

Astronomical Society of New South Wales

Complaint Handling Procedure

Objective of this Procedure

This procedure aims to guide the society in resolving complaints consistently in a fair, timely and efficient manner while treating each party involved with respect. It provides a procedure for all ASNSW members to refer to in the event that a complaint is made to them.

Scope of this Procedure

This procedure covers how complaints related to the Society can be raised by members or external people and how they are handled.

There is a distinction between verbal complaints, which are handled informally, and written complaints, which are covered by a formal process.

How a complaint may be lodged

Emergencies should be reported to the appropriate emergency services immediately. This may be done by the complainant or by the ASNSW member receiving the complaint.

Verbal complaints may be heard by any ASNSW member, committee member or event volunteer.

Written complaints should be addressed to the Secretary of the ASNSW, either by email or by post.

Receiving the complaint

Verbal complaints

Verbal complaints may be dealt with informally. If someone makes a complaint to you, please listen carefully to it, and thank the complainant for bringing the matter to your attention. Remain courteous.

Where possible, verbal complaints should be dealt with and resolved at the first point of contact. If you are unable to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, advise them of how to lodge a written complaint to engage the formal procedure if they wish to.

Written complaints

When a written complaint is received by the Secretary, the Secretary will send written acknowledgement of the complaint within three days of receiving it, enclosing a copy of this procedure.

A Register of Complaints is maintained by the Society, that records:

- The name and contact details of the complainant, and any other parties involved.
- The nature of the complaint.

- Action taken following a complaint (if required), including the review of any relevant operating procedures or plans.
- Date and details of follow-up with the complainant.

Escalation steps for the complaint

1. Complaints are initially assessed by the Secretary, who deals with minor complaints directly if possible.
2. If the matter is major, or it is not satisfactorily resolved by the Secretary, it is escalated to the Committee to determine how to address it.
A written response will be drafted and circulated among the committee for review. When the committee agrees on the final wording of the response, the document will be finalized and converted to a non-editable format, and emailed to the relevant party or parties, with a copy sent to the committee.
3. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached following the Committee's attempts at resolution, the complainant has the option to have the matter mediated through a Community Justice Centre.

Guidelines for dealing with the complaint

- **Get all the facts:** check that you have understood and recorded the details of the complaint correctly. Ask questions if necessary. Determine whether third parties are also involved.
- It may help to **discuss options** for fixing the problem with the complainant - what response they are seeking? Decide if the request is reasonable.
- **Involve all the relevant people:** Contact any other parties early, to alert them to the complaint and get their perspectives. Keep in regular contact with them throughout the process.
- **Act quickly** - Aim to resolve the complaint quickly. If you take a long time, complaints tend to escalate.
- **Keep your promises** – Be clear about deadlines when you will contact everybody. Keep the complainant and third parties informed, especially if there are any delays in resolving the matter. Don't promise things that you can't deliver.
- **Close out** – Advise the complainant and any third parties when you consider the matter closed.
- **Follow up** - Contact the complainant to find out if they were satisfied with how their complaint was handled. Let them know what you are doing to avoid the problem in the future.

Process improvement

The Committee shall review the Complaints Register annually, to identify whether there are any consistent patterns, trends, or recurring issues to address.