination, harassment, violence or possible criminal conduct	Consider formal investigation, referral, external advice or escalation to the appropriate authority or governing body.
Complaint outside FDNA's authority	Provide information about the appropriate organisation or process where possible.

6. Pathway A: Internal Complaints and Grievances

This pathway applies to complaints or grievances involving staff, volunteers, Board members, contractors or internal workplace-related matters. It may include interpersonal conflict, role clarity, workplace conduct, communication concerns, workload concerns, breaches of policy, or concerns about behaviour within FDNA operations.

Examples of internal complaints and grievances include:

- a staff member or volunteer raising concerns about how they have been spoken to or treated by another staff member, volunteer or Board member;
- concerns about unclear roles, unreasonable workload, rostering, supervision, communication or decision-making within FDNA operations;
- a complaint about bullying, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, conflict of interest or inappropriate conduct within the workplace or volunteer environment;
- a disagreement about performance expectations, role boundaries, delegation of tasks or accountability;
- a concern that an internal policy, procedure or code of conduct has not been followed;
- a complaint about confidentiality, privacy, record keeping or access to internal information; or
- a concern about how a previous internal complaint or grievance was managed.

Process:

1. **Initial discussion:** where appropriate and safe, the complainant may be encouraged to raise the concern directly with the other person or with their supervisor, manager or another trusted FDNA representative.
2. **Manager review:** the Operations Manager or authorised person will consider whether the matter can be resolved informally through clarification, support, facilitated discussion, apology, change to process, coaching or other practical action.
3. **Formal handling:** if the matter is serious, repeated, disputed, unresolved or involves possible misconduct, FDNA may appoint a complaint handler or investigator to gather relevant information and make findings or recommendations.
4. **Employment or governance advice:** where the matter involves employment obligations, Board responsibilities, serious misconduct or legal risk, FDNA may seek external advice before deciding an outcome.
5. **Outcome:** FDNA will advise relevant parties of the outcome as appropriate, subject to confidentiality, privacy, employment and procedural fairness obligations.

7. Pathway B: External Member, Participant and Public Complaints

This pathway applies to complaints from or about clubs, members, participants, parents, officials, spectators, visitors and members of the public. It may include concerns about competition administration, communication, team or club conduct, sideline behaviour, officiating, coaching, inclusion, fairness, facilities, services or breaches of codes of behaviour.

Examples of external member, participant and public complaints include:

- A club raising concerns about competition administration, fixturing, grading, team entries, registrations or communication;
- a complaint about sideline behaviour, spectator conduct, unsportsmanlike behaviour or breaches of a code of conduct;
- concerns about umpiring, coaching, selection, facilities, access or inclusion;
- a participant raising concerns about how they were treated by a coach, official, club representative, volunteer, spectator or another participant;
- a complaint about bullying, harassment, discrimination or exclusion involving members, participants, officials, coaches, clubs or spectators;
- a complaint from a member of the public about behaviour at FDNA venues or events;
- a concern about service quality, information provided by FDNA, delays, errors or administration; or
- a complaint about how FDNA responded to an earlier concern.

Process:

1. **Local or early resolution:** where appropriate, minor concerns should be resolved as close as possible to where they occurred. This may involve the relevant club, coach, team manager, official, competition coordinator or FDNA representative.
2. **Informal complaint handling:** FDNA may provide information, clarify rules or expectations, remind parties of codes of behaviour, facilitate communication, observe behaviour, or arrange an informal resolution process.
3. **Formal complaint handling:** formal handling may be required where the matter is serious, repeated, disputed, involves alleged misconduct, raises safety concerns, or cannot be resolved informally.
4. **Referral or escalation:** FDNA may refer or escalate a matter to a club, Netball Victoria, Sport Integrity Australia, Police, child protection, the Commission for Children and Young People, an anti-discrimination body or another appropriate authority where required.

5. **Outcome:** FDNA will advise the complainant and relevant parties of the outcome as appropriate, subject to privacy, confidentiality, child safety and procedural fairness requirements.

8. Informal Resolution Options

Informal resolution may be appropriate where the matter is lower risk, the parties are willing to participate, there is no child safety concern, no serious misconduct is alleged, and there is no risk of victimisation or further harm. Informal resolution may include self-management, supported conversation, explanation, apology, agreement about future behaviour, education, coaching, mediation or practical changes.

FDNA should not use informal resolution where the complaint involves child safety concerns, violence, serious harassment, repeated bullying, discrimination, possible criminal conduct, significant power imbalance, risk of retaliation, or where a formal process is required by policy, law or a governing body.

9. Formal Complaint Handling

Where formal handling is required, FDNA will appoint a suitable person to manage the process. The complaint handler must be impartial, avoid conflicts of interest, understand the relevant policy requirements, and keep appropriate records.

1. Confirm the issues to be considered.
2. Identify the relevant policy, code, rule, contract or obligation.
3. Advise the respondent of the substance of the complaint where required by procedural fairness.
4. Give relevant parties a fair opportunity to provide information.
5. Gather and review relevant documents, records, emails, messages, statements or other information.
6. Consider whether interim action is needed to protect safety, manage risk or prevent further harm.
7. Make findings, recommendations or a decision based on the available information.
8. Record the outcome and communicate it to relevant parties as appropriate.

10. Support, Participation and Procedural Fairness

FDNA will support people to participate in the complaints process in a way that is respectful, accessible and fair. This may include allowing a support person, adjusting communication methods, providing additional time where reasonable, using plain language, considering cultural safety, and supporting children and young people to have their views heard where appropriate.

Parties involved in a complaint are expected to act respectfully, maintain confidentiality, provide honest information, avoid retaliation or victimisation, and cooperate with reasonable requests. FDNA may take action if a person behaves in a way that compromises safety, fairness or the integrity of the process.

11. Outcomes

Complaint outcomes should be fair, proportionate and focused on safety, accountability and improvement. Outcomes may include no further action, explanation, apology, correction, facilitated agreement, behaviour expectations, education, training, warning, restriction, referral, disciplinary action, safety action, child safety action, policy change or process improvement.

12. Review or Appeal

A person may request a review of a complaint outcome where they believe there has been a significant procedural error, relevant information was not considered, the outcome was unreasonable in the circumstances, or there is another review right under FDNA's Constitution, By-laws, employment arrangements, Netball Victoria requirements or another applicable framework.

A review request should be made in writing within a reasonable timeframe and explain the grounds for review. A review is not a full re-hearing unless FDNA determines this is necessary. FDNA may appoint a different person to conduct the review where appropriate.

13. Records and Reporting

FDNA will keep secure records of complaints, assessments, decisions, actions, outcomes, review requests and any follow-up required. Records should be factual, objective and limited to information necessary to manage the complaint. Child safety records must be managed in accordance with FDNA's Child Safety framework and legal requirements.

The Operations Manager may report complaint trends, serious issues, systemic risks and improvement actions to the Board. Reports should generally be de-identified unless identification is necessary for governance, legal, child safety, employment or risk management reasons.

14. Procedure Review

This procedure should be reviewed at least every two years, or earlier if there are changes to legislation, child safety requirements, Netball Victoria requirements, Sport Integrity Australia guidance, Play by the Rules guidance, FDNA operations, or complaint trends indicating that improvements are needed.