

Woollahra Sailing Club

Complaints & Grievance Procedure

Approved by: Woollahra Sailing Club Board

Effective from: 01 September, 2026

Review date: before 31st August, 2027

Definitions:

Members includes all sailors, paddlers, volunteers, coaches, instructors, officials, staff, leaseholders.

1. Purpose

Woollahra Sailing Club (Club) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, inclusive and enjoyable environment for all Members, paddlers, sailors, volunteers, coaches, instructors, officials, visitors and guests.

The purpose of this Complaints & Grievance Procedure is to provide a clear, fair and accessible process for dealing with concerns, complaints and grievances arising from Club activities, facilities, conduct or administration.

The procedure is intended to:

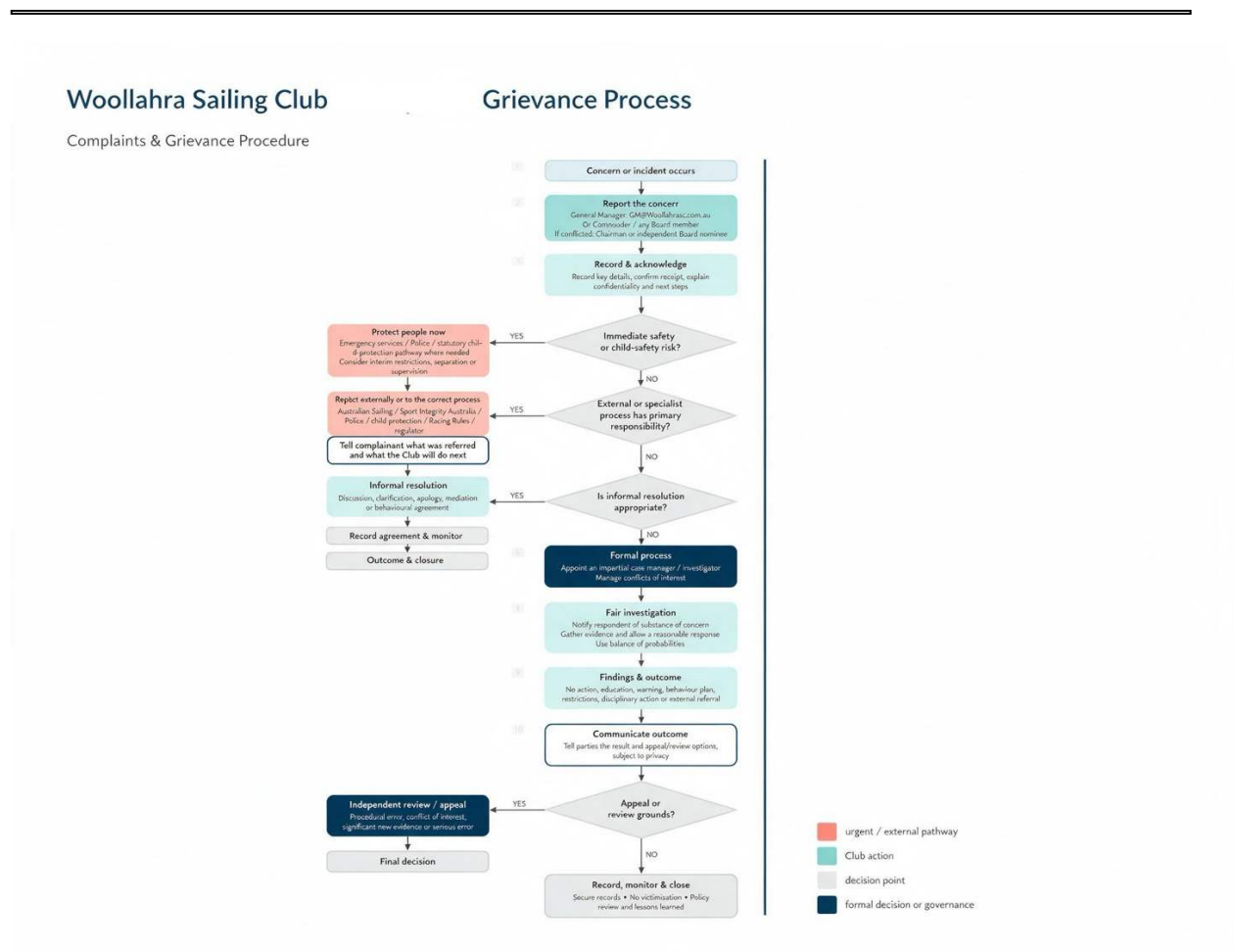
- Encourage concerns to be raised early and resolved where possible.
 - Provide a fair and consistent process for dealing with complaints.
 - Protect complainants, respondents and witnesses from victimisation.
 - Ensure matters are handled appropriately, confidentially and as promptly as reasonably possible.
 - Provide natural justice to all parties.
 - Identify matters that should be referred to Australian Sailing, Sport Integrity Australia, police, government authorities or another appropriate body.
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2. Scope

This procedure applies to Members, directors, officers, volunteers, coaches, instructors, officials, employees, visitors and guests participating in or connected with Club activities.

