



Complaints and Appeals Procedures

1. Introduction

1.1 This document describes the means by which any member or their representative of AFL England can raise a concern with AFL England, or make a complaint. It outlines the responsibilities of the staff involved and offers guidance on good complaints handling practice.

1.2 AFL England also aims to provide the best service possible within the resources available and every member of staff shares the responsibility for achieving this aim. As individuals and as an organisation we all have a responsibility for delivering a high quality of service to the public and it is fully accepted that we need to be responsive to the needs and expectations of members of AFL England to achieve this aim.

1.3 AFL England therefore welcomes compliments, comments, concerns and complaints as they all provide a valuable indication of the quality of service the national governing body is providing. We also recognise that complaints and concerns provide sources of information that enable shortcomings to be addressed to help improve member experience, and which in turn build upon other improvement measures

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals making a complaint or raising a concern with AFL England in respect of any of the services provided by the NGB. It is also applicable to all staff in respect of complaint handling.

3. Aims

3.1 Emphasis in AFL England is placed on resolving complaints as quickly as possible, particularly through an immediate informal response by front line staff where possible, or through subsequent investigation and conciliation, by staff who are empowered to deal with complaints as they arise.

3.2 AFL England has a responsibility to ensure that individuals have easy access to information about how to raise a concern or make a complaint and that issues are responded to properly, fairly and justly without prejudice.

3.3 It should be recognised that individuals can at times feel vulnerable, and may feel that their involvement will be affected if they complain. Staff should do everything they can to dispel this impression, for example, by actively seeking members' views on their involvement and by being open and responsive to members' needs. It is essential that members' and their clubs understand that they have a right to complain without fear of discrimination or effect on their membership, and all necessary assurance should be provided in this regard. AFL England will always respond to a complaint in a non-defensive and open manner.

3.4 AFL England's complaints procedure is intended to be accessible, open, thorough and prompt. Responses sent to members, although aiming at conciliation will be factual, accurate and sensitive to the feelings of staff involved but will offer apologies where shortcomings in service have clearly arisen.

3.5 AFL England aims to provide service users with easy access to a simple and efficient complaints procedure encompassing all aspects of Australian Rules provision in England

4. Disputes between AFL England organisations

4.1. If any difference of opinion shall arise between AFL England organisations relating to the performance by either party of its obligations or entitlements, such dispute shall be referred in the first instance to be resolved by mediation at each party's equal expense.



4.2. If not resolved by this means within 30 Business Days, then it (or any remaining issue/s arising from any such dispute or difference on which agreement cannot be reached) shall be referred to be dealt with and determined by arbitration, the costs of which shall be borne and payable by the party against whom any relevant award is then made.

4.3. Any such mediation or arbitration shall be referred to and conducted by such person as shall be appointed by agreement between the parties or in the absence of such agreement

4.4. Any person so appointed to arbitrate shall act as an expert and their decision shall accordingly be binding for all purposes on the parties.

4.5. Any such referral for mediation or arbitration shall be deemed to be commenced by either party giving notice to the other requiring such a referral.

5. Duties, Roles and Responsibilities of Staff involved in Complaint Handling

5.1 The President has corporate responsibility for the process of complaint investigation but day-to-day authority in this respect is delegated to the Secretary. The President signs all complaint responses, especially those graded as being high risk, but where necessary the approval and signing of complaint responses will be delegated to the Secretary.

5.2 The Secretary is responsible for:-

- Review of new complaints, logging and production of summary details (front sheet) for guidance.
- Liaison with the appropriate League or Club to initiate investigation.
- Liaison with complainants in an endeavour to resolve matters without delay, where this is the agreed outcome requested by the complainant.
- Responding to telephone enquiries, negotiate timeframes, agree outcomes and ensure the complainant is advised of progress or any delay which will require amendment to the plan.
- Ensuring that a thorough investigation has been made into each issue raised by a complainant and preparation of suitable draft responses to be sent to the President for approval, with any necessary supporting documentation, within the time frame agreed with the complainant.
- Identifying where procedural changes have been made as a result of a complaint investigation and ensuring the necessary evidence is obtained and forwarded.

5.3 The Complaints Panel membership comprises:

- One Non-Executive Director (Chair)
- AFL England President
- League President
- Safeguarding Officer
- Secretary

5.4 All Staff within AFL England have a role in:

- Immediately responding to concerns and complaints when these are raised directly with them, and to try to provide resolution, or escalate matters to the most senior member of staff at the time.
- Signposting the complainant to the Secretary when issues cannot be immediately resolved.
- Being familiar with the process available to members or their representatives
- Co-operating with Secretary to assist in the resolution of concerns and complaints in a timely manner.
- Providing an account, or statement, in respect of events under investigation within 5 working days of such a request being made.



6. Procedure for dealing with complaints

- 6.1 All written or serious verbal complaints should be referred immediately to the President.
- 6.2 The complaint will be logged in a central register by the Secretary and allocated a sequential number.
- 6.3 An acknowledgement letter will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days of receipt signed by the President or delegated officer.
- 6.4 All concerns either verbal or written will be forwarded to Secretary if the complainant wishes to be offered the option of an informal resolution rather than to formalise a complaint. The Secretary will seek to contact the complainant and where the complainant agrees will seek to resolve concerns within an agreed timescale. If the individual is not satisfied, and issues cannot be resolved informally, the complaint will be referred by the Secretary to the President to process via the formal complaints process. If the complainant cannot be contacted directly, due to lack of a telephone number, or repeated attempts fail when endeavouring to telephone on the number provided then the necessary information will be included in AFL England's acknowledgement letter.
- 6.5 The Secretary will identify the Department involved. A copy of the complaint letter will be sent together with a request for an investigation and draft response. The Secretary on behalf of the President will undertake this.
- 6.6 Where a complaint is made about a member of staff or where the complainant addresses a procedure that involves a member of staff in a responsible role then the nature and details of that complaint must be discussed with the staff member and statements obtained, where appropriate, as part of the investigation.
- 6.7 It is often extremely worrying and stressful for staff who have a complaint made against them and staff should be offered support and reassurance throughout the investigation process.
- 6.8 Staff are entitled to feedback from their line manager on the outcome of the complaint and on the final reply to the complainant. It is also the line manager's responsibility to ensure that staff are made aware in respect of the invoking of disciplinary procedures as a result of a complaint.
- 6.9 Draft responses, statements and other information requested must be returned to the Secretary within the designated timescale.
- 6.10 The Secretary shall finalise the draft response to the complaint, prior to scrutiny by the President ensuring that:
- All issues raised by the complainant have been addressed,
 - Similar terminology to that used by the complainant is used,
 - Clear explanations and details of remedial actions are given,
 - A sympathetic and apologetic tone is used and apologies given where appropriate.
 - Ensuring any identified action for follow up is in place
 - Identification and consideration of redress where called for

7. If the Complainant remains dissatisfied

- 7.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the response, a number of courses of action can be followed and it is incumbent upon AFL England to give guidance in this respect.
- 7.2 A further investigation can be undertaken in respect of any outstanding concerns and a second written response forwarded accordingly from the President if the complainant is happy with this proposal