



Policy Title:	Member Grievances, Complaints and Termination Policy.
Organisation Name:	Hervey Bay City Bridge Club Inc.
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1. Purpose —

This policy sets out how the Club manages grievances, complaints and disputes, and member-related conduct issues consistent with the Constitution. The policy ensures procedural fairness, and supports respectful, transparent resolution of disputes.

2. Scope —

This policy applies to:

- all members
- the management committee
- volunteers and participants (complaints only)

It provides a **three-tiered system**:

1. **Complaints** → dissatisfaction with service or operational issues
2. **Grievances** → statutory mediation
3. **Termination** → formal disciplinary action

It covers:

- Disputes – any disagreement or complaint raised by a member
- Grievances – a dispute that falls under the *Grievance procedure* (member vs member, member vs committee, member vs Club). These are limited to disputes suitable for negotiation and mediation.
- Complaints – an issue that does *not* fall under *Grievance procedure* (e.g., dissatisfaction, behaviour concerns, service issues)
- Conduct Concerns – behaviour that may justify termination action under *When membership ends*

PART A — STATUTORY *GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE*

3. What is a Grievance?

A grievance must meet all the following criteria:

- **It involves a dispute between:**
 - a member and another member
 - a member and the management committee
 - a member and the Club
- **It concerns a matter arising out of the member's rights or obligations under the Rules**, including:
 - decisions made by the committee
 - actions taken by the Club
 - conduct of another member that affects the member's rights or participation

Where a matter could reasonably fall under the *Grievance procedure*, the statutory grievance procedure takes precedence. A grievance is considered **raised** when the Club is notified of the dispute.

What a grievance is *not* under the *Grievance procedure*

- general complaints about behaviour
- dissatisfaction with how someone acted socially
- interpersonal friction that does not relate to rights or decisions
- operational complaints

Under the Constitution these issues should be handled under a **complaints** process, not the statutory grievance procedure.

4. Principles

The Club will:

- treat all parties fairly
- act promptly
- maintain confidentiality
- avoid bias
- keep written records

5. Steps in the Grievance Process

The Constitution follows the prescribed grievance procedure within the Act. A Club cannot add extra mandatory steps or alter the sequence.

Step 1 — Lodging a Formal Grievance

A member may lodge a grievance by notifying the other party and the Management Committee in writing, including:

- the nature of the dispute
- the parties involved
- the outcome sought

Step 2 — Initial Response

The Secretary will:

- acknowledge receipt
- provide a copy of this policy
- notify the other party of the grievance of the start the 14-day period for the matter to be resolved through dialogue between parties

Step 3 — Informal Resolution

Members are encouraged to resolve issues directly with the other party where appropriate. Informal resolution is optional and members cannot be forced to participate.

Step 4 — Mediation

If parties to the matter cannot resolve the issue in the initial 14-day period, either may request mediation within the next 21-day period.

The Club must refer the matter to mediation unless an exception applies under the section *Grievance procedure not continued in particular circumstances*. The Club will appoint an impartial mediator, either internally or externally, consistent with the request of both parties involved.

External dispute resolution applies **only if both parties consent**. This is because external mediation:

- is voluntary
- may involve cost
- involves an external third party making or facilitating decisions
- changes the nature of the process from internal to external

Because of this, the Club cannot force a member into external mediation, and a member cannot force the Club or the other party into it.

If agreed by both parties an internal mediator can be appointed who will:

- attempt to facilitate a mutually acceptable resolution
- give each party an opportunity to be heard, this means:
Sharing the *substance* of the grievance. Each party must know:
 - what the allegation or issue is
 - what conduct or decision is being disputed
 - what outcome is being sought

But you do not have to disclose:

- personal information irrelevant to the dispute
- sensitive background details
- the complainant's private motivations or unrelated history
- anything that would put someone at risk

Fairness and natural justice require clarity, not full disclosure.

