

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY PORT LINCOLN RACING CLUB



To be used in conjunction with the Complaints Management Procedure

1 Introduction

The Port Lincoln Race Club Inc. provides an extensive range of services and infrastructure to the racing industry and extended community.

The Club is committed to the provision of quality service to customers and regards complaints as an opportunity to improve facilities, practices and procedures as well as resolve the matter. The aim of this policy is to provide a fair, consistent and structured process for the Club's customers if they are dissatisfied with a Club action, decision or service. Lessons learnt from complaint investigations will be used to directly improve facilities, practices and service.

Emphasis will be placed on resolving complaints as quickly as possible. However, where complaints cannot be settled in the first instance the Club will ensure that they are dealt with through appropriate, more formal procedures by staff, with the authority to make decisions. This procedure is broadly consistent with the Australian Standard for complaint handling.

1.1 Principles Underlying the Policy

This policy is based on five principles, which will be fundamental in the way the Club approaches complaint handling. They are:

- Fairness: treating complainants fairly, requires impartiality, confidentiality and transparency at all stages of the process
- Accessibility: to be accessible there must be clear public awareness about the Club's policy and a range of contact options
- Responsiveness: this will be achieved by providing sufficient resources, well trained staff and review and improvement of the systems
- Efficiency: complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible, while ensuring that they are dealt with at a level that reflects their appropriate level of complexity
- Integration: of different areas of the Club where the complaint overlaps functional responsibilities

2 Interpretation

The Club or PLRC refers to the Port Lincoln Race Club Inc.

Employee includes a person employed directly by the Club in a full time, part time or casual capacity (whether that position is permanent or contractual) and persons providing services to, or on behalf of, the Club even though they may be employed by another party

Business Day means a day when the Club is normally open for business.

3 Definition of a Complaint

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service delivered by the Club or its representatives that has failed to reach the standard stated, implied or expected. This includes complaints about a service that has been, or should have been delivered.

The Club also receives service requests and feedback across all areas of operations and clarification may be necessary to make the distinction for the purposes of this policy.

Complaints which are determined to be about matters that are not the Club's responsibility will not be handled under this policy.

A **Request for Service** is an application to have the Club or its representative take some form of action to provide a Club service.

Feedback can take the form of comments, both positive and negative, about services provided by the Club without necessarily requiring a corrective action, change of services or formal review of a decision. Feedback may, however, influence future service reviews and delivery methods.

Where the Club has failed to meet the normal standards for a service which has been, or should have been, delivered this policy and the associated procedures apply.

4 The Club's Commitment to Complaint Handling

The Club welcomes complaints as a way of improving its services and programs as well as providing an opportunity to put things right. This policy will be made accessible to ensure that customers are fully aware of their right to complain. Information about how to lodge a complaint will be placed in a prominent position on the Club's website.

Except for minor level 1 responses, (See 6 Procedures for resolving complaints) the Club will whenever practicably possible try to ensure that, whenever possible, complaints will be handled independently of the original decision-maker or club person involved in the matter that is the subject of the complaint.

A person can make a complaint in a number of ways:

- In person to a PLRC employee, manager or board member
- Telephone
- Email
- Letter
- Visit the Club's Administration Office
- Complete and return the appropriate form on the PLRC website

All complaints will be recorded in the Club's records management system in such a way that the information can also be analysed for service improvement opportunities.

Complainants will be advised of the likely timeframe required to investigate and resolve a complaint and regularly updated as to progress where necessary.

Employees will be trained to manage complaints efficiently and effectively, and provided with a level of delegated authority appropriate for the nature of complaints they are expected to resolve.

4.1 Seven steps of the complaint handling process

The following steps will be followed by staff to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively:

- Acknowledge complaints promptly
- Assess the complaint - simple problems may not need to be investigated
- Conduct an investigation where one is warranted
- Respond to the complainant via the appropriate channel – in person, phone, email etc
- Follow up any customer service concerns with parties involved
- Consider whether there are systemic issues which need correction
- Action any changes required

5 Timeframes for Response

Where a complaint cannot be resolved immediately the complainant will be advised of the process to be undertaken. The Club will respond within [10] business days, acknowledging receipt of the complaint and, where possible, resolving it at that time. If a resolution is not possible at that time, the complainant will be kept regularly informed of progress, either by email, letter or in person.

