***Seville Community House***

***Seville Community Group Inc. Reg.: A0004911K***

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GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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| Policy number 18 |  | Date approved | 22nd July 2021 (amended 23 Aug 2022) |
| Draft FINAL |  | Scheduled review date | 22nd July 2023 |

## Purpose

This policy provides guidelines for:

* receiving and dealing with grievances and complaints at Seville Community House through a prompt, accessible, impartial and just process
* procedures to be followed in investigating grievances and complaints.

This policy is based on the principles that:

* Everyone has the opportunity to raise issues and all issues are recorded and addressed as appropriate
* A complaint process is available to resolve grievances
* When the complaint process is enacted external mediation should be offered if internal meetings do not result in a mutually satisfactory outcome for the parties involved in the complaint
* Everyone is confident about the complaint process available to them and that confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

## definitions

**Grievance is:**

* a concern about the behaviour of another person or group of people, this can include harassment of any form such as sexist or racist language, physical, emotional or verbal abuse. **Concerns about child safety and wellbeing are covered by the Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**.
* a concern about a process or action which a person believes discriminates against them
* a person feels unsafe whether due to the behaviour of another person or group of people, a process or action or the state of the premises.

A grievance, for the purposes of this policy, is **not** an issue of a minor nature that can be resolved promptly and does not require a detailed investigation. A grievance of a minor nature may include matters such as lost property, heater is not working, no toilet paper, why the class fees have gone up. These matters should be resolved after discussion with the office staff.

**Complaint** is an action taken by a person to resolve their grievance through the complaint process set out in this policy.

**Complainant** is the person making the complaint.

**Complaint Management System** includes all policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by Seville Community House in the management of complaints.

**Compliment** is an expression of praise, encouragement or gratitude about a service that is funded, regulated or provided. It may be about an individual staff member, a tutor, a volunteer, a class, a program or a service.

**Grievances and Complaints Register** records information about complaints and grievances received at the House, together with a record of the outcomes. This register must be kept in a secure file, accessible only to the Manager and Committee. The register can provide valuable information to the Manager on meeting the needs of participants at the Seville Community House.

**Dispute resolution procedure** is the method used to resolve complaints, disputes or matters of concern through an agreed resolution process.

**Mediator** is aperson who mediates, especially one who reconciles differences between disputants.

**Mediation** is a facilitated process used to negotiate a resolution to a dispute or grievance.

## scope

While this policy refers to grievances and complaints concerning the Committee of Management, staff, tutors, volunteers, participants, families, contractors, hirers and visitors at Seville Community House, this policy **does not** apply to grievances or complaints concerning

* employment matters
* between members of the Association, including Committee members
* between a member and a Committee member
* between a member and the Association

## Policy

Seville Community House aims to create a safe and supportive environment.

Grievances and other forms of feedback provide valuable information on levels of client satisfaction and provide Seville Community House with an opportunity to improve upon all aspects of service. Feedback is to be taken seriously and provides an opportunity for improvement.

Compliments are always welcome.

Feedback that is recorded and handled effectively will provide valuable information in identifying areas for improvement, coordinating a consistent approach for resolution, reducing the potential for future complaints and allow for reporting and efficient allocation of resources.

Resolving grievances at the earliest opportunity in a way that respects and values the person’s feedback, can be one of the most important factors in recovering the person’s confidence about a service. It can also help prevent further escalation of the grievance. A responsive, efficient, effective and fair complaint process that has a clear, structured process for reporting and resolving the grievance can assist Seville Community House to achieve this.

How to make a complaint (including any forms to be completed) and who to contact will be displayed on the noticeboard at Seville Community House and on the House’s website.

## Responsibilities

#### **The Manager is responsible for:**

* being familiar with the Seville Community House the *Grievances and Complaints Policy* *and Procedures*
* identifying, preventing and addressing potential concerns before the complaint process is initiated
* responding to and resolving issues as they arise where practicable
* ensuring that the name and telephone number of the person to whom grievances may be addressed are displayed prominently at the main entrance of the Community House
* advising new members of Seville Community House of the *Grievances and Complaints Policy and Procedures*
* ensuring that this policy is available for inspection at the house at all times
* treating all complainants fairly and equitably
* providing a *Grievances and Complaints Register* (refer to *Definitions*) and recording all grievances and complaints in the *Grievances and Complaints Register* along with outcomes
* complying with the Seville Community House’s *Privacy Policy* and maintaining confidentiality at all times.
* maintaining professionalism and integrity at all times
* discussing minor complaints directly with the party involved as a first step towards resolution (the parties are encouraged to discuss the matter professionally and openly work together to achieve a desired outcome)

#### **Participants/Community House Users are responsible for:**

* raising a grievance directly with the person involved, in an attempt to resolve the matter without recourse to the complaints and grievances procedures
* maintaining confidentiality at all times

**Related Documents**

All Victorian organisations, including Seville Community House, must comply with Commonwealth and State human rights legislation and directions such as:

* Disability Discrimination Act1992
* Racial Discrimination Act 1975
* Racial Hatred Act 1995
* Sex Discrimination Act 1984
* Age Discrimination Act 2004
* Equal Opportunity Act 2004 (Vic)

The major purpose of these Acts is to eliminate discrimination against people because of their disability, race, gender or age.

