



5.0 COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

1.0: INTRODUCTION

Complaint handling is an essential part of ensuring that people's rights are being protected as much as it is about ensuring that your sport is safe, fair and inclusive to all its members. A sport that openly provides avenues for complaints, that responds to complaints quickly in an informed, transparent and impartial way and a sport that learns and adapts to issues raised, is a sport that is investing in its future.

2.0: PURPOSE

The main objective of the complaints policy is to maintain responsible behaviour and the making of informed decisions by participants in this club. It outlines our commitment to a person's right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to be safe and protected from abuse.

The policy informs everyone involved in our club of his or her legal and ethical rights and responsibilities and the standards of behaviour that are required. It also covers the care and protection of children participating in our club's activities.

3.0: WHO THE POLICY APPLIES TO

This policy applies to everyone involved in the club including committee members, administrators, coaches, officials (umpires/referees/judges), rowers, parents and spectators.

4.0: EXTENT OF THE POLICY

This policy covers unfair decisions and actions, breaches of the code of behaviour and behaviour that occurs at practice, in the club rooms, at social events organised or sanctioned by the club and on away and overnight trips. It also covers private behaviour where that behaviour brings our club or sport into disrepute or there is suspicion of harm towards a child or young person.



5.0: RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

The club takes all complaints about on and off water behaviour seriously. The club will handle complaints based on the principles of procedural fairness (natural justice), that is:

- all complaints will be taken seriously;
- both the person making the complaint (complainant) and the person the complaint is against (respondent) will be given full details of what is being said against them and have the opportunity to respond (give their side of the story);
- irrelevant matters will not be taken into account;
- decisions will be unbiased and fair; and
- any penalties imposed will be fair and reasonable.

More serious complaints may be escalated to Rowing Victoria for mediation.

If the complaint relates to suspected child abuse, sexual assault or other criminal activity, then the club will need to report the behaviour to the police and/or relevant government authority.

5.1 Complaint Handling Process

When a complaint is received by our club, the person receiving the complaint (e.g. President, Secretary or Treasurer) will:

- listen carefully and ask questions to understand the nature and extent of the problem;
- ask what the complainant would like to happen;
- explain the different options available to help resolve the problem;
- take notes; and
- maintain confidentiality but not necessarily anonymity.

Once the complainant decides on their preferred option for resolution, the club will assist, where appropriate and necessary, with the resolution process. This may involve:

- supporting the person complaining to talk to the person being complained about
- bringing all the people involved in the complaint together to talk objectively through the problem (this could include external mediation);
- gathering more information (e.g. from other people that may have seen the behaviour);
- seeking advice from our district, regional, state and/or national body or from an external agency (e.g. State Department of Sport or anti-discrimination agency);
- referring the complaint to our Rowing Victoria; and/or
- referring the complainant to an external agency such as a community mediation centre, police or anti-discrimination agency.



In situations where a complaint is referred to Rowing Victoria and an investigation is conducted, the club will:

- co-operate fully;
- ensure the complainant and respondent are not victimised;
- where applicable, ensure the complainant is not placed in an unsupervised situation with the respondent(s); and
- act on Rowing Victoria's recommendations.

At any stage of the process, a person can seek advice from or lodge a complaint with an anti-discrimination commission or other external agency.

5.2 Disciplinary Measures

The club will take disciplinary action against anyone found to have breached our policy or made false and malicious allegations. Any disciplinary measure imposed under our policy must:

- Be applied consistent with any rules and requirements;
- Be fair and reasonable;
- Be based on the evidence and information presented and the seriousness of the breach;
- **Be determined by our Constitution, By Laws and the rules of the game.**

Possible measures that may be taken include:

- verbal and/or written apology;
- counselling to address behaviour;
- withdrawal of any awards, placings, records, achievements bestowed in any regattas, activities or events held or sanctioned by the club;
- suspension or termination of membership, participation or engagement in a role or activity;
- de-registration of accreditation for a period of time or permanently;
- any other form of discipline that our club considers reasonable and appropriate.

5.3 Appeals

The complainant or respondent can lodge one appeal against decisions of or disciplinary measures imposed by the club to Rowing Victoria. Appeals must be based on either a denial of natural justice, because of unjust or unreasonable disciplinary measure(s) being imposed, or on the grounds that the decision was not supported by the information/evidence presented and available to the decision maker/club.