



Explaining the complaints process

A guide for MPIOs



Clubs and associations will have their own adapted version of a complaints process that is specific to the size of the organisation and the roles within it. It is advisable that the complaints process for the club or association is well understood before providing options for a person lodging a complaint.

Step 1: Self-management

The person with the complaint tries to resolve the problem directly with the person who has upset them. Self-management of complaints can quickly resolve many lower-level and 'accidental' issues.

Step 2: Obtaining information and support

If a complainant:

- has not been able to sort out the problem themselves
- is not sure how to handle the problem
- wants to talk about the problem and get some more information about what to do
- continues to experience the problem after approaching the other person or people involved;

then the Member Protection Information Officer or someone else with authority in the sporting body is available to provide assistance to listen and provide options (based on the complaints procedures and Member Protection Policy).

Note: State/territory laws state that designated individuals must report allegations or suspected incidents of child abuse. If unsure of your requirements, contact your local child protection agency or the police to seek advice.

Step 3: Informal internal process (low-level resolution)

After talking with a Member Protection Information Officer or someone else with authority in the sporting body, the person with the complaint may decide:

- there is no problem
- the problem is minor and that they do not want to proceed with the matter
- to try and work out their own resolution, with or without support
- to seek an informal mediated resolution with the help of a third person such as a mediator or official.

Step 4: Formal internal process (written complaint and internal investigation)

If the complaint has not been resolved, the complainant may decide to write a formal complaint to the management committee or board of the club or managing body.

A formal procedure is most appropriate when:

- matters have not been satisfactorily resolved at the informal level
- matters involve serious allegations
- the other person denies the allegations
- the person or people being complained about are more senior than the person with the complaint.
- A formal internal complaint usually involves an investigation of the complaint and then recommendations about outcomes.

Step 5: An appeals process

If the person with the complaint or the person complained about is not happy with the process or outcome of the investigation, or any recommended mediation does not result in a mutually acceptable solution, then either party is entitled to appeal.

In an appeals process, the complaint is reheard by a different investigator/decision maker and the decision is reviewed. In most organisations, a person has the right to one internal appeal.

Step 6: External options

If the internal complaint resolution procedure does not achieve a satisfactory resolution or outcome, or if the person with the complaint believes it would be impossible to get an impartial resolution within the sporting organisation, they may approach an external body (such as an anti-discrimination agency) for advice or to lodge a complaint at any time during the process.

Check the specific complaint resolution procedure in your sporting organisation or talk to a Member Protection Information Officer for further information about options.