



Title: Hervey Bay City Bridge Club Member Complaints and Investigation Procedure

Organisation Name: Hervey Bay City Bridge Club Inc.

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1. Purpose —

This procedure provides a fair, lawful, and consistent process for receiving, assessing, investigating, and resolving complaints and disciplinary matters in accordance with the Club's Rules (including section *When membership ends*, section *General meeting to decide appeal, and Grievance procedure*), and is consistent with investigation standards.

It supports natural justice, safe participation, and transparent decision-making.

2. Scope —

This procedure applies to:

- complaints made by members, volunteers, visitors or the public
- conduct concerns that may breach the rules, policies or expected standards of behaviour
- conduct that may lead to the management committee acting under the section *When membership ends*

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern. A *When membership ends* matter arises only when the committee forms a reasonable belief that a member may have breached the Rules or behaved in a way prejudicial to the Club.

3. Principles —

All complaints and disciplinary matters must be managed with:

- natural justice
- clear notice of allegations
- an opportunity to respond
- unbiased decision-making
- proportionate outcomes
- confidentiality
- secure handling of information
- evidence-based findings

- decisions made on the balance of probabilities

4. Receiving a Complaint —

Complaints may be received verbally or in writing. The receiving officer must:

- record the complaint accurately in the confidential complaint register
- clarify the issue without leading or influencing
- explain the process
- advise that the management committee may initiate section 10

Anonymous complaints may be accepted, but only if they contain enough information to make an initial assessment.

5. Preliminary Assessment —

The President (or delegated officer) conducts an initial assessment to determine:

- the nature of the issue or define the allegation (i.e. behaviour/breach)
- whether it is a complaint, a conduct concern, or both
- whether the matter is trivial, vexatious, malicious or previously resolved
- if the complaint has no identifiable issue, is contradictory, or intended to disrupt
- whether immediate action is required for safety or risk

Possible outcomes:

- manage as a complaint only
- escalate to the committee as a potential issue under *When membership ends*
- take no further action

The assessment decision must be recorded and presented to the full management committee during a closed session. This stage **does not** require a full investigation.

6. Evidence Handling, Confidentiality, Investigation Scope and Reporting —

All information used in the investigation of a complaint must be:

- relevant to the issue (i.e. behaviour/breach/allegation)
- handled confidentially (standard identified within the policy)
- stored securely
- shared only with those who have a legitimate role

An investigation plan identifying elements to address the issue should be produced, including:

- evidence required
- witnesses and sources of information
- risks
- timelines and responsibilities

Evidence may include documents, emails, witness accounts, or other material. Irrelevant or prejudicial, or speculative information must not be considered.

After analysis of the facts gathered the investigator should produce a report for the Management Committee with their findings. This should include findings, reasons, evidence relied upon, conflict-of-interest management and recommendations.

7. Managing Complaints That Are *Not* a Breach of the Rules —

If the complaint does not involve a breach of the Rules, policies, or expected standards of behaviour, it must not enter the *When membership ends* process.

The delegated officer must:

- acknowledge and record the complaint in the confidential complaint register
- clarify the issue and determine the underlying concern
- attempt informal or administrative resolution, which may include:
 - providing information or clarification
 - explaining relevant rules or decisions
 - facilitating a conversation between parties
 - offering mediation or conflict-resolution support
 - referring the matter to the appropriate officer (e.g., Treasurer, Events Coordinator)
- document the steps taken and the outcome
- advise the complainant of the resolution, respecting confidentiality

These matters must not result in penalties. Patterns of repeated similar complaints may be reviewed by the committee to identify systemic issues.

8. Conduct Concerns —

The management committee may take reasonable administrative steps to address conduct concerns or breaches of the *Club's Code of Conduct*. These steps are not disciplinary action and do not affect a member's membership status.