It applies to matters arising from:

- Sailing.
- Paddling, including surfskis and kayaks.
- Training and coaching.
- Racing and competition.
- Use of Club facilities.
- Boat, kayak and equipment storage.
- Club events and activities.
- Member interactions.
- Club administration and governance.
- Social media and electronic communications where there is a sufficient connection with the Club.
- Alleged breaches of the Club Code of Conduct, Club rules or policies.



Roles and responsibilities

Stage	Responsible role	Required responsibility
Report received	General Manager, Commodore or Board member	Receive the concern respectfully, avoid promises about confidentiality, identify urgent risks and forward it for assessment.
Conflict check	Receiving contact and Board	Check whether the person receiving or managing the complaint is involved, has a personal interest or has another conflict.
Alternative contact	Chairman of the Board	Take responsibility where the General Manager, Commodore or another Board member is involved or conflicted.
Independent assistance	Independent person nominated by the Board	Manage or advise on a matter where internal independence, expertise or impartiality is required.
Initial assessment	Board or authorised manager	Decide jurisdiction, safety response, external referral, informal resolution, formal investigation or another Club procedure.
Interim measures	Board or authorised decision-maker	Put proportionate safeguards in place without treating them as a finding of misconduct.
Informal resolution	General Manager, Commodore or authorised Board representative	Clarify expectations, facilitate discussion or mediation, record the agreed outcome and monitor compliance.
Formal investigation	Impartial investigator appointed by the Board	Gather evidence, interview relevant people, maintain confidentiality and provide the respondent a fair opportunity to respond.
Decision-maker	Authorised Board decision-maker with no conflict	Consider the evidence, apply the balance-of-probabilities standard and determine the outcome.

Stage	Responsible role	Required responsibility
Disciplinary action	Board under the Constitution and Disciplinary Procedure	Apply proportionate consequences and ensure any suspension, exclusion or removal follows the governing documents.
External referral	Board or authorised officer	Refer matters to Australian Sailing, Sport Integrity Australia, police, child protection authorities, Transport for NSW or another appropriate authority.
Communication	Case manager or authorised Board representative	Acknowledge receipt, provide progress updates, communicate the final outcome and explain appeal or review options.
Records	General Manager or nominated records custodian	Maintain secure records of the complaint, evidence, findings, outcome, referral and appeal.

3. Matters Outside This Procedure

Club will not attempt to deal internally with a matter where another process or authority has primary responsibility. This includes:

- Child safety or child protection concerns.
- Alleged conduct potentially covered by the Australian Sailing National Integrity Framework.
- Matters involving discrimination or other integrity complaints requiring Sport Integrity Australia consideration.
- Criminal conduct, violence, threats or immediate danger.
- Racing-rule protests, hearings or competition-specific disputes.
- Employment matters.
- Matters governed by the Club Constitution or a separate disciplinary process.

Australian Sailing's current complaints framework distinguishes National Integrity Framework matters from matters such as personal grievances, selection disputes, competition rules and other Club-level issues.

Where a matter potentially falls within the National Integrity Framework, Club will assess whether it should be referred to Australian Sailing or Sport Integrity Australia rather than attempting to manage it solely as a Club complaint.

4. Principles

All complaints will be handled in accordance with the following principles.

4.1 Fairness

All parties will be treated fairly and respectfully.

4.2 Natural Justice

A person against whom an allegation is made will generally be:

- Told the substance of the allegation.
- Given a reasonable opportunity to respond.
- Given a reasonable opportunity to provide relevant information or evidence.
- Given a decision based on the information available.
- Treated impartially.

4.3 Confidentiality

Information relating to a complaint will be kept confidential as far as reasonably practicable.

Information may be disclosed where necessary to:

- Investigate the complaint.
- Obtain legal or professional advice.
- Protect the safety or wellbeing of a person.
- Comply with a legal obligation.
- Report a matter to police, a government authority, Australian Sailing or Sport Integrity Australia.
- Implement a decision or disciplinary outcome.

Confidentiality does not mean that information can never be disclosed.

4.4 No Victimisation

No person may be disadvantaged, threatened, bullied or victimised because they:

- Make a genuine complaint.
- Raise a safety concern.
- Participate in an investigation.
- Provide evidence or information.