Step 5 — End of Statutory Process

The outcome of mediation under the *Grievance procedure* is the end of the statutory process. The *Grievance procedure* is limited to the mediation process and does not empower any person or body to adjudicate, impose outcomes, or make binding determinations.

If the grievance remains unresolved after the mediation period, the parties may choose to continue with an internal resolution process. This step is voluntary and does not form part of the statutory grievance procedure. The parties may agree to refer the matter to:

- the management committee for facilitation of a further internal process, or
- an external dispute resolution service, provided both parties consent.

No party can be compelled to participate in any post-mediation process.

Once the statutory *Grievance procedure* has ended, any party may pursue external legal avenues. These may include seeking independent legal advice, lodging a complaint with the Office of Fair Trading, applying to QCAT or the Supreme Court for remedies such as judicial review, injunctions, or declaratory relief, or engaging in voluntary external mediation.

The Club cannot restrict or delay a member's right to pursue external legal remedies, and no internal rule or policy can require a member to exhaust internal processes before seeking external relief.

Step 6 — Appointment of a decision-maker/Further internal process (Optional)

Consistent with the *Act*, if both parties agree to continue with an internal process after mediation, the committee may appoint an impartial decision-maker or decision-making panel from the membership to consider the matter. This process is **optional** and **voluntary** and operates outside the formal *Grievance procedure* in the Constitution.

A decision-maker may be appointed when:

- mediation did not result in agreement
- the parties request a final internal determination
- the Club needs to close the matter administratively
- an independent member is preferred to avoid perceptions of bias

A decision-maker cannot be appointed if the parties have already reached a binding agreement through external mediation.

The decision-maker must:

- be independent of the grievance
- have no conflict of interest
- be capable of acting impartially

Their responsibilities include:

- considering relevant submissions and information from both parties
- ensuring each party has a fair opportunity to be heard

- deciding based on the Club's rules and policies
- providing written reasons explaining the findings and outcome

Any determination made through this optional internal process is final within the Club's internal processes, subject only to any rights available under:

- the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Qld)*, or
- general law (e.g., judicial review, natural justice principles)

PART B — COMPLAINTS (Non-Statutory Issues)

6. What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern about behaviour, service, communication, or conduct that does not fall within the statutory *Grievance procedure* in the Constitution and does not meet the threshold required for *When membership ends*.

Examples include:

- rudeness or discourtesy
- disruptive behaviour
- misunderstandings
- minor breaches of the *Code of Conduct*
- dissatisfaction with how something was handled
- interpersonal friction that does not affect rights or obligations

7. Principles

The Club will:

- treat complaints seriously and respectfully
- act promptly and proportionately
- maintain confidentiality
- avoid bias
- keep appropriate records
- resolve issues at the lowest reasonable level

8. Steps in the Complaint Pathway

Step 1 — Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, the Club encourages members to resolve minor issues directly with each other. This step is optional.

Step 2 — Lodging a Complaint

A member may lodge a complaint with the Secretary or President. The complaint should outline:

- the behaviour or issue
- when it occurred
- the impact
- the outcome sought

Step 3 — Initial Assessment

The committee will assess whether the matter is:

- a **complaint**
- a **grievance**
- a **membership-termination matter**
- a **safety issue** requiring immediate action

The committee will direct the matter to the correct pathway.

Step 4 — Managing the Complaint

Depending on the nature and seriousness of the issue, the committee may undertake further investigations as outlined in the associated procedure.

