



## Albany United, trading as North Harbour Football and Sports Club Inc, **Complaints Policy and Process** **2021**

### 1. Policy and values

Everyone involved in play, active recreation and sport joins with good intentions and we are all expected to do our best to treat each other with respect and comply with our policies and rules. Despite this, problems sometimes arise. Children and young people in particular must be cared for, treated with respect and their welfare placed at the centre of everything we do in the sport.

Albany United (hereafter referred to as the Club) knows everyone involved in the sport is here because of a shared passion for football and care for the people involved. When people involved in sport get into disagreements it can become a serious issue. The Club is committed to supporting everyone, including participants, coaches, volunteers, whānau and supporters, to participate in an environment that is respectful, safe, and fair.

The Club acknowledges it is important to everyone involved to respond quickly, fairly and thoughtfully to address issues. People are entitled to raise concerns or complaints and to have those addressed promptly and fairly. No one should be punished or victimised for raising a concern or a complaint in good faith. This policy is centred on equity, dignity, respect and maximising the potential of all people in the club.

The following principles should be kept in mind when applying it:

- Respect for the culture(s) of the people involved including culturally appropriate processes being enabled to resolve complaints and restore relationships.
- Addressing problems informally and face to face, wherever possible.
- Treating others fairly and equally.
- Maintaining relationships and keeping each other safe.



## Purpose

This document also sets out the steps for raising and dealing with concerns and complaints. It aims to:

- support people to resolve minor issues on their own
- give clear guidance for making, dealing with and resolving complaints
- make sure the approach taken to dealing with complaints is fair, consistent including enabling cultural appropriate responses and processes.

## Who can make a complaint?

Complaints can be made by or about anyone involved in the Club, this includes: volunteers, participants, supporters, club members, employees, service providers, and families/ whānau of participants.

## What can complaints be about?

Complaints may be made about things such as actions or decisions of organisation members or officials, processes not being managed well (or at all), low level disputes or disagreements between members, unprofessional or upsetting behaviour, or delays or failure to communicate about matters affecting a person.

Complaints may involve:

- organisation management issues
- conflicts of interest (including favouritism)
- off-field unsporting behaviour
- disrespectful behaviour
- low-level bullying
- low-level sexual harassment
- discrimination
- abuse of power
- health and safety risks



- offensive/insulting language or behaviour.

This complaints process does not apply to on-field misconduct, or selection or eligibility decisions. Serious complaints (e.g. unethical, dishonest or illegal behavior, harassment (sexual, racial or otherwise) bullying, health and safety risks, unlawful discrimination, and offensive/insulting language or behaviour) may be breaches of Northern Regional Football (NRF) policies. These will be assessed and may be referred to the governing organisation and dealt with under NRF Disciplinary Procedure and Appeals Policy or similar. If you are unsure whether the Complaints Policy and Process applies to your situation, the relevant Committee Head or Complaints Officer can provide guidance.

## Informal resolution first

People are always encouraged to raise concerns directly with the person who has behaved in a way causing concern, unless there are safety reasons or the issue is too serious to try to resolve it this way. If you do not feel comfortable raising the complaint yourself, a support person can raise it with the person on your behalf.

Both parties involved should have a chance to be heard respectfully, and feel safe to be able to say what they want to say, keeping in mind the need to find ways to resolve issues and be able to work with one another in future.

If self-managed informal resolution isn't successful or appropriate, it should be raised with the relevant organisation committee, which, in consultation with the people involved, will put in place an appropriate process to try to resolve it. This may include holding a facilitated meeting in suitable location, and following the process, that meets the needs of the people involved.

## 2. Complaints Process

2.1 Formal complaints should ideally be made in writing, as soon as possible after the relevant event(s). Where this is not possible, the complainant should be helped by the person receiving the verbal complaint to put it in writing. A Complaints Form can be made available when needed to aid with documenting the complaint.