- Support another person making a complaint.

4.5 Timeliness

The Club will acknowledge a complaint within two business days where practicable and will provide the complainant with the next step or an expected update date. Complex or serious matters may take longer to resolve.

4.6 Proportionality

The Club will seek to resolve matters at the lowest appropriate level while recognising that serious allegations may require a formal investigation or external referral.

5. Who Can Make a Complaint?

A complaint may be made by:

- A Club Member.
- A staff member.
- A parent or guardian on behalf of a child or young person.
- A sailor or paddler participating in a Club activity.
- A volunteer, coach, instructor or official.
- A visitor or guest.
- A person directly affected by Club conduct or an incident.

A person who witnesses concerning conduct may also report the matter to the Club.

Where appropriate, the Club may act on information received even where the person who initially raises the concern does not wish to make a formal complaint.

6. How to raise a concern

A concern or complaint may be made verbally or in writing to the General Manager at **GM@Woollahrasc.com.au**, or to the Commodore or any Board member.

If the concern involves the General Manager, Commodore or a Board member, it may be made to the Chairman of the Board or an independent person nominated by the Board. A person who receives a complaint must promptly record it, check for conflicts of interest and refer it for assessment.

The Club will acknowledge the complaint, assess any immediate safety risk, determine the correct internal or external pathway and explain the next steps. The Club will not

require a person to confront another person where that would be unsafe, unreasonable or inappropriate.

The General Manager must refer the matter to the Commodore or Chairman of the Board where the complaint involves the General Manager, a Board member, a child-safety concern, a potential criminal offence, a National Integrity Framework matter or a matter requiring formal investigation.

A complaint may initially be made verbally.

The Club may subsequently ask the complainant to provide the complaint in writing so that the matter can be properly understood and investigated.

Where possible, the complaint should include:

- The complainant's name and contact details.
- The name of the person or persons involved.
- A description of what happened.
- The date, time and location.
- Names of witnesses.
- Relevant documents, photographs, messages or other evidence.
- Any action already taken.
- The outcome the complainant is seeking, if applicable.

7. Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, minor or low-level concerns may be resolved informally.

Examples may include:

- A disagreement between Members.
- A misunderstanding.
- Minor inappropriate behaviour.
- A storage or facility dispute.
- A communication issue.

Informal resolution may involve:

- Discussion with the people involved.

- Clarification of Club rules.
- An apology.
- Mediation.
- An agreement about future behaviour.
- A direction from the Board or General Manager.

A complainant will not be required to confront another person directly where doing so would be inappropriate, unsafe or unreasonable.

8. Formal Complaint

A formal process may be commenced where:

- Informal resolution is inappropriate or unsuccessful.
- The allegation is serious.
- There is an alleged significant breach of the Code of Conduct.
- There is a repeated pattern of behaviour.
- There is a significant safety concern.
- The complainant requests a formal process.
- The Board considers that formal investigation is appropriate.

The Board must appoint a person who is suitably independent, impartial and capable of managing the matter. The appointee must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest before accepting the role.

Board members who are complainants, respondents, witnesses or otherwise conflicted must not receive confidential case information beyond what is necessary for governance, participate in the investigation or vote on the outcome.

9. Initial Assessment

Upon receiving a complaint, the Club will conduct an initial assessment to determine:

1. Whether the matter falls within the Club's jurisdiction.
2. Whether immediate action is required to protect someone's safety or wellbeing.
3. Whether the matter should be referred externally.

4. Whether informal resolution is appropriate.
5. Whether a formal investigation is required.
6. Whether the matter should be dealt with under another Club policy or procedure.

The initial assessment should normally be completed within five business days. If this is not practicable, the Club will advise the complainant of the reason for the delay and provide a revised timeframe.

The Club may seek advice from Australian Sailing, Sport Integrity Australia, legal advisers or other appropriate bodies where necessary.

10. Immediate and Interim Measures

Where necessary, the Club may take reasonable interim measures while a complaint is being considered.

These may include:

- Temporarily restricting a person's participation in a particular activity.
- Altering training arrangements.
- Separating Members involved in a dispute.
- Restricting access to particular Club facilities.
- Changing coaching or supervision arrangements.
- Temporarily suspending a person's Club privileges.

Interim measures are not a finding that a person has breached the Code of Conduct.

They may be taken where reasonably necessary to protect people, Club operations, property or the integrity of the investigation.

11. Investigation

Where a formal investigation is required, the person appointed to investigate may:

- Interview the complainant.
- Interview the respondent.
- Interview relevant witnesses.
- Review photographs, videos, emails, messages or other documents.

