



DEALING WITH UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

COMPLAINT HANDLING AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

There are several steps in resolving complaints. Clubs may wish to start with self-management and, where necessary, progress through informal and formal procedures.

Complaint self-management

The first step is often complaint self-management. The person with the complaint can try to resolve the problem directly by talking with the other person involved. This should quickly resolve many lower level and 'accidental' issues.

If self-management does not work, informal or formal procedures are necessary.

All unresolved complaints about bad behavior should be reported to a Director, the club Recorder (if the club has one) or a club administrator.

It is best if the report is a written report and lists the name of the complainer and full details of the behaviour. Without full details it is difficult to ensure procedural fairness for all parties.

Disciplinary action may initially involve a simple, gentle, warning but it could also include

suspension, expulsion or require the person to participate in a counselling session.

Informal Procedures

The emphasis here is on **resolution**, not substantiation. Informal procedures are appropriate when:

- Allegations are less serious or allegations are admitted
- Complainant prefers an informal option
- Behaviour has been observed rather than formally reported.

Informal procedures are based on observation, counselling, mediation and education.

Formal Procedures

The club's constitution and/or by-laws should contain a formal procedure for the discipline of members who breach codes of conduct. Once the club has adopted rules about disciplinary procedures it is entitled to apply and enforce these rules.

If your club does not have disciplinary procedures contained in its rules, it is advisable you seek legal advice about serious complaints. In addition, you are welcome to ask the ABF for advice.

From complaint to outcome, a formal process usually follows this path:

- A formal complaint – usually in writing
- An investigation to determine substance ie the facts followed by a finding or a report with recommendations to the club's management
- Sometimes conciliation/mediation
- An appropriate outcome.

The outcome may involve counselling or education or more formal sanctions but must be in line with the club's constitution.

A formal procedure must also include an appeals process to ensure procedural fairness.

Training and Further Information

Training in handling complaints may be useful for clubs, directors and administrators. The Australian Sports Commission has a comprehensive, free Complaints Handling on-line training course at www.playbytherules.net.au .