2.2 If the complaint is about an organisation issue or about a member of the club, the complaint should firstly be raised with the organisation [e.g. Club Captain or President], or a Complaints Officer if the Club has appointed one. Complaints about a club committee member can be raised with either the Committee Head if applicable, or the Club Captain or President if the complaint does not relate them in any way. If the complaint does relate to any of the officers of the club (President, Treasurer or Secretary) either singularly or in conjunction with others, then the club is unable to resolve the issue internally due to conflicts of interest, and it must be immediately escalated to the regional or national organisation. If the committee or official that the complaint would usually be made to is involved in the issue or has a conflict of interest, the complaint should be made or passed to another suitable person in authority. If the issue is not resolved at organisation level or the organisation is involved in the issue, it should be referred to the Northern Football Federation.

2.3 The person or committee responsible for dealing with the complaint (the decision maker) must acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as it is received. It is always best to send a written acknowledgement to the person making the complaint so they know their complaint has been received and is being taken seriously.

2.4 Initial contact should be made to the complainant for further clarification on the exact nature of the complaint if it is not clearly stated, and to discuss any child welfare or safety concerns the complainant has (if any).

2.5 The complainant should be asked how they would like their complaint addressed, and what outcome they are seeking. It is important that the person who receives the complaint explains to the complainant that to resolve the complaint fairly to everyone involved, they will usually need to tell the person or organisation of the complaint made against them, give them all relevant information and discuss a process for resolving the complaint.

2.6 If the person is under 18, their parent/guardian must also be notified. If the complainant is not willing to have their complaint or identity shared with the person or organisation concerned, other ways to resolve the complaint will have to be discussed

2.7 The person who made the complaint and any other relevant people may be asked to give further information in a way that is comfortable to them (face-to-face, with support person or people if desired, by phone, videocall or email). Complaints should be raised with the person who is complained about in a way that preserves the dignity of that person.

2.8 The decision maker will usually meet separately with the person making the complaint and the person complained about. These meetings will be at a time and place and run according to



a protocol/agenda that suits everyone, to the extent possible. People may be accompanied by chosen family/whānau and/or other support people. These meetings should take place as soon as possible and ideally within two weeks of the complaint being received. Where it is not possible to meet face to face, the meeting can be held by phone or videocall if people agree and have access to technology.

2.9 Decisions should be made in a careful, reasoned way that is justified on the facts and is consistent with any rules that apply. The decision should be recorded in writing with a simple explanation of:

- the issue
- any applicable policy or rule
- the process followed
- the facts and any evidence relied on
- any submissions or explanations by anyone involved
- the decision (complaint upheld or not upheld)
- the reason for the decision
- any penalty or outcome
- any recommendations for repairing relationships.

2.10 Although most people involved in football are volunteers, some are employees. If someone is an employee, they need to have a written employment agreement, and must be treated fairly under New Zealand employment law if any decision is being made about their employment. Contractors (who are not employees) need to be treated fairly and reasonably, and consistent with the terms of their contract. Volunteers should be treated fairly, reasonably and respectfully in making any decisions about their conduct or participation in the sport.

## Communicating the outcome

2.11 The decision maker(s) will promptly provide a copy of the decision to the person or organisation the complaint is about, and the complainant, and outline any appeal process. The outcome should be discussed so the parties understand the decision and why it was made, and what will happen next.

2.12 The people affected by the decision i.e. the complainant, the person or people complained about, may have strong feelings about the outcome and the impact on their reputation or rights. There should be a discussion about what steps can be taken to restore relationships of



everyone involved. Support should be explored, especially if there are any concerns about health, wellbeing or safety.

2.13 All matters related to any complaint should be recorded in writing and placed on a confidential complaint file at the club including the original complaint, any and all responses to the complaint, notes of any meetings or conversations, relevant documents, committee minutes, the decision and any outcome. The details of all complaints will be kept confidential unless otherwise agreed between the parties.