



**NQUEC**

North Queensland Underwater Explorers Club Inc  
www.nquec.org.au PO Box 1177, Hyde Park Qld 4812

## **NQUEC POLICY DOCUMENT – COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE**

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**Introduction:** The Club Management Committee (CMC) aims to provide a simple, confidential, and trustworthy procedure for resolving complaints based on the principles of procedural fairness.

**Reason for club policy:** Changes introduced to the *Queensland Associations Incorporations Act 1981* in 2020 require incorporated clubs to develop and use their own complaint handling procedure. This procedure applies to all NQUEC members, across all membership categories.

**Who may report a complaint:** Any person may report a complaint (the Complainant) about a person, or people bound by this policy (the Respondent) if they feel they have been discriminated against, harassed, bullied, or otherwise treated unfairly or inappropriately.

**Scope of complaints handling procedure:** This procedure is designed to address and resolve disputes between aggrieved parties which do not involve criminal behavior. Where the CMC believes events surrounding a complaint may involve criminal behavior, then the complaint handling procedure will be halted, and the incident referred to the appropriate external authority. Participation in future club activities by members involved in a complaint of this nature will be suspended until the matter is finalised by the external authority.

**Improper complaints and victimisation:** The CMC will seek to ensure the club's complaint handling procedure has integrity and is free of unfair repercussions or victimisation against a person making a complaint. The CMC may take administrative action (club imposed sanctions or disciplinary measures) against a club member who harasses or victimises another person for simply making a complaint, or for supporting another person's complaint.

If at any point during the complaint handling process; a member of the CMC considers that a Complainant has knowingly made an untrue complaint, or the complaint is malicious or inappropriately intended to cause distress to the Respondent, then the matter may be referred in writing to the full CMC for review and appropriate action, which may include taking administrative action against the Complainant.

**Complaint reporting and initial process steps:** All members involved in a complaint should aim to reach resolution in a timely manner, as quickly as the nature of the complaint and the nature of any potential harm will practicably allow. A complaint must first be reported to a member of the CMC. Complaints may be handled informally or formally, and a Complainant may indicate their preference for either course of action.

Informal resolution could be achieved via a low-key conversation where both parties accept the basic facts of the issue or incident and agree upon a solution. The member found to be 'in the wrong' can then be counselled by the CMC and advised how to improve their response to future similar situations. However, if a complaint is not resolved to the Complainant's satisfaction through informal means, then the Complainant may then report a formal Complaint in writing.

Formal complaint handling begins with the CMC appointing a Complaints Officer who will act on behalf of the CMC to guide both parties through the process. When selecting a Complaints Officer, the CMC must ensure the candidate has not already been involved in events surrounding the complaint and can therefore remain unbiased in order to achieve a fair and equitable outcome.

**Complaint investigation:** The Complaints Officer will investigate the complaint to gather the facts surrounding the issue or incident. At investigation conclusion, the Complaints Officer will submit their written report to the CMC, who will then determine what, if any, action to take, which may include:

- (a) Directing the Complaints Officer to gather more information.
- (b) Taking administrative action against one or both parties.
- (c) Recommending no further action.
- (d) Referring the complaint to mediation.

**Resolution through mediation:** Mediation is a confidential process that allows those involved in a complaint to discuss the issue or incident in question and come up with a mutually agreed solution. If a Complainant wishes to resolve the complaint through mediation, the Complaints Officer may either perform the role of mediator, or appoint another member of the CMC as mediator (one that is acceptable to both parties). If neither option is deemed acceptable, then the aggrieved parties may seek to engage a mediator external to the club, but in this situation, lawyers are not permitted to act as mediators. The Complaints Officer would also determine which party or parties (Complainant, Respondent, or both) are responsible to pay for any such mediation costs.

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Club policy document introduced April 2020 by:

**Simon Penprase**  
NQUEC President