Seville Community House Privacy Policy

Seville Community House Social Media Policy

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GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Policy number |  | Date approved | Com mtg on 22 July 2021(amended 23 August 2022) |
| Draft | FINAL | Scheduled review date | 22 July 2023 |

# **Complaint Process**

**General Guidelines**

* Complainants have the right to have grievances resolved promptly, to have their privacy respected and to be kept informed of the progress of the complaint.
* Complainants are entitled to be represented at all stages by an advocate of their choice and will be informed of this right when lodging a complaint.
* Serious allegations will be addressed within 24 hours. If a serious complaint involves a Committee member, staff member or volunteer, that person shall not have contact with the complainant involved. If criminal conduct has been alleged the matter will be reported to the police.

## Principles to be followed when dealing with complaints

All complaints need to be handled promptly and with transparency. The following principles must be adhered to in the complaint handling process:

1. **Confidentiality -** only those directly involved or handling the grievance will have access to information on the complaint.
2. **Respect for another’s point of view -** each party involved should show respect for the other’s right to disagree.
3. **Commitment to resolving the issue and willingness to compromise -** the parties involved should be willing to resolve the problem by being open to all proposals and suggestions and should be prepared to compromise.
4. **Impartiality -** all parties must be given the opportunity to present information directly related to the complaint. No decision or judgements will be made until all information has been carefully and impartially considered by those responsible for resolving the complaint.
5. **Compassion and respect -** all people involved in handling the complaint must be sensitive to the needs of those directly concerned and also to others who may be directly affected by the complaint.
6. **Prompt action -** all complaints must be dealt with promptly and time limits should be formally agreed to at all stages of the process.
7. **Freedom from persecution or unjust repercussions**- no form of persecution, harassment or discrimination will be tolerated as a consequence of a person making a complaint, or as a consequence of the outcome.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN

**Step One**- *aggrieved person tries to resolve his/her grievance*

Depending on the nature of the grievance, the aggrieved person is encouraged to raise their concerns directly with the person with whom they have the alleged grievance or if it is concerning the organisation or program of the organisation with the person in charge of the organisation or program, thereby giving that person the opportunity to resolve the issue. As part of this step the following should be adhered to:

* Provide the Manager with a written copy of the grievance together with the outcome so it can be entered into the *Grievances and Complaints Register* (refer to *Definitions*).
* Comply with the Seville Community House’s *Privacy Policy* with regard to all meetings/discussions

**Step Two-** *aggrieved person makes a formal complaint to the Manager/Committee*

If a mutually satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved, the complainant should lodge a formal

complaint to the Manager.

The complaint must be in writing and include a full description of the incident or events relating to the complaint, including the times, dates, person(s) involved and actions taken in an attempt to remedy the situation.

The Manager will arrange a confidential meeting with the complainant and then with the person

against whom the complaint is being made.

If the complaint relates to the Manager, the complainant should address the written complaint to

the Committee of Management and an appropriate Committee member will arrange a confidential meeting with the complainant and then with the person against whom the complaint is being made.

Assistance to document the complaint will be provided to the complainant if necessary.

At this meeting the following guidelines are suggested in communication with the complainant:

## *Receive*

* Listen – openly to the concerns being raised by the complainant.
* Ask – the complainant what outcome they are seeking.
* Inform – the complainant clearly of the complaint process, the time the process takes

and set realistic expectations.

* Accountable – be empathic towards the affected person and action all commitments

made.

* Assess – create a prioritisation framework to identify situations which pose an

immediate threat or danger or require a specialised response.

## *Record*

* Record – all information that is relevant to the complaint in the *Grievances and*

*Complaints Register.*

* Protect – use a system that restricts access to clients who are involved in managing the

complaint.

**Acknowledge**

* Acknowledge – receipt of the complaint early to build a relationship of trust and

confidence with the person who raised the complaint.

* Anonymity – the complainant may request to remain anonymous but this will not allow the complaint process to proceed. If the complainant feels unsafe then other appropriate action will have to be taken. For example, if the behaviour of the person against whom the complaint is being made is of an aggressive or offensive nature, do the Police or another agency need to be involved. Does this person have a Caseworker who could be contacted?
* Desired outcomes – provide realistic expectations and refer the matter to other

organisations where identified as being more suitable to handle.

* Conflict of interest – avoid this by appointing a person unrelated to the matter as an

investigator.

* Timeframes and expectations – provide these to the complainant where possible.

## *Resolve*

* Involve the complainant – keep them informed of the progress of the complaint and

discuss any disparities identified in the information held.

* Additional information – request when required but apply a timeframe that limits when

it is to be provided.

* Extensions in time – consider only where necessary and always communicate any

additional time requirements to the complainant with an explanation of the need.

* Record – continue to record all decisions or actions of the complaint investigation in the

*Grievances and Complaints Register.*

* Focus – when investigating, focus on the identified complaint matters only

**Step Three***- mediation*

If there is no resolution after the meeting with the Manager or Committee member, a meeting

should be held with the two parties in the presence of **a mediator**.

The mediator should be:

* 1. a person chosen by agreement between the parties, **or**
  2. an independent person appointed by the Manager/Committee member, **or**
  3. a mediator employed by the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria.

The Committee should be briefed on the nature of the complaint, proposed actions and/or outcome of the complaint.

The outcome(s) of the mediation will be final and the Committee and staff will provide adequate support to all parties involved so that determinations of the grievance process are upheld.

**Step Four*-*** *evaluation*

The Committee will evaluate, with input from the Manager, the nature, number and outcomes of the complaints and issues arising from these complaint and review the complaint management system as part of Seville Community House’s commitment to continuous improvement.

## Related Documents

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