

Scouts Australia

International Contingent Complaints Management Framework

Edition 1 - February 2026





Scouts Australia is a Child Safe organisation. Scouts Australia is inclusive of all, regardless of gender, sexuality, race, religion, or abilities and does not tolerate any form of harm, abuse or neglect.

International Contingent Complaints Management Framework

Purpose

The purpose of this Complaints Management Framework is to establish a clear, fair, and efficient process for handling complaints. Our goal is to address concerns promptly, resolve issues satisfactorily, and use feedback to continuously improve Scouting's operational practices, policies and standards.

In Scope

This Framework applies to all members of the National Operations Committee (NOC), their direct reports and where applicable teams operating under NOC members direction including, but not limited to: Standing sub-committees (e.g. NAISC, NTC, etc)

Ad hoc Teams (e.g. International Contingents, working groups, etc) who may receive a complaint regarding Scouting's services or practices.

Out of Scope

Complaints that emanate from within a Branch and pertain to their own members. In these cases, the relevant Branch Complaints Management Process will apply.

Complaints that relate to employees of Scouts Australia. These complaints will be managed in accordance with the National Support Team's complaints management processes.

Complaints that relate to members of the National Executive Committee - NEC (the Board of Scouts Australia) and for whom complaints management practices are defined in the NEC Operational Procedures.

Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction regarding our services or practices that requires a response. This may include, but is not limited to any perceived breach of Australian Law.

Complainant: An individual or entity who lodges a complaint.

Respondent: an individual or individuals to whom the complaint relates.

Resolution: The outcome or solution provided to address and resolve a complaint.

Appeal: A request to review the resolution of a complaint if the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial outcome.

Team Leader: Usually, a Commissioner responsible for a portfolio.

Framework Statement

Scouts Australia is dedicated to addressing complaints with integrity, transparency, and a commitment to fairness. We aim to resolve all complaints in a timely manner, ensuring that each complaint is handled with respect and confidentiality. Feedback from complaints will be used to enhance Scouting's operational practices, policies and standards.

As such we have adopted the following principles^[1]:

Fair – This means that both the person complaining (the complainant) and the person being complained about (the respondent) should have the opportunity to present their version of events, provide supporting information and respond to any potential negative decisions. In addition, the person investigating and/or making decisions about the complaint should be impartial; that is, they should not favour the complainant or the respondent or prejudge the complaint in any way.

Confidential – This means that information about a complaint is only provided to those people who need to know about it, in order for the complaint to be actioned properly and that all records associated with the complaint will be kept confidential and stored and managed appropriately.

Transparent – The complaint process and the possible outcomes of the complaint should be clearly explained and those involved should be kept informed of the progress of the complaint and the reasons for any decisions.

Accessible – The complaint process should be easy to access and understand, and everyone should be able to participate equally. For example, a complainant may require a language interpreter to understand and participate or a person with a disability may need information provided in a specific format.

Efficient – The complaint process should be conducted without undue delay. As time passes, information relevant to the complaint may deteriorate or be lost, which will impact on the fairness of the process. In addition, unresolved complaints can have a negative and ongoing impact on a workplace.

Additionally, a precept of this Framework is that: The complainant will be protected, so far as is possible, from being victimised because they have made a complaint.

Respondents will be protected from vexatious and malicious complaints.

[1] Adapted from the Good practice, good business guide for internal complaint processes – Australian Human Rights Commission

Complaints Handling Process

Submission:

Complaints can be submitted via [email, telephone, or in person]. The contact details for submitting complaints are as follows:

Email: complaints@scouts.com.au
Aus Phone: (02) 8440 5900
International: +61 2 8440 5900
Address: Level 2, Quad 3
102 Bennelong Parkway
SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK NSW 2127
AUSTRALIA

Complaints should include the complainant's name, contact information, and a detailed description of the issue.

Acknowledgment:

All complaints will be acknowledged within 48 hours of receipt. An acknowledgment will confirm that the complaint has been received and provide an estimated timeline for resolution. Usually, this should be no more than 20 business days. An exception to this time frame may be where the complaint relates to an overseas event and the respective international Contingent (including any post-tour event) is still overseas. In which case, the timeline will start from the time all members of the Contingent are back in-country.

Assessment and Investigation:

Other than for child protection matters (which shall be referred to and handled by the appropriate enforcement authority), a thorough investigation will be conducted to gather all relevant information. The investigation may involve interviews, document reviews, and other necessary actions to understand the issue.

Complaints will be assessed to determine their nature and severity. This assessment will help decide the appropriate action and resources required for resolution.

Any complaints that relate to an issue of children at harm shall be immediately dealt with in accordance with the Scouts Australia Child Protection policy and any associated standard/protocols.

An overarching expectation is that all complaints will be handled promptly and efficiently. In some cases, the nature of the complaint may be quickly resolved where:

- the complainant indicates a desire to sit down and discuss the matter with the respondent informally and this seems appropriate in the circumstances.
- the information on hand supports a view that the complaint has arisen from a misunderstanding or miscommunication.
- the behaviour being complained about is not serious and does not appear to be discrimination or harassment.
- the dispute relates to Scouting policies, standards and/or procedures.

If, however, a person wants to proceed with a formal complaint the following steps are recommended.

Obtain information from the complainant

The person handling the complaint should:

- provide information about the complaint process, potential outcomes, options for assistance/support and protections from victimisation.
- Ensure the allegations are documented, either by the complainant or the complaint officer.
- explain that the process is confidential, what this means and why it is important.
- explain what records of the complaint will be kept, for how long and where.
- explain the action that may be taken if the complaint is found to be vexatious or malicious, including the potential for cancellation of the complainant's membership and or legal action by the respondent.
- ask the complainant to provide relevant documents or details of witnesses that may support the allegations.

