

MT ALEXANDER WOMEN'S SPORTS CLUB



Complaints Procedure

for breaches of the Club's Code of Conduct

The Mt Alexander Women's Sports Club ("the club") is committed to providing a safe, respectful, inclusive and welcoming environment for all players, officials, volunteers and supporters (club members) as well as the broader community. We acknowledge, however, that members, parents and visitors can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the club which appears to be discriminatory, or to constitute unreasonable behaviour that in some cases, breaches the clubs [Code of Conduct](#).

A member or visitor may make a complaint about any decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is discriminatory or constitutes a breach of the clubs Code of Conduct.

Raising the complaint directly with the person perceived as causing the grievance may sometimes address the concerns of the aggrieved person. However, that is not always possible. Whilst most concerns can be addressed through direct discussion by the parties, there will be instances where raising the concern with the other person on a face-to-face basis is not appropriate or possible. If this happens the processes outlined below can assist.

Examples of complaints covered by this procedure include:

- Breaches of MAWSC [Code of Conduct](#)

Examples of complaints NOT covered by this procedure include:

- Child protection issues – see MAWSC [Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)

PRINCIPLES OF OUR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Impartiality: If you make a complaint, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgments or assumptions will be made and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

Confidentiality: You should feel secure that, if you do make a complaint under this procedure, it will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be: the person making the complaint, the person about whom the complaint is made, the person to whom the complaint is made, the person investigating the complaint and required committee personnel.

No victimisation: Provided your complaint is made in good faith, you should rest assured that you will not suffer in any way as a consequence of making the complaint. The President and Complaints Officer of the club will ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimised or adversely affected in any way.

Vexatious or malicious complaints: There is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith (and with good will) and with an intention for resolution as opposed to retribution. The Club is committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach it with feedback or complaints. At the same time the health and safety of Club members and those interacting with the Club is paramount and this includes complaints management so it is expected that complainants and respondents to complaints and those otherwise affected will act reasonably and in accordance with this policy.

Timeliness: Each complaint will be finalised within as short a period of time as is practicable. Complainants will be advised if the matter cannot be finalised within one month.

Anonymous Complaints: Complaints lodged without contact information, where it appears the complainant wants to retain anonymity, should, in some instances, be exempt from active response by the Club. The Club will only address the content of such complaints where sufficient information enables it to do so. However, anonymous complaints may be accepted if there is a compelling reason to do so, and the Club will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough initial information provided. This will be rare because principles of due process and natural justice ordinarily require transparency to those against whom a complaint has been made. Where a complainant wishes to remain anonymous and/or asks that certain information remain confidential, which may prevent us from carrying out a complete and fair investigation, the Club will not close or progress the matter without first informing the complainant of this.

CLUB MEMBERS INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING COMPLAINTS PROCESSES

Member Protection Information Officers (MPIOs) are an integral part of all levels of Australian sport, especially grassroots sport. MPIOs are there to listen to issues raised by members of any sport before triaging and referring them to the right place to find a resolution. The MPIO is responsible for providing information about a person's rights, responsibilities and options to an individual making a complaint or raising a concern, as well as information support during the process.

MPIOs don't handle complaints or investigate grievances, and they don't mediate between members or stakeholders. They're also separate from the relevant Integrity Manager or the person(s) in

authority regarding complaints, disputes and resolutions in your sport. MPIOs are an impartial party who are there to help guide people in the right direction.

Roles and Responsibilities of MPIOs:

- Serve as the primary contact for club members, players, staff, and volunteers regarding concerns related to harassment, discrimination, bullying, or breaches of the club's Code of Conduct.
- Provide confidential advice and support to ensure the well-being and safety of all members, especially in sensitive matters.
- Provide guidance on club policies and processes to members and stakeholders involved in a complaint before or after it is formalised.
- Promote awareness of the club's complaints process and commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment.

Club Complaints Officer (CCO) The Club Complaints Officer is a role taken on by a member of the committee of management. It is preferred if this member is not closely involved in the day-to-day operations of the club so they can keep a more impartial connection to any complaints.

