



Athletics Essendon COMPLAINTS POLICY

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CONTENTS	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Definition of a Complaint	4
3. Policy Principles	4
4. How to Make a Complaint	4
5. Procedure for Handling Complaints	4
6. Confidentiality	5
7. Timelines for Resolution	5
8. Support for Complainants	5
9. Disciplinary Action	6
10. Monitoring and Review	6
11. Appeals	6
12. Anti-Retaliation Clause	6
13. Contact Details	7
14. Reporting Requirements and Documents	8
a. Record of Complaint form	8

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Introduction

This Complaints Policy operates in conjunction with the Athletics Essendon Constitution, particularly Part 3—Members, Disciplinary Procedures and Grievances. All complaint resolution processes must reflect the Constitution’s requirements for fairness, mediation, and timely action. This Policy is a by-law under Rule 47 and is binding on all Members.

Our Commitment

Athletics Essendon is committed to creating environments where its members feel safe and secure. The Club’s vision includes the creation of a ‘family friendly club’. This Policy forms part of our commitment to achieving this.

Club Responsibilities

We will:

- adopt, implement and comply with this policy;
- ensure that this policy is enforceable;
- publish, distribute and promote this policy and the consequences of any breaches of this policy;
- promote and model appropriate standards of behaviour at all times;
- deal with any complaints made under this policy in an appropriate manner;
- deal with any breaches of this policy in an appropriate manner;
- recognise and enforce any penalty imposed under this policy;
- ensure that a copy of this policy is available or accessible to all people and organisations to whom this policy applies;
- review this policy every 12 months; and
- seek advice from and refer serious issues* to Athletics Victoria and/or Australian Athletics or other bodies as appropriate.

Purpose of our Policy:

- The main objective of Athletics Essendon’s Complaints Policy (“policy”) is to ensure there is **a fair, transparent, and accessible process for dealing with complaints received from within the Club and external parties.**
- It seeks to ensure everyone is empowered to safely lodge a complaint and is protected from recrimination.

Our policy covers all matters directly and indirectly related to our club and its activities, relating to behaviour, services, or practices; occurring during training sessions, in the club rooms, at social events organised or sanctioned by the club (or our sport), and during away and overnight trips. This policy covers the conduct of any person involved in the activities of our club, including but not limited to:

- club committee members, administrators and other club officials;
- coaches, assistant coaches and other personnel;
- support personnel, including managers, physiotherapists, psychologists, masseurs, sport trainers;
- Officials of the Club;
- athletes;
- members, (all categories)
- participants in any activity or event we host
- parents and guardians;
- spectators;
- external parties who are not members of the Club but are acting on our behalf, whether in a paid or unpaid/voluntary capacity.

*Serious issues include unlawful behaviour that involves or could lead to significant harm and includes criminal behaviour (e.g. physical assault, sexual assault, child abuse) and any other issues that our state or national bodies request to be referred to them.

2. Definition of a Complaint

In the context of an athletics club, a complaint is typically defined as any expression of dissatisfaction or concern raised by a member, participant, coach, volunteer, parent, or any other individual associated with the club **or from** outside the club

The complaint may relate to issues such as:

- The behaviour or actions of club members, coaches, officials, or volunteers.
- The quality of training, coaching, or facilities provided by the club.
- Safety concerns or incidents during our times of use of the track or programs and events we are delivering
- The club's policies, procedures, or decisions that are perceived to be unfair or inappropriate.
- Discrimination, harassment, or any form of misconduct within the club environment.
- The level of communication or organizational issues.

3. Policy Principles

Our Policy has been developed according to the following guiding principles

- Fairness: Ensure that complaints are handled impartially and confidentially.
- Timeliness: Complaints should be addressed promptly within specified timeframes.
- Respect: All parties involved in the complaint process should be treated with respect.

Our club takes all complaints about on and off-field behaviour seriously. Our club will handle complaints based on the principles of procedural fairness, and ensure:

- all complaints will be taken seriously;
- the recipient of the alleged complaint will be judged as innocent until deemed otherwise
- the person whom the complaint is being made against, will be given full details of what is being alleged against them and have the opportunity to respond to those allegations;
- irrelevant matters will not be taken into account;
- decisions will be unbiased; and
- any penalties imposed will be reasonable.

More serious complaints may be escalated to Athletics Victoria or Australian Athletics.