Advise the respondent about the complaint

The person handling the complaint should:

- advise the respondent that a complaint has been made against them and provide as much information as possible about the allegations and supporting information (where applicable).
- confirm that they will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing or through an interview.
- provide information about the complaint process, potential outcomes and options for assistance/support.
- explain that the process is confidential, what this means and why it is important.
- explain what records of the complaints will be kept, for how long and where.
- explain that it is unacceptable to victimise someone who has made a complaint.

Assess the information

If the respondent confirms that they did what is alleged to have occurred and the behaviour is not acceptable according to Scouting's Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct or other Policies, Standards and Practices, then disciplinary action (refer Guide to Disciplinary Action) is to be taken.

If there is disagreement about what happened, the person handling the complaint should consider whether there is other information that will help to determine what happened. It is generally understood that the person making the decision should be satisfied that it is 'more probable than not' that what is alleged to have happened did happen.

Given, for example, the nature of discrimination and harassment, there may often be no direct witnesses or documents to support the complainant's version of events. This does not mean that the allegation is untrue. In these situations, the complainant should be given the opportunity to comment on the information that has been provided by the respondent and to provide any other information to support their allegations before a final decision is made.

Support:

Regardless of origin, where the complaint relates to the NOC, direct report or Team it is crucial that their care and well-being is considered utmost and that the services of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is made available to them together with any other appropriate support as agreed.

Resolution:

The outcome and resolution will be communicated to the complainant within 5 business days after the investigation is completed. The response will include an explanation of the decision and any actions taken to address the complaint.

Appeal:

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution, they may appeal the decision. Appeals should be submitted in writing within 10 business days of receiving the resolution. The appeal will be reviewed by the Chief Commissioner of Australia (or their nominated delegate), and a final decision will be communicated within 10 business days.

Cross jurisdictional issues:

Some complaints may relate to matter that have cross-jurisdictional implications, including those that occur overseas. As a general guide the following shall apply:

Overseas Events Complaints

The matter will in the first instance be referred to the International Commissioner who shall appoint a delegate to act on their behalf as the person handling the complaint and to proceed with all facets of the complaint process.

A high-level brief will be prepared by the person handling the complaint that outlines the nature of the complaint and those impacted, including any known witnesses to the incident. The home Branch(s) of all involved will be informed within 2 business days of the complaint being received (where possible). This is to serve for awareness purposes only.

Throughout this process the accountability for managing and resolving the complaint remains with the International Commissioner, albeit the responsibility for the actions and process sits with the person handling the complaint.

It is an expectation of this process that once completed the matter will be closed and that no subsequent cross jurisdictional investigation will occur, unless there is a matter referred to the relevant Branch(s) by the International Commissioner for follow-up.

Domestic Complaints

Where a complaint is received the Chief Commissioner of Australia shall be the accountable party for resolving the complaint. The Chief Commissioner of Australia shall, in consultation with the relevant Branch Chief Commissioners appoint a delegate to act on their behalf as the person handling the complaint and to proceed with all facets of the complaint process.

A high-level brief will be prepared by the person handling the complaint that outlines the nature of the complaint and those impacted, including any known witnesses to the incident. The home Branch(s) of all involved will be informed within 2 business days of the complaint being received (where possible). This is to serve for awareness purposes only at this stage. Throughout this process the accountability for managing and resolving the complaint remains with the Chief Commissioner of Australia, albeit the responsibility for the actions and process sits with the person handling the complaint.

It is an expectation of this process that once completed the matter will be referred to the relevant Branch(s) by the Chief Commissioner of Australia with suggested recommendations for follow-up and action. This may mean, some additional level of analysis by home Branch(s) may be required but should not be an invitation to re-litigate the matter or exploit the potential for “cross jurisdictional shopping” for complaint resolution.

Roles and Responsibilities

NOC Members (and or their direct reports/teams):

- Report any complaints received to their Team Leader.
- Assist in the resolution process as needed.

Team Leaders:

Oversee the complaints management process and ensure compliance with this policy.
Review and address any escalated complaints.

NST:

Manage the complaints administrative process, including receipt, acknowledgment and storing final resolution.

Maintain records of complaints and outcomes.

Confidentiality

All complaints and related information will be handled confidentially. Details will only be shared with individuals directly involved in resolving the complaint or as required by law.

Training

All NOC members will receive training on this Complaints Management Framework with reference to the following published guides:

- Conflict Management Guidelines.
- Conducting an Investigation.
- Guide to Disciplinary Action.

Training will be provided during onboarding and periodically thereafter.

Monitoring and Review

Complaints will be monitored to identify trends and areas for improvement. This Framework will be reviewed every three years and updated as necessary to ensure its effectiveness.

Documentation and Records

Records of complaints, investigations, and resolutions will be maintained for a period of 20 years. Documentation will include complaint details, investigation findings, and communication with the complainant.

Compliance and Legal Considerations

This Framework complies with all applicable laws and regulations. Scouts Australia will ensure that its Complaints Management practices meet legal and regulatory requirements.

Communication

This Framework will be communicated to all NOC members and made accessible to others through either the NOC operating practices and where appropriate the wider public upon request.

Contact Information

For any questions regarding this policy, please contact:

International Commissioner via email: international@scouts.com.au

To submit a complaint, please email: complaints@scouts.com.au

Scouts Australia is committed to providing excellent service and values feedback from all stakeholders. We appreciate your cooperation in helping us improve our operational practices, policies and standards through the Complaints Management Framework.

[1] Adapted from the Good practice, good business guide for internal complaint processes – Australian Human Rights Commission



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