Roles and Responsibilities of the CCO:

1. Complaint Handling and Resolution
 - Act as the first point of contact for receiving and addressing formal complaints from players, members, staff, and volunteers.
 - Investigate complaints in a fair, impartial, and timely manner, ensuring adherence to the club's Code of Conduct and AFL Victoria policies.
2. Policy Compliance and Implementation
 - Ensure all complaints are managed in line with the club's policies
 - Provide guidance on club policies and processes to members and stakeholders involved in a complaint.
3. Documentation and Reporting
 - Maintain detailed, confidential records of all complaints, investigations, and resolutions.
 - Report serious or escalated matters to relevant authorities, such as AFL Victoria, law enforcement, or child protection agencies, as required.
4. Mediation and Conflict Resolution
 - Arrange for the management of complaints through such processes as facilitation and/or mediation to restore positive relationships within the club.
 - Offer support and advice to all parties during the complaint process, ensuring fairness and respect.
5. Education and Awareness
 - Promote awareness of the club's complaints process and commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment.
 - Assist in delivering training on respectful behaviour, discrimination, harassment, and complaint resolution for club members and staff.
6. Risk Prevention
 - Identify trends or recurring issues from complaints and recommend strategies to mitigate future risks.
 - Collaborate with the leadership team to ensure the club environment supports respectful and fair interactions.

MAKING A COMPLAINT - Informal Management

Some complaints, because of their seriousness, should be referred immediately to the President or Complaints Officer – e.g. complaints about behaviour which places others at risk of serious harm.

Before making a formal complaint, you may first consider informal management of the issue/s before going any further. This needs to be carefully considered and is not a mandatory part of the process. Also, these steps are also not necessarily the order in which you may take them. It is important that information and opinions exchanged in this way are attempted with respect and ensuring confidentiality and privacy to those concerned.

- a. In many circumstances, the most appropriate step to take first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel and what the basis of your complaint is. If the complaint is about their behaviour, describe the behaviour in question and let them know that it is of concern. Ask for their response. If the complaint is about another member and their behaviour, tell them why you think it may be of concern and ask them for their response. Telling the person and giving them a chance to respond will give them a chance to think about, reflect upon and perhaps stop or change what they are doing. It may also help you better understand what is going on.
- b. If the problem or concern is unable to be resolved by a direct personal approach, it can be raised with an appropriate person who has relevant involvement or authority in the matter in order to discuss the issue and seek resolution. This could be a coach or club leader who may be able to help you resolve the issue informally. Sometimes it may be better to raise an issue with this person first.
- c. Member Protection Information Officer - It may be helpful to first speak to the club MPIO who can guide you through this formal process and advise you of your rights, responsibilities and options.

MAKING A COMPLAINT - Formal Management

The initial formal complaint must be sent to the CCO in writing via email address complaints@mtalexanderfalcons.com.au using the complaints form or at a mutual meeting where the complaints form can be filled out collaboratively with the CCO. If the complaint is against the CCO then the formal complaint can be sent to the Club President.

Step 1 In/Out of scope: The Club Complaints Officer will initially decide if the complaint is in or out of scope for management by the Club. This will be based on whether there is a breach of Club code of conduct and take into account the principles of our complaint's procedure (page one of this document). Any child abuse incidents are subject to mandatory reporting regulations and are covered in our MAWSC [Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#). On occasion it may be deemed that complaints should go directly to league or state level and the complaints officer will support this process. Policy. On occasion it may be deemed that complaints should go directly to league or state level and the complaints officer will support this process.

Step 2 Complaints officer initial response: When a complaint is received by the club, the Complaints officer will:

- confirm that they have received the complaint within 7 days of receiving it;

- convene a meeting with the complainant (and support person if requested/required) if not already held within 14 days of receiving the complaint to:
- listen carefully and ask questions to understand the nature and extent of the problem;
- ask what the complainant would like to happen;
- explain the different options available to help resolve the problem;
- take notes; and maintain confidentiality but not necessarily anonymity.

