



THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION

COMPLAINT POLICY

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1.0	Oct 19	First draft	M. Crane

Authorisation

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National Secretary



1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Order of Australia Association (the Association) is committed to dealing with complaints in a manner that is fair, effective and efficient. We will aim to put things right for a person who has made a complaint and to learn from the experience.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to officers of the Association on the Association's complaint management system.

1.3 Applicability

The policy and procedures outlined in this document apply to officers of the Association receiving or managing complaints from members or other stakeholders.

1.4 Legislative/Regulatory Requirements

- Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 10002:2014 *Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organizations (as amended)*

1.5 Definitions

Complaint An expression of dissatisfaction made in writing to or about the Association, its services, policies, practices, officers or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Complaint Handling Officer An officer of the Association appointed at Regional Group, Branch or Board level to handle complaints. Complaint Handling Officers should have the skills and authority to resolve or investigate complaints, and, where appropriate, provide remedies and identify improved practices.

Complaint management system The policies and procedures used by the Association in managing complaints.

Officer of the Association A director of the Association, a member of a Branch or Regional Group committee, a staff member, or a volunteer acting on behalf of the Association.



2. Policy Statement

The Association will:

- provide a fair complaint management system that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint;
- publicize its complaint management system so that people know how to make a complaint;
- ensure that officers of the Association know what to do when a complaint is received;
- ensure that all complaints are managed fairly and in a timely way;
- ensure that complaints are resolved wherever possible and that relationships are repaired; and
- gather information to help the Association improve.

3. Responsibilities

The Board is responsible for ensuring that:

- a complaint policy is in place and reviewed regularly, and that compliance is monitored; and
- arrangements are in place for managing complaints made to the Board.

Branch and Regional Group committees are responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place for managing complaints made at Branch and Regional Group level, and for reporting upwards as required in paragraph 4.3.2.

Officers of the Association are responsible for managing complaints in accordance with the policy and procedures set out in this document.

4. Procedures

The Association will employ a complaint management system comprising three elements:

- Enabling Complaints. The Association's arrangements for making a complaint will be member focussed, visible, accessible and valued and supported by officers of the Association.
- Responding to Complaints. The Association will respond to complaints promptly and ensure that they are handled objectively, fairly and confidentially. The Association will provide remedies where complaints are upheld and a system for review.



- Accountability and Learning. The Association will ensure clear accountabilities for complaint handling and use complaints to promote continuous improvement.

4.1 Enabling complaints

The Association enables complaints by:

- promoting a culture that is committed to effective complaint handling and values feedback through complaints. Officers of the Association at all levels must be open to member concerns and committed to seeking appropriate resolution of complaints and addressing policy and process inadequacies highlighted by them. This commitment is reflected in the Association's Values and other relevant policies.
- ensuring that information about how to make a complaint is well publicized and that the process is easy for complainants to understand. Information about how to make a complaint is at Appendix 1. This information is to be published in a separate tab on the Association's website and advertised in every issue of *The Order*, and should be considered for inclusion in Branch and Regional Group communications (such as newsletters) from time to time. An outline of how the Association will handle complaints is at Appendix 2. This outline is to be published in a separate tab on the Association's website.

4.2 Responding to complaints

Complaints must be dealt with promptly, courteously and in accordance with their urgency. In order to achieve this, the Board, Branches and Regional Groups must establish standing arrangements that can respond quickly to complaints as they arise.

The Secretary at Board and Branch level is designated as the person to whom complaints (in writing) should be addressed. Regional Groups must identify an equivalent if there is no Secretary. The Secretary (or Regional Group equivalent) must record each complaint and its supporting information and the complaint must be assigned a unique identifier/number. The record of the complaint must document:

- Contact information of the person making the complaint and the date received;
- Issues raised by the person making the complaint and the outcome/s they want;
- Any other relevant information;
- Any additional support the person making the complaint requires; and
- Any special confidentiality requirements.



Receipt of a complaint must be acknowledged promptly, preferably within five working days. The respective Secretary should consider the most appropriate medium for communicating with the complainant (eg email, letter). If appropriate, and if the Secretary is authorised to do so, an apology or explanation may be offered at this point. Complainants and, if applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint, should be kept informed of progress.

The Board, Branches and Regional Groups must each appoint Complaint Handling Officers. In order to facilitate effective resolution at the earliest opportunity, Complaint Handling Officers should have the skills and authority to resolve or investigate complaints, and, where appropriate, provide remedies and identify improved practices. While it is a matter for the Board, Branches and Regional Groups, the respective Secretary is likely to be the most appropriate Complaint Handling Officer. Since it is critical that the person dealing with a complaint is independent, alternative Case Handling Officers should also be identified in case the Secretary is the subject of, or involved in, a complaint. This could be the respective Chairman or another Board or Committee member.

