



Complaints Handling Program

Guiding Principles for Handling Complaints

To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program that meets our legislative and regulatory obligations and is in line with the Australian complaints handling standard (AS 10002:2022) and the Complaints Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people, published by the National Office for Child Safety (Child-focused Complaints Handling Guide).

When managing a complaint or an appeal, the **School** always aims to apply the following Guiding Principles as set out in AS 10002:2022.

People Focused Approach	We treat complainants with respect and aim to understand the complaint from their point of view. We adopt a proactive approach with respect to handling complaints and are open to feedback on our complaints handling process.
Complainant Involvement	We aim to actively involve complainants in the complaint handling process, as far as practicable, except in cases where complainants wish to remain anonymous.
Transparency and visibility	How to make a complaint and our complaints handling process is communicated to staff, volunteers and contractors, the School community and other relevant interested parties. We provide individual complainants with adequate information about the handling of their complaint.
Accessibility	We aim to make the complaints handling process simple and easily accessible to all. Where appropriate, we also provide support to help

	<p>people make complaints and accept complaints on behalf of complainants by authorised representatives. We make information available in relation to the details of making and resolving complaints and all complaints handling information is easy to understand and use.</p>
No Charge	<p>Access to our complaints handling process is free of charge to the complainant.</p>
Responsiveness	<p>We acknowledge the receipt of complaints in a timely manner and prioritise urgent complaints. We also advise complainants about the complaints process and notify them when we are unable to deal with their matter.</p>
Early Resolution	<p>We aim to resolve complaints, where possible at the first point of contact with our organisation and training is provided to staff to enable early resolution by staff.</p>
Impartiality, Fairness and Equity	<p>We address each complaint, on its merits, in an equitable, objective, fair and unbiased manner through our complaints handling process. We provide avenues for review of the complaint outcome and also an alternative investigator for the complaint where the complainant perceives a conflict of interest, or potential for conflict of interest.</p>
Communication	<p>We provide clear information to staff to help resolve complaints, where possible, at the first point of contact with our organisation.</p>
Conduct of Parties	<p>We have procedures in place to ensure that both staff and complainants remain respectful and courteous during the handling of complaints. This includes procedures for identifying and managing unreasonable conduct by complainants.</p>
Health and Safety of Staff	<p>We take all necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of our staff involved in complaint management.</p>
No Detriment	<p>The complainant will not suffer any detriment as a result of making a complaint.</p>
Information Integrity	<p>We ensure that the information about our complaints handling process is accurate and not misleading, and that data collected is relevant, correct, complete, meaningful and useful.</p>

<p>Confidentiality and Privacy</p>	<p>Personally identifiable information about complainants is only made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint within the School and, unless the complainant consents, actively protected from disclosure. Personal information will be managed in compliance with privacy laws.</p>
<p>Multiple Parties</p>	<p>When complaints involve multiple parties, we work with each party to facilitate an appropriate and timely response to the complaint, subject to privacy and confidentiality obligations.</p>
<p>Accountability</p>	<p>We have established, and maintain, accountability for, and reports on, the School's decisions and actions with respect to complaints handling.</p>
<p>Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>Responding to and learning from complaints is an essential part of the School's commitment to continuous improvement.</p>
<p>Prevention of Ongoing Disputes</p>	<p>We aim to minimise the possibility of unresolved complaints being escalated through adequate staff training, the accessibility of our complaints handling procedures and the availability of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.</p>
<p>Procedural Fairness</p>	<p>Where a complaint specifies actions of a particular staff member, we will apply principles of responsiveness, accessibility, completeness, objectivity, confidentiality and transparency to both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made.</p>
<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>We empower staff to effectively implement our Complaints Handling Program by providing them with the skills, training and education necessary to handle complaints.</p>

We also apply the Guidelines set out in the Child-focused Complaints Handling Guide, to ensure that our complaints handling system upholds the rights of children and young people and meets the requirements of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations in the following ways:

1. Embedding children's rights, safety and wellbeing into the complaints process: creating a child-rights focused complaints culture is the first step in handling complaints involving children and young people.
2. Reporting responsibilities: our complaints handling system clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of our staff and volunteers in meeting their obligations to report and take action to protect the safety of children and young people.

3. Sharing information and communicating with stakeholders: the **School** recognises the importance of sharing information in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and of fulfilling our legislative responsibilities concerning information sharing. We maintain awareness of what information we can share, with whom, and when and how it should be communicated.
4. Confidentiality and privacy: we comply with our legislative obligations to maintain confidentiality and protect the personal information and privacy of children, young people and adults.
5. Managing risks – complaints and incidents: we monitor and reassess the risks to children and young people throughout the complaints process.
6. Conducting investigations involving children and young people: complaints are properly investigated and taken seriously, and children’s rights are safeguarded throughout the investigation process. Investigations are planned, fair, proportionate and thorough, with findings supported by the available evidence.
7. Being fair and objective: an adult’s opinion is not prioritised over a child’s in the event that they differ; children and young people are listened to without judgement and their views are taken seriously.
8. Explaining outcomes and review options: the types of outcomes that are available for different complaints are explained to complainants; the final outcomes of a complaint, the reasons and options for review are clearly explained to the complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint.
9. Record keeping and complaints data: the **School** keeps full and accurate records about complaints involving children and young people, in line with our record keeping obligations. These records are analysed to improve service and identify trends and risks.

In particular, we recognise that children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. The following principles guide the participation of children and young people in any decision-making processes, including our complaints handling process. Participation should:

- bring them no harm
- be voluntary and informed having regard to their age, maturity and capacities
- be responsive to their individual needs
- be respectful of culture and diversity
- be meaningful
- take into account any ethical considerations at the outset and as the process unfolds
- address power imbalances
- include continuous reflection.