Step 3 Management process: 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 (the respondent);
- bringing all the people involved in the complaint together to talk objectively through the problem (this could include external mediation with an independent mediator);
- providing the respondent with a copy of the written complaint;
- receiving a written response to the complaint from the respondent, where appropriate, and if the respondent chooses;
- gathering more information (e.g. from other people that may have seen the behaviour);
- seeking advice from an external agency (e.g. State Department of Sport or anti-discrimination agency);
- making a confidential report to the Club Committee to consider and take the appropriate action.

Step 4: After undertaking the above steps, the club will: respond to the complaint with a decision which may or may not include disciplinary measures. This will be communicated in writing to the both the complainant and respondent.

The complainant or respondent can lodge one appeal against decisions or disciplinary measures imposed by, the club. Appeals must be based on either a denial of natural justice, because of unjust or unreasonable disciplinary measure(s) being imposed, or on the grounds that the decision was not supported by the information/evidence presented and available to the complaints officer. (see below for more details on the appeals process)

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

The club can take disciplinary action against a member or supporter found to have breached the club's code of conduct, or other related policy, or where an individual has made false and/or malicious allegations. Any disciplinary measure imposed under the policy must be:

- applied consistent with any contractual rules and requirements;
- fair and reasonable;
- based on the evidence and information presented and the seriousness of the breach;
- determined by the club's Constitution, By Laws and/or the rules of the game.

Possible measures that may be taken include the following recommendations and directions:

- verbal and/or written apology;
- counselling to address behaviour;
- clarifying standards of expected behaviour;
- implementing a period of monitoring;

- withdrawal of any awards, placings, records, achievements bestowed in any tournaments, activities or events held or sanctioned by the club;
- suspension or termination of membership, participation or engagement in a role or activity;
- a fine; or
- any other form of discipline that our club considers reasonable and appropriate.

APPEALS

If you feel that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly or that the outcome is unacceptable to you the complainant or respondent may appeal to the Club President. The President may delegate the appeal response to another Club Office bearer or form a three-person appeals committee to consider and advise him or her on the appeal. This appeals committee may include independent non-committee members who sign a confidentiality undertaking. If the complaint is against the President then the appeal should be sent to the Club Secretary who will perform the same function, in this regard, as the President. The appeal will consider the way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome: Unless the President or Secretary believes that: the complaint was handled improperly; or the outcome was inappropriate he or she will take no further action. If the President or Secretary believes that the complaint was not handled properly; or the outcome was inappropriate; he or she will organise for the complaint to be reviewed by the whole committee to reconsider the matter.

RECORD KEEPING

Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint must be kept at Mt Alexander Falcons in a separate locked complaints file. The CCO will hold this file for the tenure of their appointment and then pass it onto the next CCO.

Mt Alexander Falcons Complaints form		Date:
Complainants Name and Pronouns		
Complainants contact details	Phone Email	
Complainants role in club	<input type="checkbox"/> Administrator <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Spectator <input type="checkbox"/> Coach/Assistant Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Other volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Name of person/s complaining about	
Role of person complaining about	<input type="checkbox"/> Administrator <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Spectator <input type="checkbox"/> Coach/Assistant Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Other volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Location/event of alleged issue	
Description of alleged issue	
Possible nature of complaint (can tick more than one box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Harassment or <input type="checkbox"/> Discrimination <input type="checkbox"/> Sexist <input type="checkbox"/> Transphobic <input type="checkbox"/> Race <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Religion <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Victimisation <input type="checkbox"/> Homophobic/Biphobic <input type="checkbox"/> Unfair decision <input type="checkbox"/> Physical abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Selection dispute <input type="checkbox"/> Child abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching methods <input type="checkbox"/> Personality clash <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Complainants suggested management and/or resolution	
CLUB USE ONLY:	
Information provided to complainant	
Resolution and/or action taken	
Follow-up action/close the loop with all parties	

Once completed please send to complaints@mtalexanderfalcons.com.au