

<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Complaints Procedure</b>
<b>Person Responsible</b>	Principal
<b>Staff Involved</b>	All staff
<b>Frequency of Performance</b>	When a complaint is raised by a student/parent/guardian or any Djerriwarrh Community College stakeholder other than staff
<b>Related Documents</b>	Complaint Form Complaint Action Form

### Definitions

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Complainant</b>	The person making the complaint
<b>Complaint</b>	Any expression of concern or dissatisfaction with an action, delivery of service, policy or procedure, system or conduct of another person.
<b>Respondent</b>	Person about whom the complaint is made and who is required to respond to the complaint

## 1. Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Djerriwarrh Community College (the College) encourages students, parents/guardians, or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss;
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise;
- think about how the matter could be resolved;
- be informed by checking the College's Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Students, parents/guardians and community members are encouraged to raise their concerns in the first instance directly with the person concerned. This is appropriate in matters where the person feels comfortable with making a direct approach, or where the concern does not relate to allegations of misconduct or unlawful behaviour (e.g. assault, illegal discrimination or harassment, or corruption).

Concerns raised in this manner will be taken seriously and, where practical and appropriate, attempts will be made to resolve the issue or give advice on available options.

## 2. Complaints

The College is always happy to discuss with students, parents/guardians and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the teacher, Lead Teacher or Youth Worker. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, students, parents/guardians or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal.

A complaint may be received by a student, parent/guardian or community member:

- in person to a teacher, principal or member of college staff;
- by phone to a teacher, principal or member of college staff;
- in writing (email, letter, website); or
- using the College Complaint Form.

### 2.1 Informal complaints

Students, parents/guardians and community members are encouraged to raise complaints informally with an appropriate member of staff:

- parents/guardians with a complaint about a student other than their own child should raise it with the Lead Teacher;
- students or parents/guardians with a complaint about a teacher should discuss the issue with the relevant teacher or the Lead Teacher;
- students with a complaint about another student should raise the issue with the Youth Worker or Lead Teacher;
- complaints relating to the College's policies and procedures in the first instance should be raised with the Principal;
- complaints about the Lead Teacher or administration staff should be raised with the Principal;
- students or parents/guardians with a complaint about the Principal should discuss the issue with the Principal or the School Council Chair.

The staff member will attempt to resolve complaints informally through discussion and conciliation with the complainant(s).

If the concern is not resolved at this stage, the complainant will be advised to lodge a complaint using the formal process.

## **2.2 Formal complaints**

If a student, parent/guardian or member of the community wishes to make a formal complaint, they are required to complete the College's Complaint Form. The Complaint Form can be accessed via the College's website, through Compass or from College Reception.

The student, parent/guardian or community member may be supported by staff or a support person to complete the Complaint Form if required.

The Complaint Form and any supporting documentation must be submitted to the Principal.

## **3. Formal complaint process**

If a student, parent/guardian or member of the community makes a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, the College will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

### **3.1 Complaint received**

Upon receipt of the Complaint Form, the Principal will contact the complainant(s) within two working days to acknowledge the complaint, confirm mutual understanding of the details and discuss further steps in the complaint process.

### **3.2 Information gathering**

Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.

Staff investigating complaints will systematically gather and document all relevant information, including records of interviews, telephone calls, consultations and other follow up with all persons concerned.

### **3.3 Response**

Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting the parties are unable to resolve the complaint together, the Principal will work with the complainant to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event they would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

### **3.4 Timelines**

The College will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the College may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of the complaint. The College will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, the College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

### **3.5 Resolution and outcome**

Where appropriate, the College may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret;
- a change of decision;
- a change of policy, procedure or practice;
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support;
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent/guardian and school relationship, engagement and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, the College may also ask both the complainant and the respondent to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

The outcome of the complaint process will be communicated to the complainant either in person, by telephone or email and followed up in writing within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.

If the complaint cannot be resolved within 30 days the reasons for this need to be communicated to the complainant. A record of these communications will be maintained on the complainant's file.

### **3.6 Escalation**

If a complainant is not satisfied that the complaint has been resolved by the College, or if the complaint is about the Principal and the student, parent/guardian or community member does not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the School Council.

At any time throughout the complaints process, the complainant may take their complaint to an appropriate external body. It is the College's responsibility to provide contact information for the appropriate external body.

#### **4. Managing complaints**

The Principal has initial responsibility for investigating the complaint and for the ongoing progress of the investigation. Should it become necessary to escalate the complaint, the Principal will pass the complaint to the Chair of the School Council.

All formal complaints will be documented and tracked.

Staff will not investigate complaints about themselves.

Should a complaint be made against the Principal, the matter will be addressed by the Chair of the School Council.

Staff must ensure that student's needs and interests are not prejudiced when a complaint is made. For this reason the complaint may be kept confidential from staff and may not be entered on the student file while the complaint remains open.

#### **5. Records and reporting**

All formal complaints and their investigation will be recorded in the Complaints Register.

The Principal will record the outcome of the complaint on the Complaint Action Form.

All documentation relating to the complaint including the Complaint Form, Complaint Action Form, correspondence, supporting documentation, witness statements and any other documentation relating to the investigation of the complaint will be maintained in a secure location separate from student files.

All formal complaints will be communicated to the School Council including actions taken and recommendations for corrective actions.

#### **6. Appeals**

If a complainant disagrees with the outcome of the complaint, they can submit a request for appeal for a review of the decision.

An appeal against a decision made by the Principal will be submitted to the School Council.

An appeal against a decision made by the School Council will be submitted to the Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services Board.

#### **7. Independent mediation and consultation**

At any time during the complaint or appeal process the complainant/respondent may seek the advice or mediatory services of an external independent body for example the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria, a free mediation service.

Should the complainant/respondent choose to seek alternative advisory or mediation services, the complainant/respondent will meet the financial costs of such services.

## 7.1 Advice and support services

Complainants and respondents may seek advice or support from external bodies. These may include those listed below.

Mediation and consultation	Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV) Phone: 1300 372 888 Website: <a href="https://disputes.vic.gov.au/">disputes.vic.gov.au/</a>
Refunds, fees and charges	Consumer Affairs Victoria Helpline: 1300 55 81 81 <a href="mailto:consumer@justice.vic.gov.au">consumer@justice.vic.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="https://consumer.vic.gov.au">consumer.vic.gov.au</a>
Teachers	The Victorian Institute of Teaching Phone: 1300 888 067 Website: <a href="https://vit.vic.edu.au">vit.vic.edu.au</a>
Health and safety breaches	WorkSafe Advisory Service Phone: (03) 9641 1444 or 1800 136 089 (toll free) Email: <a href="mailto:info@worksafe.vic.gov.au">info@worksafe.vic.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="https://worksafe.vic.gov.au">worksafe.vic.gov.au</a>
Discrimination and racial or religious vilification	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Phone: 1300 292 153 Email: <a href="mailto:complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au">complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="https://humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au">humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au</a>

## 8. Issuance and approval

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