If the complaint relates to suspected child abuse, sexual assault or other criminal activity, then our club may need to report the behaviour to the police and/or relevant government authority.

4. How to Make a Complaint

A complaint involves a formal, clearly communicated, written request for resolution or corrective action.

The 'Record of Complaint' document (Attachment 1) details the information required to be provided when lodging a complaint. It is strongly recommended this form is used to submit complaints.

Written complaints must be submitted in hard copy or via email, to the following recipients:

- Club President: president@athleticsessendon.org.au
- Secretary: secretary@athleticsessendon.org.au
- Member Protection / Complaints Officer: memberprotection@athleticsessendon.org.au

5. Procedure for Handling Complaints

Where the complaint constitutes a grievance under Rule 30 of the Constitution (between members, committee, or the Club), Rule 31(c) applies. Disputes unresolved within 14 days must be referred to an agreed or appointed mediator.

Complaint Handling Process

When a complaint is received by our club, the person receiving the complaint (e.g. President, Member Protection Officer) will:

- listen carefully and ask questions to understand the nature and extent of the concern;
- ask the complainant how they would like their concern to be resolved and if they need any support;
- explain the different options available to help resolve the complainant's concern;
- inform the relevant government authorities and/or police, if required by law to do so; and
- where possible and appropriate, maintain confidentiality but not necessarily anonymity.

The following steps will be taken to ensure an outcome is achieved:

Step 1: Acknowledgment: Confirm receipt of the complaint by the Club, typically within 2-5 working days by the Complaints Officer, who will act as a mediator; and attempt in good faith to settle the dispute by mediation.

Step 2: Investigation: The relevant individuals or a designated committee will investigate the complaint. This may include gathering evidence, interviewing witnesses, and reviewing any relevant documents.

Step 3: Mediation process: The mediator to the dispute, in conducting the mediation, must

- give each party every opportunity to be heard;
- allow due consideration by all parties of any written statement submitted by any party; and
- ensure that natural justice is accorded to the parties throughout the mediation process.

The mediator must not determine the final outcome of the dispute.

Step 4: Outcome: After the investigation, a decision is made on whether the complaint is upheld or not. If upheld, outline the actions to be taken (e.g., disciplinary action, policy change).

Once the complainant decides on their preferred option for resolution, the club will assist, where appropriate and necessary, with the resolution process. This may involve:

- supporting the person complaining to talk to the person being complained about;
- bringing all the people involved in the complaint together to talk objectively through the problem (this could include external mediation);
- gathering more information (e.g. from other people that may have seen the behaviour);
- seeking advice from our district, regional, state and/or national body or from an external agency (e.g. State Department of Sport or anti-discrimination agency);
- referring the complaint to Athletics Victoria; and/or
- referring the complainant to an external agency such as a community mediation centre, police or anti-discrimination agency.

6. Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated with strict confidentiality to protect all parties involved. Only relevant committee members (including Complaints Resolution Officer if not a committee member) will have access to the complaint details.

7. Timelines for Resolution

In accordance with Rule 31(c) of the Constitution, members must attempt to resolve disputes within 14 days of the issue arising. If unresolved, it must be referred to a mediator within the following 14 days.

Our constitution dictates that if the complaint involves two club members, the two parties must attempt to resolve the dispute within 14 days of the dispute coming to the attention of each party.

Appointment of mediator

If the parties to a dispute are unable to resolve the dispute between themselves within the time required by rule 26 of the Constitution, the parties must, within 10 days, notify the Club's Member Protection / Complaints Officer of the dispute, who will oversee the process from that point.

8. Support for Complainants

Guidance and support for complainants can be sought from the club's Member Protection / Complaints Officer: memberprotection@athleticsessendon.org.au throughout the process. Complainants may also approach a relevant external agency such as an anti-discrimination commission, for advice.

Examples of external agencies:

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission:

<https://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/>

Commission for Children and Young People

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/>

9. Disciplinary Action

Refer to Rules 28 and 29 of the Constitution for disciplinary grounds and procedures. This Complaints Policy provides procedural guidance and must be read in conjunction with these rules.

Our club may take disciplinary action against anyone found to have breached our policies or made false and malicious allegations. Any disciplinary measure imposed under our policy must:

- be applied consistent with any contractual and employment rules and requirements;
- be fair and reasonable;
- be based on the evidence and information presented and the seriousness of the breach; and
- be determined by our Club Policy documents .