Administrative steps may include:

- providing feedback
- issuing written reminders or expectations notices
- requesting improved conduct

These measures clarify behavioural expectations and support a safe and respectful environment. They do **not** constitute action under the section *When membership ends*. Administrative actions, expectations notices, and any other committee decisions that do not involve the section *When membership ends* are not appealable.

A repeated pattern of unacceptable conduct may lead the committee to consider whether the behaviour constitutes a breach of the Rules or conduct prejudicial to the Club. A behaviour

may be considered prejudicial if it reasonably threatens the Club's functioning, safety, reputation, or lawful operation. The behaviour will be assessed to identify if:

- it impacts on the Club's operation by disrupting events or activities, interferes with other members rights to participate, undermines the committee decisions or governance, creates conflict that is not resolved through normal processes
- it is prejudicial due to intimidation, harassment, bullying, creates a hostile or unsafe environment, causes members to withdraw from participation, or creates risk
- the behaviour publicly undermines the Club or brings it into disrepute
- it breaches the Club's rules or a lawful direction of the committee

If after the Club has issued expectation notices, provided feedback, and attempted resolution the behaviour does not stop, the Club may form a reasonable belief that the member is unwilling to comply with the expected standard of behaviour required by the Club.

9. Section *When Membership Ends* —

The section dealing with *When membership ends* begins only when the management committee forms a reasonable belief that a member may have:

- breached the Rules, or
- behaved in a way prejudicial to the Club

Only the management committee may initiate action under this section. Anonymous complaints may inform preliminary assessment but cannot be relied upon as sole evidence in a termination matter.

9.1 The Secretary must provide the member with a written notice including:

- the grounds for the proposed termination
- outlines the conduct or rule said to be breached
- provides at least 14 days' notice of the meeting
- advises the member of their right to respond
- advises the member they may bring a support person
- Delivery must be recorded.

9.2 Conflict-of-Interest Management:

- All committee members must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest. Conflicted members must not participate in deliberations or decisions. Declarations and management actions must be recorded.
- Committee members may provide support of administrative tasks but must not be involved in any activities that are deliberative.

9.3 Preparation for a *When Membership Ends* meeting:

- circulate relevant documents
- ensure the member has access to the material being considered or a summary of those materials
- confirm whether the member will attend or provide a written response

- consider reasonable requests for adjournment

9.4 When conducting the meeting, the Chair must:

- outline the allegation and process
- confirm the member understands the allegation
- allow the member to present their response fully
- ensure respectful and fair conduct
- Allow the member to provide written material or witness statements

If the member does not attend and has been properly notified, the committee may proceed.

9.5 Decision Making, the committee must deliberate in private and ensure:

- decisions are based on evidence
- outcomes are proportionate
- no bias influences the decision

9.6 Permitted outcomes under the Rules:

- no further action
- termination of membership

9.7 The written decision must include:

- findings
- reasons
- evidence relied upon
- conflict of interest management

9.8 Notice of Outcome, the Secretary must provide written notice of:

- the decision
- the reasons
- the effective date

The complainant may be advised of the outcome to the extent permitted by confidentiality.

10. Appeal Rights —

A member whose membership is terminated under the section *When membership ends* has a statutory right to appeal to a general meeting under sections dealing with these matters including *Appeal against rejection or termination of membership* and *General meeting to decide appeal*.

The general meeting must:

- give the member a full and fair opportunity to be heard
- vote on the appeal by majority

The decision of the general meeting is final.

Appeal rights apply only to decisions made under the section *When membership ends*. All other committee decisions, including administrative actions taken to address conduct or behaviour of concern, are not appealable.

11. Recordkeeping —

The Secretary must securely retain:

- complaint records
- preliminary assessments
- notices of allegation
- written responses
- meeting minutes
- written decisions
- notices of outcome
- conflict-of-interest declarations

Records must be stored confidentially and retained in accordance with governance requirements.

Definitions used in this document are as per the Hervey Bay City Bridge Club Glossary.
