**NURIOOTPA HOCKEY CLUB**

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY**

**PURPOSE** The Nuriootpa Hockey Club ("the Club") is committed to providing a straightforward and fair procedure for handling complaints, ensuring natural justice (procedural fairness) is upheld. Any person (complainant) may report a complaint regarding an individual or individuals bound by this policy (respondent).

**POLICY**

**1. General** The Club prefers that matters are resolved at the lowest appropriate level.

* If a complaint pertains to an incident or behaviour at the team level, it should initially be reported to and handled by the respective Senior Men’s coaches, Senior Women’s coaches, or Junior Coordinator.
* If a complaint involves club-wide matters, it should be reported to and handled by the Club President in the first instance.

Complaints may be addressed informally or formally. The complainant generally determines this unless the President believes the complaint falls outside this policy, should be handled through another process, or must be reported to an appropriate authority by law.

All complaints will be managed promptly, seriously, sensitively, and confidentially. The Club’s complaint procedures are outlined in Appendix 1. Individuals may also seek external resolution under anti-discrimination, child protection, criminal, or other relevant legislation.

**2. Mediation** The Club will appoint Complaint Handling Officers who may facilitate mediation.

The Club aims to resolve complaints efficiently, ideally without requiring disciplinary measures. Mediation allows individuals to be heard and reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

Mediation may take place before or after an investigation. If a complainant wishes to engage in mediation, the President will coordinate with a Complaint Handling Officer.

Further details on the mediation process can be found in Appendix 1.

**3. Improper Complaints and Victimisation** The Club's complaints procedure is designed to maintain integrity and prevent unfair repercussions against complainants.

If, at any stage, the President determines that a complaint is knowingly false, malicious, or intended to cause harm, the Club Committee may take disciplinary action against the complainant.

The Club will also take necessary steps to ensure that individuals involved in a complaint are not subjected to victimisation. Disciplinary measures may be applied to anyone found harassing or victimising a complainant.

**DEFINITIONS**

* **Complaint:** A complaint made under Appendix 1.
* **Complainant:** The person lodging the complaint.
* **Complaint Handling Officer:** A person appointed by the Club to investigate and/or mediate a complaint.
* **Respondent:** The person against whom the complaint is made.
* **Victimisation:** Any unfair treatment or detriment suffered by a person for lodging a complaint or supporting a complainant.
* **Vilification:** Public actions inciting hatred, contempt, or severe ridicule of a person or group based on specific attributes.

**REVIEW OF POLICY** The Club will review this policy annually or as required and make any necessary updates.

**ACCESS TO POLICY** This policy is available on the Club’s website or upon request.

**RELATED POLICIES**

* Nuriootpa Hockey Club Member Protection Policy

**APPENDIX 1 - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**1. Confidentiality** All complaints will be handled confidentially and disclosed only as required by law or to effectively resolve the complaint.

If a complainant chooses to remain anonymous, the Club may have difficulty assisting in resolution.

Procedural fairness requires the Club to inform respondents of the full details of complaints made against them so they have an opportunity to respond.

**2. Informal Approach**

* **Step 1:** If reasonable, safe, and appropriate, the complainant should first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the respondent.
* **Step 2:** If the issue remains unresolved, the complainant should contact the relevant Senior Men’s coaches, Senior Women’s coaches, or Junior Coordinator for guidance and support.
* **Step 3:** After the initial discussion, the complainant may decide to:
	+ Drop the complaint if the issue is resolved or deemed minor.
	+ Seek personal resolution (with or without a support person).
	+ Pursue mediation.
	+ Proceed with a formal complaint.

**3. Formal Approach**

* **Step 4:** If informal resolution is unsuccessful, the complainant may submit a written complaint to the President.
* **Step 5:** The President will review the complaint and determine the appropriate course of action, which may include:
	+ Handling the matter personally or referring it to an appropriate official.
	+ Initiating mediation.
	+ Assigning an investigator.
	+ Referring the matter to the police or relevant authority.
	+ Implementing interim measures during the complaint process.
* **Step 6:** An appointed investigator will conduct an investigation and submit a written report to the President for a final determination.
* **Step 7:** The complaint and resolution process will be documented and securely stored.

**4. Mediation**

* If mediation is selected, the President will appoint a Complaint Handling Officer as the Mediator.
* The Mediator will facilitate a discussion between the parties to help them reach a resolution.
* Mediation is confidential and without prejudice to further legal or disciplinary processes.
* A mediation agreement will be documented and signed by the parties involved.
* Mediation will not be recommended if:
	+ The respondent denies all allegations and refuses to engage.
	+ Either party is unwilling to participate.
	+ The complaint involves serious allegations that require formal investigation or legal intervention.

This policy ensures that all complaints within the Nuriootpa Hockey Club are handled fairly, efficiently, and in accordance with best practices.

Authorised and Endorsed by the Nuriootpa Hockey Club Committee 2025