

Member Grievance Resolution Policy

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Introduction

Within the Australian Air League Inc. (**AAL**), we aim to foster good relations amongst all Members and especially between all Officers, their senior Officers and the various Councils. We acknowledge that the enjoyment Members experience from their involvement within the AAL is reflected by their experiences within the AAL and with other Members.

Open, transparent communication and feedback are regarded as essential elements of a satisfying and productive experience.

The AAL also acknowledges that problems can arise that cause a Member, or Members, to feel aggrieved. These problems can arise from the behaviour or decisions of the AAL, its Councils, Officers or other Members.

The aim of this document is to provide an avenue through which Members can resolve AAL related complaints as they arise and to allow Members who have such problems, referred to as grievances, addressed in-house in a timely and confidential manner.

The AAL encourages its Members to resolve any issues or concerns that they may have at the earliest opportunity with each other or, failing that, their immediate superior Officer.

The preferred process (for less serious grievances) involves Members resolving issues to their satisfaction internally at their level, without feeling they have to refer to higher levels within the AAL or asking external organisations/authorities for assistance.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Members of the AAL.

For the purpose of this Policy:

- "**Member**" means any person who holds a Certificate of Membership issued by the AAL. This includes
 - Uniformed Members under 18 years of age (**Cadet Members**); and
 - Members 18 years of age and over (**Adult Members**), including:
 - Uniformed Adult Members
 - Non Uniformed Adult Members (**Associate**)

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of **all Officers** to ensure that:

- they identify, prevent and address potential problems before they become formal grievances;
- they are aware of, and committed to, the principles of communicating and information sharing with their Members and their families (when appropriate);

- all decisions are made with consideration given to the ramifications for the individual, as well as the AAL in general;
- any grievance is handled in the most appropriate manner at the earliest opportunity; and
- all Members are treated fairly and without fear of victimisation.

It is the responsibility of **all Members** to ensure that:

- they attempt (where appropriate) to resolve any issues through their immediate superior Officer, or other senior Officer, and through internal processes at the earliest opportunity.

What is a grievance?

A grievance can be about anything done, or not done, by the AAL or another Member or Members, which a Member feels that it affects them unfairly or unjustly.

Members should feel comfortable discussing issues with their immediate superior Officer or other senior Officer in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

For grievances about discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying, you should utilise the applicable procedure set out in the Anti-Discrimination, Bullying & Harassment Policy (found in the AAL's Health and Safety Policies and Procedures – at Section 1 Paragraph 14 of AAL's Manual).

How will a grievance be handled?

All formal avenues for handling of grievances will be fully documented and the Member's wishes will be taken into account in determining the appropriate steps and actions.

If a Member comes forward with a grievance it will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. It is important that the Member also maintains confidentiality in order to avoid idle gossip and the possibility of disrupting proceedings.

If a Member decides to go ahead and make a formal complaint (see below), it will be taken seriously and investigated in an impartial manner. This may mean that the Member, the person complained about, and any witnesses will be interviewed. Again, confidentiality will be assured. No decision will be made until the investigation is complete.

If a complaint is made against a Member, they can be assured they will not be prejudged. They will have an opportunity to tell their side of the story.

Each complaint will be dealt with in as short a time as is possible in the circumstances and all involved will be treated with fairness, equality and respect.

What are your options if you do have a grievance?

- The aggrieved Member should consider speaking to the person causing the problem. While this may not be appropriate in certain cases, it may be the easiest way of resolving the issue if the aggrieved Member feels comfortable speaking to the person. The aggrieved Member can tell them that their behaviour, decision, actions, etc. was unfair, offensive etc., and why the aggrieved Member believes this to be so.

The person may have been totally unaware of the affect of their behaviour or decision on the aggrieved Member. By telling them, the aggrieved Member will give them a chance to redress the situation.

- If the aggrieved Member does not want to speak to the person directly, they can advise their Commanding Officer or other responsible Officer about their grievance.