Possible sanctions that may be taken include:

- a direction that the individual make verbal and/or written apology;
- counselling of the individual to address behaviour;
- suspension or termination of membership, participation or engagement in a role or activity;
- de-registration of accreditation for a period of time or permanently; and or
- any other form of discipline that our club considers reasonable and appropriate.

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy and all related grievance/disciplinary procedures must be published on the Club's website to ensure Member access, in line with Rules 28(e) and 31(e) of the Constitution.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

11. Appeals

Appeals may be submitted to Athletics Victoria or otherwise managed according to procedures developed by the Committee under Rule 28(c) of the Constitution.

The complainant or respondent may be entitled to lodge an appeal against a decision made in relation to a complaint (including a decision where disciplinary sanctions are imposed by our club) to Athletics Victoria. Appeals must be based on any right of appeal provided for in the relevant constituent documents, rules, regulations or by laws.

In situations where a complaint is referred to Athletics Victoria and an investigation is conducted, the club will:

- co-operate fully with the investigation;
- where applicable, ensure the complainant is not placed in an unsupervised situation with the respondent(s); and
- act on Athletics Victoria's recommendations.

At any stage of the process, a person can seek advice from an anti-discrimination commission or other external agency and, if the matter is within their jurisdiction, may lodge a complaint with the anti-discrimination commission or other external agency.

12. Anti-Retaliation Clause

Athletics Essendon is dedicated to fostering a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all members, staff, and volunteers. As part of this commitment, the Club strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who:

- Files a complaint, raises a concern, or reports misconduct related to the Club's operations, policies, or behaviour, either internally or to external authorities.
- Participates in an investigation or inquiry regarding a complaint, whether as a complainant, witness, or in any other capacity.
- Asserts their rights under applicable laws, including those related to fair play, safety, and the prevention of discrimination or harassment in the sporting environment.

Retaliation may include, but is not limited to, any adverse action such as exclusion from team activities, demotion in status, unfair treatment in selection, disciplinary actions, or any form of harassment or mistreatment.

The Club assures all individuals that it will investigate complaints of retaliation promptly and thoroughly. Anyone who believes they have experienced retaliation should immediately report the incident to the President or Member Protection / Complaints Officer, or through the Club's Complaint Process.

Any individual found to have engaged in retaliatory behaviour will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the Club or other appropriate measures.

13. Contact Details

Complaints can be lodged with the Club President, Secretary or Member Protection / Complaints Officer. Email complaints should be submitted via the following email addresses:

- i) president@athleticsessendon.org.au
- ii) secretary@athleticsessendon.org.au
- iii) memberprotection@athleticsessendon.org.au

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND DOCUMENTS

Attachment 1: RECORD OF COMPLAINT

Name of person receiving complaint	Name: Role: Club Secretary / President / Member Protection / Complaints Officer	Date: / /
Complainant's Name		
Complainant's contact details	Phone: Email:	
Complainant's role/status in Club	☐ Administrator (volunteer) ☐ Parent ☐ Athlete ☐ Spectator ☐ Coach/Assistant Coach ☐ Support Personnel ☐ Employee (paid) ☐ Other ☐ Official	
Name of person complained about	☐ Over 18 ☐ Under 18	
Person complained about role/status in Club	☐ Administrator (volunteer) ☐ Parent ☐ Athlete/player ☐ Spectator ☐ Coach/Assistant Coach ☐ Support Personnel ☐ Employee (paid) ☐ Other ☐ Official	
Location/event of alleged issue		
Description of alleged issue		

Nature of complaint (category/basis/grounds) (Can select more than one box)	☐ Harassment ☐ Discrimination ☐ Sexual/sexist ☐ Selection dispute ☐ Coaching methods ☐ Sexuality ☐ Personality clash ☐ Verbal abuse ☐ Race ☐ Bullying ☐ Physical abuse ☐ Religion ☐ Disability ☐ Victimisation ☐ Pregnancy ☐ Child Abuse ☐ Unfair decision ☐ Other:.....
Preferred action to be taken to address issue	
Information provided to the person complained about	Committee Use Only
Resolution and/or action taken	Committee Use Only
Follow-up action	Committee Use Only