



# BLFC Complaints Policy & Guidelines

## Introduction

From time to time, things might happen which cause people to feel upset or which creates conflict. This document explains the procedure that people can follow to raise and resolve these concerns as soon as possible when they arise.

- Complaints should be treated seriously and sensitively, having due regard to confidentiality.
- Complaints should be handled promptly, to avoid unnecessary escalation.
- Any complaint alleging potentially serious misconduct, such as physical assault and/or sexual harassment will result in a formal referral to the appropriate external authorities (police/ child protection agency etc.)
- Records will be kept of all complaints and resolutions by the BLFC Committee. These records will be kept confidential.
- The BLFC Committee will nominate a Complaints Advisor who will be responsible to run formal investigations and maintain a Complaints Register.

## What is a Complaint?

A complaint is a concern or grievance by a registered BLFC player, family member or supporter, or any BLFC related matter that is felt to be unjust or unfair or which causes resentment, upset or distress.

- Complaints may include, but are not limited to, issues regarding:
  - interpersonal conflict;
  - Inappropriate behaviour; or
  - Outcomes of internal recruitment/selection processes.
- Complaints related to on-field conduct are subject to the Football Brisbane Code of Conduct and will be dealt with (and referred to Football Brisbane if necessary) in accordance with that policy.

## Process

### STEP ONE: PERSON RAISES A COMPLAINT

The aggrieved person raises a complaint either verbally or in writing with the BLFC committee via the email or written letter. Complaints may be given to a Team Manager or Age Group Coordinator, who will notify the Committee. The matter will be discussed between the board members and the Complaints/Grievance Advisor. The BLFC committee will appoint an appropriate Resolution Officer on a case to case basis (committee member, volunteer, team manager etc..)



### **STEP TWO: DISCUSSION**

A discussion should be held with the aggrieved person and the Resolution Officer to obtain details of the complaint and discuss the possible options available to resolve the complaint. Ideally this meeting will be face to face; alternatively by telephone. Email should be avoided where possible for this step. Options to resolve a complaint are listed below.

### **STEP THREE: ACTION THE RESOLUTION**

The Resolution Officer takes action to resolve the complaint. This action is determined on a case by case basis.

### **STEP FOUR: FOLLOW UP**

The Resolution Officer has a discussion or meeting with the aggrieved person (after the resolution action) to determine whether the grievance has been resolved and address any outstanding issues.

## **Resolution Options**

Options available to try and resolve complaints will always depend on individual circumstances. Which option is appropriate will depend on a range of factors including but not limited to:

- the nature and severity of the conduct;
- which resolution option the aggrieved person feels comfortable with; and
- the amount of information provided about the complaint.

The options should be discussed in detail between the aggrieved person and the appointed resolution officer. The responsibility to decide which option is appropriate ultimately rests with the BLFC Executive Committee, especially with respect to formal investigations.

### **1- Self Help**

If you have a complaint, you can approach the other person directly, requesting that the unwelcome behaviour stop. If you decide to do this, you need to be specific and say exactly what you do not like about the other person's behaviour and how it has made you feel. You might prefer to take this approach as it allows you to feel directly involved in resolving your concern on your own terms and to your satisfaction.

The following self-help methods might be of use to you: -

- letting the other person know straight away that their behaviour is unwanted and unwelcome and that the behaviour must stop. Be professional, clear and strong when delivering this message to the other person;
- ask the other person a quick question - for example - 'Did you know that what you just did/said
- could be harassment?'
- using body language appropriately can also be effective and sometimes easier if you don't want to say anything. Standing tall and moving away or giving one cool unimpressed look can sometimes have an instant effect;



- use an 'I' statement saying, 'When you touch me/speak to me that way, I feel embarrassed/angry/offended because I don't like you touching me/want to be spoken to like that and went to be treated with respect';
- be direct and request exactly what you want. For example, by saying, "Please do not touch me/talk to me like that"; or
- if necessary repeat your comments until the other person understands and respects your request.

If you feel unable to approach the other person directly, or you have tried to resolve your complaint this way and the complaint is not resolved, then you may need to look at the other options listed below.

## **2. Assisted resolution**

If you don't feel you are able to approach the other person directly, someone from the BLFC (for example your team manager, age group coordinator, committee member, Complaints Adviser) may be able to assist you. This could possibly involve them approaching the other person and explaining the nature of the complaint. In these circumstances it is important not to 'accuse' the other person of the behaviour, demand a response or assume that that person is 'guilty' — all people deserve fairness in both understanding the complaint and having an opportunity to have their say in response if they want to.

Assisted-help could include (where appropriate):

- an opportunity for you to explain how the incident has made you feel and how you would like it to be resolved;
- a discussion between the Resolution Officer and the person concerned;
- the facilitation of a discussion between you and the person concerned;
- re-issuing the Standards of Conduct Policy to staff or particular Members;
- delivering targeted training to a group of people (eg a team) engaging in the offending conduct; or
- issuing a memo to a group of people on particular behaviours e.g. bullying, spreading rumors, or the inappropriate use of social media, etc.

## **3. Mediation**

Another option available to an aggrieved person in trying to resolve a complaint is mediation. Mediation is a confidential, voluntary process in which disputing parties, assisted by a skilled and impartial third party (the mediator), seek to resolve complaints. The aim is to assist the parties to communicate issues of concern so that they can find a long lasting settlement that will improve their sporting relationship.

Mediations are particularly useful if you feel unable to communicate with the other person or if you have attempted other methods of resolving your complaint and you are still not satisfied that the issue has been resolved. If you think that mediation would assist you the BLFC Complaints Officer or appointed Resolution Officer will assist you with this. Much more often than not, mediation provides an effective way of resolving complaints.



### 4. Serious complaints — Formal Investigation

Any complaints involving alleged serious misconduct (for example serious sexual harassment, stalking, physical assault, malicious damage to property) will be referred to the police with the consent of the complainant. If the serious misconduct has occurred by a member the club will undertake disciplinary action including termination of their membership as set out in the BLFC Constitution.

### BLFC Responsibilities

- taking prompt steps to resolve complaints in a manner that promotes a positive ongoing sporting relationship;
- discussing a complaint with the person who is the cause of the complaint;
- listening to and considering any complaint that is raised with them;
- considering what reasonable outcomes they wish to achieve;
- ensuring that complaints are resolved confidentially by not discussing complaints with other BLFC members unless they are acting as a Support Person during the process; and
- ensuring that the team training and games proceed as normal throughout the handling of the complaint.

### Resolution Officer Responsibilities

- identifying and addressing problems in the team or support base;
- helping resolve grievances at the earliest possible stage;
- ensuring that all grievances are treated seriously, approached objectively and handled discreetly and confidentially;
- managing the resolution of grievances in a timely, professional and unbiased manner in accordance with this guideline and other relevant policies and processes;
- seeking the advice and help of the Grievance Advisor from the BLFC committee where appropriate;
- maintaining effective productivity throughout the grievance handling process; and
- giving consideration to the wellbeing of the aggrieved Member and other affected staff.
- Listen to the Member, treat the issue seriously. Do not judge them. Be objective.
- Act quickly, discreetly and confidentially.
- Take file notes/records and store securely
- If in doubt, seek advice from the Complaints/Grievance Advisor or other BLFC Committee Member.