The Commanding Officer or other responsible Officer should arrange to follow the steps outlined below (where appropriate). Note: the below are guidelines only:

1. Make sure that the complainant feels listened to and supported. The Commanding Officer or other responsible Officer doesn't have to agree with what the complainant says, but they must make sure that the complainant knows that the AAL will act on the concerns raised.
2. If more than one person is present, establish the role of each person.
3. Outline the process that is to be followed.
4. Inform the parties that any information obtained in the investigation is confidential.
5. Listen to the complainant. Obtain a chronology of events (who, what, why, when, how etc.).
6. Run through the applicable policies and procedures (e.g. this Policy) with the complainant.
7. Ask the complainant what kind of outcome they are hoping for (best case scenario)
8. Provide the complainant with plenty of time to ask questions.
9. Offer the complainant assistance (such as counselling) or a way to get home safely if they are visibly upset.
10. Provide the complainant with a direct contact number that they can call if they have any concerns or queries.
11. Take accurate and detailed notes of all conversations (including dates, people involved) and attach any supporting documentation.
12. If deemed necessary, provide the complainant with a written summary of the meeting and clarification of the next steps to be taken.

The Commanding Officer or other responsible Officer will ensure that the manner in which the meeting is conducted will be conducive to maintaining positive working relationships, and will provide a fair, objective and independent analysis of the situation.

All parties are to maintain complete confidentiality at all times.

- The Commanding Officer, or other senior Officer, will tell the complainant what their options are. With their agreement, they may approach the person complained about and talk to them informally about the complainant's grievance. Alternatively, the complainant may decide to make a formal complaint.
- If you do decide to make a formal complaint, this can be done by putting the complaint in writing and delivering the document to your Commanding Officer or other responsible Officer. You may have a fellow AAL Member, or family Member, attend the meeting with you when you deliver the complaint. The written complaint should contain a description of the incident(s), decision, behaviour in question, the time and date of the incident(s) etc, the names of any witnesses, your signature; and date of the complaint.

At this time the Officer receiving the formal complaint will escalate the complaint to the next link in the Chain of Command for direction and advice.

The investigation

Once a formal complaint is made and the complaint has been escalated, an Officer, or Officers, will be appointed to investigate the matter. The choice of the investigating Officer/s will be discussed with the complainant to ensure impartiality.

Investigating a Grievance

The AAL will ensure that all parties are provided with procedural fairness.

In line with the above, the investigator/s will, where appropriate, ensure that:

- the respondent is aware of all the allegations made against them in sufficient detail to be able to respond;
- the respondent is allowed a reasonable opportunity, including adequate time, to respond to each of the allegations;
- the investigation is carried out in a reasonable time frame;
- all participants are given the opportunity to have a support person in the interviews pertaining to the investigation;
- all participants are required to maintain confidentiality and may be required to sign a confidentiality agreement;
- they have no personal interest or bias in the matter being investigated;
- all participants are given the opportunity to respond to any contradictory evidence;
- they make reasonable and diligent enquiries to ensure that there is sufficient evidence before making findings on the balance of probabilities.

Impartiality

The investigator/s must not have a vested interest in the outcome of the matter. Squadron Members will often consider that their Squadron Officers are not sufficiently impartial because of their involvement and duties/involvement in the Squadron.

If such a concern is raised, the Officer/s will consider whether:

- the use of an external investigator, or Wing/Region/Group/Federal Officer, is necessary to ensure impartiality;
- any conflicts of interest need to be disclosed (e.g. if any individuals are friends outside the AAL); and
- the investigator has handled any previous disciplinary matters,

and provide the answers to this information to the Officer who appointed them as the investigator.

The Officer who appointed the investigator will then decide whether it is appropriate for the investigator to carry out the investigation.

What are the outcomes?

If the investigation reveals that the complaint is valid, a number of actions may be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint. The person against whom the complaint is made may be required to give the complainant a written apology; he/she may be given a written warning, counselling, demotion, or a recommendation for termination of Membership be issued.

If the investigation is inconclusive, i.e. the complaint cannot be proved due to lack of evidence; the AAL may nevertheless take a number of actions. These may include training of staff, and monitoring behaviour of staff.

If the complaint is found to have been completely fabricated, appropriate action may be taken against the complainant, including counselling, a written apology to the person complained about, an official warning or a recommendation for termination of Membership be issued, depending on the seriousness of the allegations.

Related Documents

- Health and Safety Policies and Procedures (which contains the Anti-Discrimination, Bullying & Harassment Policy at Section 1 Paragraph 14 of the AAL's Manual).



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