6 Procedures for resolving complaints

Complaints may vary greatly in their level of complexity and seriousness. Wherever possible complaints will be resolved when first reported, but if necessary, staff will escalate complaint handling as set out below.

The complaints procedure consists of a three-tiered scheme.

1. *Immediate response to resolve the complaint*

All staff are empowered to handle complaints in the first instance and it is preferable that they are dealt with promptly at the initial point of contact and at the appropriate staffing level.

2. *Complaint escalated to a more senior staff member*

A complaint will be directed to a more senior staff member in the PLRC, where circumstances indicate that the complaint would be more appropriately handled at a higher level. This may occur, for example, where a staff member has been involved in the matter that is the subject of the complaint, where the complaint is about an issue that requires a decision to be made at a more senior level, or where a complaint concerns a matter that ranges across more than one PLRC work area.

3. *Board review of the complaint*

This process is generally a last resort in the complaint handling process, but may also be used in situations which are not able to be resolved by other means, such as a complaint about a decision of the Chair/ Administration Manager or Board member.

The Club's detailed Complaints Management Procedure is available to the public. See *13 Further Information* below

While the Club prefers to work with its customers to resolve complaints quickly and effectively, a complainant will always retain the right to seek other forms of resolution, such as taking legal action at any time.

6.1 Alternative Procedures

There are also other complaint procedures which apply to particular types of complaints. If the complaint would be more properly dealt with by another process this will be explained to the complainant at the outset. For example:

- Complaints against the Club
- Insurance claims
- Decisions made under legislation

7 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

All complaints received by the Club will be treated seriously and complainants will be treated courteously. However, occasionally the conduct of a complainant can be unreasonable. This may take the form of unreasonable persistence, unreasonable demands, lack of cooperation, argumentative or threatening behaviour. What can be termed 'unreasonable' will vary depending on a number of factors and the Club aims to manage these situations in a fair and equitable manner.

Where a complainant's behaviour consumes an unwarranted amount of the Club resources or impedes the investigation of their complaint, a decision may be made to apply restrictions on contact with the person. Before making any decision to restrict contact, the complainant will be warned that, if the specified behaviour(s) or actions continue, restrictions may be applied.

Any decision to suspend action on a complaint will be made by the Board and will be communicated in writing to the complainant.

8 Using Complaints to Improve Service

Quality of service is an important measure of the Club's effectiveness. Learning from complaints is a powerful way of helping to develop the PLRC and increase trust among the people who use our services.

In addition to making changes to procedures and practices where appropriate, the Club will review and evaluate the information gained through its complaints handling system on an annual basis to identify systemic issues and improvements to service. The Club will receive a report on the number and nature of complaints received, including the percentage of unresolved complaints, at least once a year.

Where appropriate, complainants will be provided with an explanation of changes proposed or made as a result of the investigation of their complaint.

9 Privacy and Confidentiality

Complainants have a right to expect that their complaint will be investigated in private, to the extent possible. The identity of complainants will be made known only to those who need to know in the process of investigating and resolving the complaint. The complaint will not be revealed or made public by the Club, except where required by law.

10 Remedies

Where complaints are found to be justified the Club will, where practicable, remedy the situation in a manner which is consistent and fair for both the Club and complainants. The solution chosen will be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances.

As a general principle the complainant should, so far as possible, be put in the position he or she would have been in, had things not gone wrong. This may mean providing the desired service or changing a decision. Sometimes, however, it may only be possible to offer an apology.

Compensation will only be offered in cases where the loss or suffering is considered substantial. The Board are the only authorised mechanism to offer financial compensation and may consult with the Port Lincoln Race Club Inc. insurers or legal representatives before taking any such action.

11 Alternative remedies

The Club may seek to use alternative dispute resolution methods such as mediation to resolve a complaint in circumstances where the Chair/ Administration Manager or his/her delegate deems such a course of action appropriate and the complainant is amenable to that process.

When advising a complainant of the outcome of an investigation of a complaint, the Club will provide information about alternative remedies, including any rights of appeal.

12 Review and evaluation

In order to ensure the Club continues to provide the best possible complaints handling service for its customers, this policy will be subject to periodic evaluation and review.

13 Further information

This policy and the Complaints Management Procedure will be available for inspection at the Club administration offices during ordinary business hours and available to be downloaded, free of charge, from the Club's website: www.portlincoln racingclub.com.au

Copies will be provided to interested parties upon request.
Review of this policy was completed April 2019.