Administrative outcomes can include:

- *Verbal or Written Reminders*
 - Clarifying expected conduct
 - Reminding a member of the Code of Conduct
 - Reinforcing club values (respect, courtesy, fairness)
- *Expectations Notices*
 - Outlining specific behaviours that need to change
 - Setting clear expectations for future conduct
 - Confirming what “acceptable behaviour” looks like in practise
- *Informal Conversations*
 - A quiet word from a committee member
 - A conflict-diffusion conversation
 - Clarification of misunderstandings
- *Written Acknowledgement of Concern*
 - A neutral letter acknowledging an issue was raised
 - No blame, no findings, no penalty
 - Simply confirming the matter has been addressed
- *Request for an Apology*
 - Encouraging the member to apologise voluntarily
 - Facilitating reconciliation between members
 - Not a disciplinary direction — a behavioural request

These actions are **administrative**, not disciplinary, and do not invoke processes *When membership ends*.

Step 5 — Escalation (if needed)

If the behaviour continues, escalates, or becomes prejudicial to the Club, the committee may consider initiating action under ***When membership ends***.

PART C — MEMBERSHIP TERMINATION

9. What is a Membership Termination Matter?

Under *When membership ends*, the committee may terminate membership if a member:

- is convicted of an indictable offence;
- breaches the Constitution;
- has membership fees in arrears for at least 2 months; or
- behaves in a way considered to be injurious or prejudicial to the character or interests of the Club

This process is **initiated by the Club**, not by a member.

10. Principles

The Club will ensure:

- natural justice
- clear notice of allegations
- an opportunity for the member to respond
- unbiased decision-making
- proportionate outcomes

11. Steps in the Termination Process

Step 1 — Notice of Allegation

The Secretary will give the member written notice at least 14 days prior to taking any action stating:

- the proposed termination
- the grounds for termination
- the member's right to respond
- the date the member has opportunity to present their case

Step 2 — Meeting

At the meeting, the member must be given:

- a full and fair opportunity to present their case
- the right to bring a support person (not a legal representative unless approved)

Step 3 — Committee Decision

The committee may decide to:

- take no further action
- terminate membership

The decision must be:

- based on evidence
- free from bias
- recorded in writing

Step 4 — Notice of Outcome

The member will receive written notice of:

- the decision
- the reason

Step 5 — Appeals

A member whose membership is terminated may appeal to a general meeting. This is a mandatory statutory right. A general meeting must:

- be called within required timeframes
- give the member a full and fair opportunity to be heard
- decide the appeal by majority vote

PART D — INTERACTION BETWEEN GRIEVANCES AND TERMINATION

12. When a Grievance Reveals Conduct Issues

If a grievance reveals conduct that may justify termination:

1. The *Grievance process* must be properly concluded prior to any other action
2. If conduct appears prejudicial or likely to breach the rules, the committee can initiate action under *When membership ends* once the statutory process is complete

13. Grievances About the Termination Process

A member may raise a grievance about:

- bias
- unfair procedure
- unreasonable delay

However:

- a grievance cannot be used to obstruct or delay legitimate action under the section *When membership ends*
- the committee may pause the process if fairness requires it

14. Separation of Roles

To maintain fairness:

- mediators in grievances must not be decision-makers in termination matters
- committee members with conflicts of interest must step aside

To be clear, committee members with conflicts of interest are not prohibited from providing administrative assistance. They cannot influence the outcome and must limit their role to be strictly logistical. This distinction is widely recognised in governance practice, being:

- administration = process support
- decision-making = substantive judgment

PART E — RECORD-KEEPING & CONFIDENTIALITY

15. Records

The Club will keep:

- grievance notices
- mediation notes
- membership termination notices
- decisions and reasons

16. Confidentiality

All parties must maintain confidentiality except where disclosure is:

- required by law
- necessary to carry out this policy
- authorised by the committee

Confidentiality is maintained by sharing the *substance* of the grievance, not the private details. Each party must know:

- what the allegation or issue is
- what conduct or decision is being disputed
- what outcome is being sought

However, you do not have to disclose:

- personal information irrelevant to the dispute
- sensitive background details
- the complainant's private motivations or unrelated history
- anything that would put someone at risk

PART F — REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

17. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if:

- legislation changes
- the Model Rules are updated
- the committee determines a review is needed

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