Complaint Handling Officers must deal with complaints on their merit in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. They must ensure that any conflicts of interest are declared and manage such conflicts in accordance with the Association's G10 Conflict of Interest Policy.

The Board, Branches and Regional Groups must establish a review process in which the Complaint Handling Officer's decision is reviewed by a suitably experienced colleague before management of the complaint is finalised. While it is a matter for the Board, Branches and Regional Groups, the respective Chairman or Coordinator is likely to be the most appropriate reviewer.

Since every complaint will be unique, it is impossible to prescribe a process that will be applicable in every case. However, the following table provides general guidance for Secretaries, Complaint Handling Officers, decision makers, reviewers, the Board, and Branch and Regional Group committees. Throughout the process, all officers of the Association must ensure that the personal information of the complainant and any people who are the subject of a complaint are kept confidential and only used for the purpose of addressing the complaint and any follow up actions. It is also important that the complainant and, if applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint are kept informed of progress, particularly if there are delays.



Table 1. Guidance for Responding to a Complaint

1. Assess the complaint	Clarify the issues of the complaint and what kind of resolution the complainant is seeking. If it is not a matter that can be handled by the Association's complaint management system, refer the complainant to a more appropriate body (such as an Ombudsman).
2. Seek resolution	Where appropriate and possible, seek to achieve resolution. Where resolution is reached, document the agreed action. In this event it may not be necessary to continue with an investigation unless there are systemic issues that require further examination outside the complaint process.
3. Plan the investigation	Define the issues to be investigated and develop an investigation plan.
4. Obtain evidence	Gather sufficient reliable information to enable the issue to be addressed by proving or disproving relevant matters, taking into account all relevant information and no irrelevant information. Ensure the complainant and, if applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint, are given sufficient opportunity to present their positions.
5. Reconsider resolution	Consider whether resolution is now possible.
6. Report and recommend	Prepare a document setting out the complaint, how the investigation was conducted, relevant facts, conclusions, findings and recommendations. Recommendations could include remedies for the complainant, action to improve the Association's service delivery or action to address inappropriate behaviour by an officer of the Association.
7. Decide on the complaint and action to be taken.	If the Complaint Handling Officer is not authorised to make a decision, refer the report to a person who is so authorised. Once a decision is made, refer it for review by a colleague (usually the Board/Branch Chairman or Regional Group Convener) before finalising. After the decision is confirmed, document it, and arrange implementation of the agreed action and for follow up to ensure the action occurs.
8. Inform the parties	Once a decision has been confirmed, the complainant and, if applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint, should be given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision and the reasons for it; • Any changes or other action that have resulted from the complaint; • A remedy, if appropriate; and • Information on where to seek independent internal (eg for a complaint at Branch level, the Board) or external (eg the Ombudsman) review.



If an investigation of a complaint determines that a service provided by the Association to an individual was unsatisfactory, and the Association has in some way contributed to this, the Association must provide redress to remedy the situation.

Circumstances that warrant provision of redress and remedies can arise in many ways, but broadly they exist when one or a combination of the following have occurred:

- Poor communication resulted in misunderstandings or misapprehensions;
- An inadequate or unfair process was used to arrive at a decision or provide a service; or
- A decision was unfair, disproportionate or unreasonable in the circumstances.

The following principles and possible remedies should be considered.

Table 2. Principles in Considering Redress and Possible Remedies

Principles involved in consideration of redress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistakes are admitted and put right. • A sincere and meaningful apology is offered. • Redress is fair and reasonable. • As far as possible, redress restores complainants to their original position. • Decisions about redress are procedurally sound. • Arrangements and reasons for providing redress are transparent.
Possible remedies that may be offered to complainants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An apology. • Reconsideration of a decision. • Amendment or retraction of documentation (eg publications, newsletters). • An offer of non-financial assistance (eg providing information or contact details). • Appropriate compensation for loss. • Changed policies or procedures to prevent a reoccurrence. • Action to modify the behaviour of an officer of the Association who was the subject of a complaint, if applicable.



4.3 Accountability and Learning

4.3.1 Monitoring the complaint management system

The Board is responsible for monitoring the complaint management system and ensuring that it remains effective. In addition to regular review of this policy, the Board will consider monitoring measures such as consultation with Branch committees, internal audits, and complaint satisfaction surveys.

4.3.2 Continuous improvement

The complaint management system is an important source of ideas for organisational development. Accordingly, the Board will analyse complaints data to identify recurrent themes that might point to systemic issues.

To enable such analysis, complaints must be recorded in a systematic way and key data must be passed to the Board without compromising the confidentiality of individuals. This data must include:

- The number of complaints received;
- The outcome of complaints (eg not upheld, or upheld and redress provided);
- Issues arising from complaints;
- Systemic issues identified; and
- Number of requests for review of complaint handling.

Regional Group and Branch level data must be reported to the National Secretary quarterly in February, May, August and November, or on occurrence for complaints about matters of a very serious nature. Nil returns are required. The National Secretary is to collate this reporting with any Board level complaint data and provide consolidated reports to the Board.

