

# **Complaint Management Policy & Procedure**

Date adopted: 20.1.2018 Date for review:



## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Purpose**

This policy is intended to ensure Goolawah Cooperative handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively. It provides guidance to members, guests and visitors who wish to make a complaint against another member.

### **1.2. Scope**

The policy applies to all members, guests and visitors of Goolawah Cooperative wishing to lodge a complaint.

### **1.3. Commitment**

All Cooperative members and their guests have agreed to abide by the Goolawah Cooperative Code of Conduct. The Cooperative is committed to upholding the Code of Conduct. It ensures members, guests and visitors feel safe within Goolawah Co-operative, are treated with respect and integrity, and have the right to speak and be heard in a safe environment.

### **1.4. References**

Delegation Manual for Directors & Office Holders 4.1/4.2; Goolawah Cooperative Ltd Rules - Disputes and Mediation, Fines Payable by Members, Expulsion of Members; By-law 10A iv), Code of Conduct Jan 2017, Department of Fair Trading Fact Sheets - Running a Cooperative Dec 2017 & Managing Cooperative Disputes Dec 2017, Community Justice Centre Fact Sheets, The Law Society of NSW Mediation.

## **2. Guiding principles**



### **2.1. Facilitate complaints**

#### **People focus**

The Cooperative is committed to receiving and dealing with complaints within a reasonable time frame. Members, guests and visitors making complaints will be;

- provided with information about the complaint management procedure
- provided with accessible ways to make complaints
- listened to, treated with respect and be actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for decision/s and any options for redress or review.

## **Accessibility**

The Cooperative will ensure that information about how complaints may be made is well publicised, and that the complaint management procedures are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly to those who may require assistance.

A member, guest or visitor may be represented by another person in the resolution of their complaint under exceptional circumstances.

## **2.2. Respond to complaints**

### **Early resolution**

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with the Board.

### **Responsiveness**

The Board will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints, assessing in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

The Board is committed to managing the safety of members, guest and visitors, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints procedure
- the expected time frames for action
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

The Board will advise a member, guest or visitor as soon as possible when they are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

The Board will also advise as soon as possible when they are unable to meet time frames for responding to the complaint and the reason for the delay.

### **Confidentiality**

The Cooperative may protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information will only be disclosed or used by the Cooperative as permitted under the Cooperative's Privacy Policy.

## **2.3. Managing the parties**

### **Empowerment**

The Board and the Complaints Management Team are empowered to implement the complaint management procedure as relevant to their role and responsibilities outlined by the Department of Fair Trading.

The Complaints Management Team is comprised of members elected by the Cooperative. They assist the board in assessment, investigation and resolution of complaints.

All members, guests and visitors are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of the complaint management procedure.

## Managing unreasonable conduct

The Cooperative is committed to being accessible and responsive to all who lodge a complaint and/or provide feedback. As a result, the Board will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably impacts on the Cooperative.

## 2.4.Accountability and learning

### Monitoring and improving

The Board will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.

The Board will monitor the complaint management procedure to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints, and
- identify and correct any deficiencies

The Board will report to the community at monthly meetings on any complaints received in the preceding month.

The Cooperative is committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaint management procedure. To this end, the Cooperative will:

- support the appropriate resolution of complaints
- implement best practices in complaint handling
- review the complaints management procedure as required

## 3. Complaint Management Procedure

The six key stages in the complaint management procedure are;



### 3.1.Receipt of complaints

Member making the complaint should contact a director/s in person, by phone, email or in writing by completing the Complaint Form available on the Goolawah Cooperative website or at the Camp Kitchen. It is recommended the complaint be lodged within 14 days of an incident or issue occurring.

A record of the complaint will be documented in the Complaints Register and will include:

- the contact information of the complainant
- the date reported
- issues raised by the complainant and the outcome/s they want
- other relevant and additional support the complainant requires.

### 3.2.Acknowledgement of complaints

The Board will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly and preferably within 7 days.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with complainant.

### 3.3.Assess and investigate

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, the Board will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within their control. The Board will also consider the outcome/s sought by the complainant.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, the Board will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about health and safety
- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

A member involved in a breach of the Code of Conduct or a dispute may be directed to step down from holding an office or committee position until resolved.

### 3.4.Managing the complaint

After assessing the complaint, the Board will consider how to manage it. To manage a complaint the Board may:

- Give the complainant information or an explanation
- Request the Complaints Management Team (2 nominated members) to investigate the complaint within 7 days allowing a right of reply. A team member will document all conversations and members present will sign to verify details of documentation.

The Board will keep the complainant up to date on the progress, and will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. The outcome and any actions will be recorded in the Complaints Register.

Once all information is gathered, the Complaints Management Team will meet with directors to discuss the complaint and decides if it is a breach of the Code of Conduct or a dispute between members.

### Breach of the Code of Conduct

If the complaint is deemed by the Board to be a breach of the Code of Conduct by a member or a guest, the following action will apply;

**First breach** – written warning and any agreed consequence to be completed within 21 days.

**Second breach** – written warning and any agreed consequence to be completed within 21 days.

**Third breach** - written warning, and any agreed consequence to be completed within 21 days, plus \*\$110 fine payable within 30 days.

All consequences will be agreed upon by the board. A member may appeal at the next community meeting.

\*RULE Fines Payable by Members. If agreed by the community, community work hours may be performed in lieu of a fine.

Any subsequent breaches within a 12 month period will raise serious concerns. The member MUST attend the next monthly meeting to explain their actions. Members need to be aware of Rule Expulsion of Members.

## **Disputes**

In cases where the complaint is deemed to be a dispute, the following applies;

Refer to the Resolving Disputes Information Package for advice and follow the process outlined in RULE Disputes and Mediation (managed by the Board).

It is important to resolve the dispute, sign an agreement, and record the outcome in the Complaints Register.

### **3.5.Providing reasons for decisions**

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, the Board will contact the complainant and advise them of:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action taken
- the reason/s for the decision
- any options for review that may be available to the complainant

### **3.6.Closing the complaint, record keeping, redress and review**

The Board will keep comprehensive records about:

- How the complaint was managed
- The outcome/s of the complaint
- Any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

The Board will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and recorded.