



Policy #15

Complaint Handling Policy

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Foundation for all sports

Little Athletics Tasmania Complaint Handling Policy

Introduction

Tasmanian Little Athletics Association Inc. (LATas) is committed to the provision of quality services. A consistent approach to the handling of complaints is integral to effective service delivery.

The aim of the LATas Complaint Handling Procedure is to define complaints and the system for dealing with complaints submitted or referred to the LATas. It serves to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and impartially and strives to satisfactorily resolve disputes between the Association and complainants in a timely fashion.

Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is defined as a formal expression of dissatisfaction with some aspect of the LATas's services, policies and procedures, whether justified or not.

A complaint does not include a request for information or clarification of LATas rules, policies, procedures or decisions.

Complainant

The person lodging the complaint.

Minor Complaint

A complaint dealing with a matter that can be explained or resolved by existing rules, policies and procedures.

Scope

Only complaints where the complainant has identified themselves are covered by this procedure. Anonymous complaints are not within the terms of this procedure although it is expected that the validity of such complaints will be assessed and corrective action taken, if necessary.

Implementation

The LATas board will induct staff on the processes involved in the Complaint Handling Procedure and the communication skills required for effective complaint handling. Where required, further training will be provided in customer service and/or complaint handling.

Lodging a Complaint

Complaints may be lodged with the LATas:

- in person
- by telephone
- by facsimile, email or letter

and should detail the name, address and contact phone numbers of the complainant, together with a brief description of the problem.

Confidentiality

LATas will not disclose the identity of a complainant if that complainant requests that their details remain confidential.

Responsibility

1. If the complaint is about an incident, person or operation at a Centre level and the matter has not been brought to the attention of the Centre for attempted resolution, then the matter should be referred back to the Centre in the first instance.

If the complaint is made by phone, the complainant is to be given details of the Centre and the person with whom they should lodge the complaint.

If the complaint is received in writing, the President will arrange for a copy of the complaint, along with a covering letter to be sent to the appropriate person at the Centre. The President will also arrange for a letter to be sent to the complainant advising that the matter has been referred back to the Centre, giving details of the Centre contact.
2. In the case of verbal complaints received by telephone or in person, the LATas administration officer is empowered to resolve **minor** complaints, within their sphere of knowledge, wherever possible, at first contact.

If the complaint is of a more significant nature or outside the level of knowledge of the Administration Officer, the Officer will request that the complaint be documented and forwarded to the LATas Office for further attention. The Administration Officer will not attempt to discuss and resolve the matter. Alternatively, the matter will be immediately referred to the President.
3. Written complaints (letter, email, facsimile) will be passed on to the President for attention.

Procedures

Minor verbal complaints

1. On receipt of a verbal complaint, the LATas Administration Officer will immediately determine if the complaint is of a minor nature; and whether they themselves possess the required knowledge to attempt resolution.
2. If the complaint is one to which the Administration Officer is able to attempt resolution, then they will listen to the complaint in accordance with the guidelines set out in Appendix A of this procedure.
3. The Administration Officer will address the complainant's concerns in a detailed and complete manner, outlining how or why the situation or incident occurred, being clear on what solutions can be offered. The Administration Officer will aim to answer the points raised in positive, professional and caring manner, and with complete impartiality
4. If the complaint requires further investigation, the complainant will be advised of the course of action and provided with a target date for providing a response.
5. If, after discussion and/or investigation, the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved it may be:
 - referred for further discussion and possible resolution with the President; or
 - documented by the complainant in written format and forwarded to the LATas for further attention
6. The Administration Officer will document all verbal complaints on a LATas Complaint Form detailing the name address and contact details of the complainant, together with a brief description of the problem and the resolution/outcome. The completed form will be passed onto the President for corrective action, where required, and/or filing. Additionally, all complaints will be recorded in the Complaints Register, detailing the name of the complainant, the nature of the complaint and the resolution/action taken.
7. All information received will remain strictly confidential.