The National Secretary is to maintain a consolidated log of all complaints received by the Association and their outcomes. While respecting confidentiality appropriately, the Board, Branches and Regional Groups may draw on this log when dealing with complaints in order to help ensure consistency of outcomes for similar cases.

4.4 Dealing with unreasonable complainant conduct

Most complainants act responsibly. However, some complainants are difficult to satisfy and occasionally the conduct of some can be challenging because of unreasonable persistence, unreasonable demands, unreasonable lack of cooperation, unreasonable arguments or otherwise unreasonable behaviour including generating unreasonable publicity.



In these circumstances, special measures may be required. It is important to remember that, even where a person's conduct may be unreasonable, they may have a valid complaint. Fair consideration must be given to the complainant while remaining mindful of the safety and wellbeing of those dealing with the complaint and ensuring that there is no undue use of resources.

5. Related Documents

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with:

- Constitution of the Order of Australia Association
- By-Laws of the Order of Australia Association
- G6 Values (to be issued)
- G8 Privacy Policy
- G9 Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- G10 Conflict of Interest Policy
- G12 Whistleblower Policy (to be issued)

Appendices:

1. How to make a complaint
2. How we will handle your complaint



How to Make a Complaint

Making your complaint

Your complaint must be in writing. You can submit it by letter or email.

What to include in your complaint

You should briefly explain your complaint, including details such as:

- Who or what you are complaining about;
- What you think has gone wrong;
- Times and dates;
- How you have been affected by the issue you are complaining about;
- Details of telephone conversations and meetings;
- Copies of relevant documents (eg letters);
- The names of people you have dealt with;
- What you have done to try to resolve the issue; and
- The outcome you are seeking.

How much will it cost to make your complaint?

There is no charge for making a complaint to the Association.

How to submit your complaint

You can submit your complaint to your Regional Group, Branch or the National Board. Contact details for Regional Groups are available from your Group Convener. Branch and Board contact details are shown below.

Secretary ACT Branch	Email: secact@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: GPO Box 423 CANBERRA ACT 2601
Secretary NSW Branch	Email: secnsw@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: Old Parliament House 18 King George Terrace PARKES ACT 2600
Secretary NT Branch	Email: secnt@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: PO Box 2171 PARAP NT 0804
Secretary QLD Branch	Email: secqld@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: Old Parliament House 18 King George Terrace PARKES ACT 2600



Secretary SA Branch	Email: orderofaustraliasa@gmail.com Mail: PO Box 1065 CLEARVIEW SA 5085
Secretary TAS Branch	Email: sectas@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: Old Parliament House 18 King George Terrace PARKES ACT 2600
Secretary VIC Branch	Email: secvic@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: PO Box 18389 Collins St East MELBOURNE VIC 8003
Secretary WA Branch	Email: wabranch@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: PO Box 4053 WOODLANDS WA 6018
National Secretary	Email: natsec@theorderofaustralia.asn.au Mail: Old Parliament House 18 King George Terrace PARKES ACT 2600

Who else can you complain to?

If you are reluctant to complain to your Regional Group or Branch, you can complain directly to the Board.

Alternatively, you might wish to consider complaining to the Ombudsman in your state or territory. However, Ombudsmen will generally ask that you first try to resolve your complaint with the Association.



How we will handle your complaint

On receipt of your complaint, we will:

- Consider your complaint carefully;
- Treat you fairly and impartially;
- Treat you with courtesy and respect;
- Acknowledge your written complaint promptly;
- Act on your complaint as quickly as we can;
- Keep you informed about the progress of your complaint; and
- Explain to you the reasons for any decision we make.

Assessment

We will assess your complaint to clarify the issues and what kind of resolution you are seeking.

If it is not a matter that can be handled by our complaint management system, we will refer you to a more appropriate body (such as an Ombudsman).

Where it is appropriate and possible, we will seek to achieve resolution of your complaint without the need for a formal investigation.

If your complaint is not resolved, we will proceed to a formal investigation.

Investigation

If an investigation is required, we will appoint an appropriate investigating officer. The purpose of an investigation is to gather sufficient reliable information to enable the issue to be addressed.

Outcome

Upon completion of the investigation, we will give you:

- Reasons for any decision taken;
- Advice about changes or actions that have resulted from the complaint;
- A remedy, where appropriate; and
- Information on where to seek internal or external review.



Requests for Review

If you are not satisfied with our decisions, you can have the handling of your complaint reviewed. The purpose of a review is to ensure that we have acted fairly and reasonably in dealing with your complaint. If we find problems with our decision-making process, or in the way we have managed the investigation, we will improve our process so that the problem does not occur again. If appropriate, we may also reconsider our decision. We ask that a request for review is made in writing and sets out the reasons why you believe the decision is not reasonable or correct.