

# Complaint Handling Policy

---



## Policy statement

South West Music Regional Conservatorium (SWMRC) is committed to ensuring feedback and complaints about services are welcomed, handled fairly and acted on appropriately. We understand that feedback is essential to ensuring a high quality of service and ensure people are supported to submit a complaint to us in any way. This policy applies to feedback and complaints from external stakeholders. For internal complaints, refer to the SWMRC Internal Grievance Resolution Procedures.

## Scope

This policy applies to all SWMRC representatives, both paid and unpaid, including employees, volunteers, contractors and board directors.

## Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the CEO to:

- promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution,
- maintain a system to manage, record and resolve complaints,
- make sure that people can easily make a complaint, including people with disabilities,
- make sure that all complaints are dealt with fairly and quickly and in a manner that ensures procedural fairness,
- manage all level 2 and 3 complaints, and
- regularly review complaint trends and issues and support identified improvements.

It is the responsibility of employees, volunteers, board directors and contractors to:

- ensure any person receiving services is aware of their right to, and how to, make a complaint,
- be alert to complaints and help people make a complaint, if needed,
- show commitment to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling,
- treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints, and
- maintain confidentiality when receiving or handling complaints.

## Definitions

**Complaint** – A statement of dissatisfaction about services provided by or through SWMRC where it is clear, or can be reasonably assumed, that some sort of action is expected.

**Feedback** – Any form of statement about services provided by or through SWMRC that gives information about the quality of service without an expectation that remedial action is needed.

**Procedural fairness** - Ensuring fairness of the procedure by which a decision is made, including: being free from bias by the decision-maker; being rational or based on evidence that is logically capable of supporting the facts; and providing people likely to be adversely affected by decisions an opportunity to present their case and have their response taken into consideration before the decision is made.

## Making a complaint

A person can make a complaint in any way, including by speaking to us in person, sending us a letter or email, phoning us or through another agency.

- Complaints can be made anonymously.
- A person making a complaint can have an advocate, such as another person or an organisation, help them when making or interacting with us about a complaint.
- We will acknowledge all complaints as soon as possible and, at most, within three business days.

We will treat every complaint with integrity and in a fair and unbiased manner and will ensure procedural fairness. We will:

- Keep the identity of people making complaints confidential in line with our *Privacy Policy*;
- Do what we can to make sure a person making a complaint is not adversely affected because they have made a complaint;
- Treat any new complaint on its merits, even if it has been made before; and
- Manage any conflicts of interest responsibly.

If a Level 2 or 3 complaint is about the CEO or Board Chairperson, the complaint will be handled by an external service to ensure objectivity and procedural fairness.

## Managing complaints

When a complaint is received, we will seek information about the nature of the complaint, the person(s) involved, what outcome(s) the complainant is seeking and any other information required to support an effective investigation.

Where a complaint is straightforward and simple to resolve (level 1), we will seek to manage and resolve it on the day it is received.

We will let the person making the complaint (and their advocate, if relevant) know what to expect from the complaints process including:

- the expected time frames for our actions,
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of the complaint.

As the complaint resolution progresses, we will keep the person making the complaint (and their advocate) informed.

After investigation, we will let the person making the complaint (and their advocate) know:

- the outcome of the complaint and the nature of any action we took or intend to take,
- the reason(s) for our decision, and
- any options for review that may be available, such as an internal review, external review or appeal.

We will ask the person making the complaint (and their advocate) if they are satisfied with the resolution of the complaint.

## Complaint type and resolution timeframes

There are three categories for complaint complexity and handling:

**Level 1** - Single issues that are straightforward and simple to resolve. Managed by the person receiving the complaint. Target resolution time – 7 days.

**Level 2** - More complex or multiple issues where investigation may be required. Managed by the CEO. Target resolution time – 14 days.

**Level 3** - Complex, serious or sensitive issues including complaints: referred by another agency; where intensive investigation is needed; that allege serious misconduct or unlawful behaviour, or required to be reported or referred to an authorised agency. Managed by the CEO and reported immediately to the Board. Target resolution time – 28 days.

Any Level 3 complaints where the complainant is dissatisfied with resolution may be referred to an external service at the discretion of the Board.

## Dissatisfaction with complaint resolution

If you are unhappy with the resolution of your complaint, you can request that it be escalated internally or we will support you to refer it to an external agency (see below). Dissatisfaction with a complaint at the following levels will be escalated as shown:

- Level 1 – CEO
- Level 2 – Board Chairperson
- Level 3 – External service

## Other ways to make a complaint

At any time, you can choose to have your complaint dealt with by an external agency, including:

- Australian Human Rights Commission – phone 1800 620 241 (National)
- Commonwealth Ombudsman – phone 1300 362 072

## Recording and reviewing complaints

We keep confidential records of complaint details, including:

- the nature of the complaint, expected and actual outcomes, complainant satisfaction and resolution times; and
- actions taken or recommended to address identified issues.

All complaints are de-identified and recorded in the *Complaints Register*. De-identified data is used bi-annually to analyse trends and identify and address systemic issues.

Complaint information is securely stored for seven years or longer if required by regulation, legislation or contract.

## Complaint reporting

Complaint information is reported to the SWMRC Board as follows:

- Complaint data (quarterly)
- Complaint analysis, including data and comparative trends (bi-annually)

## Related documents

- Complaint Handling Tool
- Complaint Register

## Relevant legislation

- Anti-Discrimination Act (1977) NSW
- Disability Inclusion Act (2014) NSW
- Privacy Act 1988
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)
- Ombudsman Act (1974) NSW

## Document control

Name	DCN	Version	Approved	Review
Complaint Handling Policy		1	3 Mar 2022	Mar 2024