Written Complaints

1. All written complaints will be filed accordingly, and then referred to the President, on the day of receipt. If the complaint is about the President it will be referred to the LATas Finance Director.
2. Within three (3) working days of receipt of the complaint, the President or their appointee shall write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint and explain the procedure to be applied. A target date for providing a response will also be advised.
3. If the complaint is about another person, they should also be told about the procedure and the target date for resolution.
4. All complaints should aim to be resolved within 28 days.
5. If the outcome of the investigation is delayed, the President or their appointee will contact the complainant and where applicable, the person who is the subject of the complaint, to keep them informed as to the progress.

6. The President will review the complaint and investigate as they consider appropriate. This may include contacting/interviewing witnesses and/or other persons involved. Written records will be kept of all meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
7. If there is any concern regarding the legal implications of a complaint, the matter will be immediately referred to the LATas Legal Advisor and resolution of the matter will be based upon the legal advice provided.
8. Once all of the relevant facts have been established, the President will produce a written response to the complainant, or may refer the matter directly to the Board of Management. Such response will include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it and where applicable and appropriate, what action the LATas will take to resolve the complaint.
9. Prior to writing to the complainant to report the outcome of the investigation, the President will discuss the complaint and the findings with at least one member of the Board of Management, to confirm the outcome.
10. If following the response from the President, the complainant remains unsatisfied and renews the complaint; the complaint will be referred to the Board of Management.
11. Within seven (7) working days of renewal of the complaint, the President or their appointee shall write to the complainant to confirm that a review will be carried out. A target date for providing a response to the review will also be advised.
12. If the outcome of the review is delayed, the President or their appointee will contact the complainant to keep them aware of the progress.
13. If the complainant remains unsatisfied following any review and further investigation, the complainant may seek external mediation.
14. The President will ensure that all complaints are recorded in the Complaints Register, detailing the name of the complainant, the nature of the complaint and the resolution/action taken.

Review

The volume and type of complaints should be reviewed by the LATas Board on a regular basis. This review will be used as a basis for assessing needs and attitudes towards LATas's services and activities.

On a periodic basis (at least annually), all complaints received will be analysed to identify trends and areas of dissatisfaction. This information will be considered when reviewing policies and procedures and where appropriate, incorporated into future action plans. The volume and type of complaints will be used to establish benchmarks for improvement.

Principles of Effective Complaint Handling

Treat all complaints seriously	However small or trivial it may seem to you, the complaint will be an important problem for anyone who takes the trouble to complain.
Treat every complaint individually	Even if you have already received several similar complaints the same day, it is probably the person's first chance to have their say.
Listen	Listening is the first step in reducing tension
Be courteous and patient	Be sympathetic, courteous and helpful, but avoid laying on blame to other colleagues. Acknowledge the complainant's feelings.
Identify yourself	If you are unknown to the person, introduce yourself.
Ask for their name and use it	Anonymous complaints are acceptable only where there are special circumstances.
Take time to find out exactly what the problem is	It is easy for someone to forget to tell you an important detail, particularly if they are upset or annoyed. Ask the necessary questions. Confirm details received.
Don't take the complaint personally	To an angry or upset person, YOU are the Association, and the only one they can put their feelings to right now. Do not be defensive. Do not argue with the complainant.
Stay cool and calm	Do not argue with the person – be polite and try to find out exactly what the person thinks is going wrong, or has gone wrong.
Check you are being understood	Make sure that the person understands what you are saying. Don't use jargon – it can cause confusion and annoyance to someone "not in the know".
Don't rush	Take your time. Let people have their say, and let off steam if they need to. Listen carefully and sympathetically to their problems before replying and attempting to find a solution or offer a next step.
Don't create false expectations	Explain courses of action that are realistically available.
Ensure a satisfactory outcome	Ask if the complainant is satisfied with the explanation or action taken / proposed. If not, give advice about available alternatives.

Complaint Form

Complainants Personal Details

Name:

Address:

Contact Details

Landline Mobile

Email

Complaint Details

If the complaint is about a person or organisation, please provide details.

Details of the Complaint

(if insufficient space, please continue over page)

Has the complaint been brought to the attention of the person/s involved / concerned?

Yes

No

If Yes, what was the outcome?

LATas feedback / advice given

Complainant satisfied

Yes

No

Comments

Signed:

Position

Date

Complaint Handling Chart (for verbal complaints)