- Review Club records.
- Inspect relevant equipment or facilities.
- Obtain information from coaches, officials or other relevant persons.

The investigator should remain impartial and should not have a personal interest in the matter.

The respondent will be given a reasonable opportunity to respond to allegations that may result in adverse findings.

12. Findings

At the conclusion of an investigation, the investigator or authorised decision-maker will determine whether the available evidence supports the allegation.

The possible findings may include:

- **Substantiated:** the allegation is supported on the balance of probabilities.
- **Not substantiated:** the evidence does not establish the allegation on the balance of probabilities.
- **Unfounded:** the evidence indicates the alleged conduct did not occur.
- **Unable to determine:** there is insufficient reliable evidence to reach a conclusion.

A complaint must not be treated as malicious merely because it is not substantiated.

The standard generally applied to Club disciplinary matters will be the **balance of probabilities** — whether it is more likely than not that the conduct occurred.

13. Outcome

Where a complaint is substantiated, the Club may:

- Require an apology.
- Provide education or counselling.
- Issue a formal warning.
- Establish behavioural expectations.
- Restrict participation in activities.
- Restrict access to Club facilities.

- Cease membership
- Impose disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- Refer the matter to Australian Sailing, Sport Integrity Australia or another appropriate authority.

Where a complaint is not substantiated, the Club may nevertheless take reasonable steps to prevent future conflict or address underlying issues.

The case manager will agree with the complainant and respondent how updates will be provided. If there is no substantive update, the case manager will provide a progress update at least every 10 business days, subject to safety, privacy and external-process requirements.

The complainant should generally be informed that the matter has been finalised and, subject to privacy considerations, whether action has been taken.

14. Frivolous, Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

The Club will not tolerate complaints made for the purpose of harassing, intimidating or unfairly disadvantaging another person.

A complaint will not be considered malicious merely because it is not substantiated.

Where the Club determines that a complaint was knowingly false, malicious or vexatious, that conduct may itself constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

15. Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complainant may request to withdraw a complaint.

The Club will consider the request.

However, the Club may continue to investigate or take action where:

- There is a significant safety concern.
 - The matter involves a child or young person.
 - There is a legal or reporting obligation.
 - The alleged conduct may affect other Members.
 - The Board considers that action is necessary to protect the Club or its Members.
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16. Appeals and Review

A person who is subject to a disciplinary finding may seek review or appeal in accordance with the Club Disciplinary Procedure.

An appeal or review request must be made in writing within 10 business days of notification of the decision. It must identify the ground relied upon and any supporting information. The appeal will be determined by a person or panel independent of the original decision, with no conflict of interest.

A complainant may request a review where there is evidence that:

- The procedure was not followed.
- A significant conflict of interest existed.
- Significant new evidence has become available.
- The outcome was affected by a serious procedural error.

An appeal or review is not an opportunity simply to repeat the original complaint or disagreement with the outcome.

17. External Referral

Nothing in this procedure prevents a person from making a complaint directly to an external authority.

Where appropriate, Club may refer matters to:

- Australian Sailing.
- Sport Integrity Australia.
- Police.
- Child protection authorities.
- Transport for NSW or another relevant regulator.
- Other government agencies or statutory authorities.

Where a matter falls under the National Integrity Framework, the Club will follow the applicable Australian Sailing/Sport Integrity Australia pathway. Australian Sailing currently directs complaints involving child safeguarding and discrimination to Sport Integrity Australia, while other relevant integrity complaints are managed through the applicable sailing integrity process.

Where a matter may fall within an external integrity, child-safety, criminal or regulatory pathway, the Club must seek advice or make the referral as soon as reasonably practicable and must not delay referral while attempting informal resolution.

18. Records

The Club will maintain appropriate records of complaints, investigations, outcomes and disciplinary actions.

Records will be stored securely and access will be restricted to authorised persons.

Records should include:

- The complaint.
 - Relevant evidence.
 - Investigation notes.
 - Findings.
 - Decisions.
 - Disciplinary outcomes.
 - Appeals or reviews.
 - External referrals.
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19. Responsibilities of the Board

The Board is responsible for ensuring that:

- This procedure is implemented.
- Complaints are handled fairly and consistently.
- Conflicts of interest are identified and managed.
- Appropriate records are maintained.
- Serious matters are referred to the appropriate external authority.
- Members are aware of how to raise concerns.
- The procedure is reviewed periodically.

The Board may appoint a Complaints Officer, Member Protection Information Officer or other suitably qualified person to assist with complaint management.

20. Review

This procedure will be reviewed periodically by the Club Board and updated where necessary to reflect changes to legislation, Australian Sailing requirements, Sport Integrity Australia requirements or Club operations.

Woollahra Sailing Club Board