

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare

Grievance Policy

INTRODUCTION This document provides information on handling grievances at Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc, including how to submit a grievance, how to deal with a grievance and how to support persons through the grievance process. It is inevitable that conflict can occur in the workplace. It is important that there are established procedures to deal with such occurrences quickly to protect the people involved and to protect our organisation. This policy considers responses to grievances and complaints, harassment and workplace bullying (see definitions below).

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT? A complaint is an expression of concern, dissatisfaction or frustration with the quality or delivery of a service, a policy or procedure, or the conduct of another person.

WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT? Any person can make a complaint. This can include staff, volunteers, customers, community members or committee members.

HOW CAN COMPLAINTS BE MADE? Most complaints are reported as verbal grievances about minor matters that can be resolved informally. Ideally, these should be resolved informally with the Grievance Officers. All grievances should be dealt with according to 'Best Practice' see Appendix I.

If there is a feeling that the complaint needs to be formalised, the complaint must be lodged in writing within 14 business days of the cause or trigger for the complaint.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A COM- PLAINT IS RE- CEIVED?

The Executive Committee appoints two Grievance Officers (one male and one female) annually. The Grievance Officers are responsible for:

- setting up a facilitation process for grievances between the affected parties, as necessary (see below)
- monitoring the well-being of all parties involved in, or affected by the complaint
- They should ideally be trained in or at least be familiar with the skills of Conflict Resolution.

Complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible. It is reasonable that informal attempts to resolve a complaint should take place within two weeks.

With an initial complaint, the President and/or chair of the Human Resources sub-committee is able to provide initial advice on how an issue is to be dealt with and to assist with resolution, if necessary. **If resolution is not achieved, the complaint is referred to the President and/or chair of the Human Resources sub-committee in consultation with the complainant.**

If an *informal complaint* is received, the President and/or chair of the Human Resources sub-committee will determine whether it is a matter that can be resolved informally, or whether it should be dealt with by the Grievance Officers. If a *formal* complaint is lodged (in writing), the President and/or chair of the Human Resources sub-committee will refer the complaint to the Grievance Officers to be considered and dealt with at the earliest possible time.

The Grievance Officers will notify the Executive Committee of any grievance referred to them and convene a meeting of the persons involved as necessary.

All parties are entitled to have a support person present. This meeting will seek to resolve the complaint in a manner that is agreed to by all involved and if necessary reconvene until a solution is agreed upon.

Detailed minutes of these meetings together with the original complaint and copies of documents related to all formal complaints are to be kept securely by Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc.

All parties to a complaint must treat the matter confidentially. This means that all parties ensure that information is restricted to those engaged in the resolution.

DEFINITIONS **Grievance**—an actual or perceived wrong considered as grounds for complaint.

Complaint—an expression of concern, dissatisfaction or frustration with the quality or delivery of service, a policy or procedure, or the conduct of another person.

Harassment—any form of ongoing behaviour that is not welcome, not asked for or not returned, and that offends, intimidates or humiliates a person. It includes sexual harassment.

Workplace Bullying—an employee is subject to workplace bullying if the person is subjected to repeated behaviour by another person, including the employee’s supervisor, a co-worker, committee / member or a member of the community that:

- is unwelcome + unsolicited;
 - the person considers to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening; and
 - a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.
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- **Conflict Resolution** – or ‘win/ win’ - procedures for achieving outcomes of grievances or solutions to conflicts where both/all parties feel valued.

AUTHORISATION: This version approved on: 18 April 2018 This policy is to be reviewed: November 2023

Authorised by: Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare President Barry Powells

Signature



Appendix I : **Grievance handling – Best Practice** (*this section is based on Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW guidelines*)

All grievances must be handled:

- Confidentially
- Impartially
- Fast
- According to a clear policy / procedure that everyone knows about.

If you have to handle a grievance, you should keep the above rules in mind – *always*.

Then you should go through the following steps:

1. Get full information from the ‘complainant’ about their grievance and how they want it resolved ... listen, listen, listen.
2. Decide whether you are the appropriate person to continue handling the grievance.
3. If yes, put the information you’ve received from the complainant to the person / people they’re complaining about and get their side of the story.
4. Decide whether the complaint is valid or not (this may involve talking with others / witnesses).
5. Decide how the complaint should be resolved (again this may involve talking with others – eg management committee).
6. Act on your decision, letting both parties know what is going to happen and why, and telling them about other / external avenues of complaint if they are not happy with your decision.
7. Monitor the outcome.

For further information on Conflict Resolution see:

Cornelius, Helena and Shoshana Faire (2007). *Everyone Can Win: Responding to Conflict Constructively*. Simon and Schuster.