



COMPLAINTS – GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Document 1007 Version: 4

Date of Issue: 01/12/2006 Date Revised 19/07/2021

Next Review Due: 19/07/2023

1. Purpose and Scope

This provides guidelines to the Milang and District Community Association Incorporated (MDCA Inc.) staff, volunteers, and consumers to achieve resolution of complaints in a positive manner, as quickly, fairly and effectively as possible. The fair and equitable resolution of any complaint will be the ultimate goal for all parties.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. Complaint - an expression of grievance or resentment; a statement saying that one is dissatisfied.

3. Background

- 3.1 MDCA Inc. recognises that complaints do occur and that members of the public have the right to raise complaints and have them heard and acted upon.
- 3.2 Complaints can have a major impact on MDCA Inc. Without clear procedures to deal with these quickly there can be negative consequences such as a negative perception and dissatisfaction within the community.
- 3.3 MDCA Inc. recognises that it is important to respond to community needs appropriately and to ensure quality services are provided. Individual, group, and agency feedback is a valuable guide to MDCA Inc.

4. Principles

- 4.1 Complaints will be dealt with transparently, promptly and in a way that supports the rights of consumers and takes account of their particular abilities and circumstances.
- 4.2 MDCA Inc. welcomes information and feedback from consumers both formally via regular satisfaction surveys and informally at any time, which will enable improvement in the quality of our services.
- 4.3 A clear written procedure for dealing with complaints will be available to staff and volunteers to guide their response.
- 4.4 A confidential comments box will be available in a private area of the facility and comment forms made available for individuals to fill out and lodge.

- 4.5 Information about how to make a complaint will be included in program/service information (including staff and volunteer induction packages) and made available to consumers.
- 4.6 Consumers have a right to complain about the service they are receiving without fear of retribution and can expect complaints to be dealt with fairly and promptly.
- 4.7 All complaints are to be recorded on the Complaints Record Form which is to be completed by the Chief Executive Officer or program coordinator. Any complaints received regarding the Chief Executive Officer will be directed to the President of MDCA Inc. and appropriate responses put in place.
- 4.8 Person/s affected by the complaint will be fully informed of the complaint and given the opportunity to put their case.
- 4.9 All complaints received by the Chief Executive Officer will be dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner and then be reviewed at the following MDCA Inc. Committee Meeting where appropriate management responses will be put in place.
- 4.10 Any complaints directed to the MDCA Inc. will be in writing.
- 4.11 The MDCA Inc. will respond in writing to all complaints it receives.

5. Documentation

- Fair Work Act 2009
- Federal Workplace Relations Act 1996
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act and Regulations 1986
- Privacy Act 1988
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
- Whistle blowers Protection Act 2019
- Associations Incorporation Act 1985
- Volunteer Protection Legislation 2001 (SA)

6. Procedure

This document describes a step-by-step process for managing complaints at MDCA Inc. It should be read in conjunction with the Complaints guidelines. In general, complaints should be managed immediately, by the staff or volunteers concerned and as informally as possible.

- 6.1 Receive complaints constructively and openly.
- 6.2 Establish the detail of the complaint.
- 6.3 Decide if you are the person to deal with it. Refer the matter on if:

- it is a matter of MDCA Inc. policy or public statements (to the Chief Executive Officer)
- it is directed at another staff member/volunteer
- the complainant requests or expects to deal with a more senior staff member
- you do not feel confident to manage the complaint

6.4 Resolve the complaint as quickly and immediately as possible.

- Adopt a positive attitude to the complainant and the complaint.
- Listen, attempt to understand, and clarify the nature of the complaint where possible.
- Express empathy and understanding.
- Ensure that the complainant is aware of the process for making a complaint if the complaint is not quickly and easily resolvable. Offer to explain the process.
- Assist the person where necessary to complete the Complaint Form, where appropriate.
- Record all complaints in the Complaints Register.
- In the face of threatening or abusive behaviour, do not continue to try to resolve the complaint but summon aid and support.
- Move complaints processes along as quickly as possible and keep complainants regularly notified of the progress of their complaint.

Some successful methods of resolving complaints that can be used singly or in combination are:

- Showing empathy – words and gestures that send the message that we understand the complainant’s inconvenience and displeasure
- Express regret – words and gestures that send the message that MDCA Inc. is sorry but without necessarily admitting fault or liability
- Acknowledge the fault where the issue is minor, the fault is clear, and redress can be quickly and easily made.
- Offer redress where appropriate.
- Offer to follow-up. You may offer to make inquiries and contact the complainant at an agreed time or within an agreed period. The standard response time is one week.
- Offer to refer the matter to a more senior person on staff. An offer to refer to someone more senior in the organisation can demonstrate to a complainant that their issue is being taken seriously.

7. Admission of fault

Volunteers or staff taking a complaint in the first instance should refrain from admissions of fault and refrain from making or agreeing to statements that denigrate MDCA Inc. or individuals connected with it.

8. Timelines

- Resolution of complaints should happen as quickly as possible.
- Complainants should be contacted within one working week of receipt of a complaints form or written complaint.
- Meetings should be arranged at the earliest possible date.
- Complainants should be kept regularly informed of the progress of their complaint.

If the situation **cannot be resolved** informally then the following **Complaints** flow chart will be implemented:

Verbal complaint is referred to the Chief Executive Officer who will address the issue in accordance with the MDCA Inc. Complaints Policy.



The person receiving the complaint is expected to:

- Talk to all the parties involved and ask for further explanation
- Spend time reviewing all the explanations
- Document the incidents including dates on a Complaints Record
- Discuss options for resolution of the complaint with the people involved
- Document the outcome of the resolution process.
- Ensure confidentiality



If unresolved, the complaint is to be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer and addressed by him/her in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

If the grievance is against the Chief Executive Officer, then the written complaint is to be addressed to the President of the MDCA Inc. and marked 'Confidential'.



If the written complaint cannot be resolved with the assistance of the Chief Executive Officer, the President of the **MDCA Inc.** must be informed in writing - marked 'Confidential' and requested to resolve the issue in accordance with the Complaints Policy.



The President will convene a sub-committee of the **MDCA Inc.** (With 2 other members) to investigate the complaint. This sub-committee may call for such other witnesses/and or written reports/seek expert assistance as it deems necessary.



Having carried out its investigations, the sub-committee shall notify its findings and make recommendations as appropriate to the MDCA Inc. The Chief Executive Officer and the complainant will be notified of the outcomes within 15 working days of the receipt of the matter by the sub-committee.



A person making a complaint has the right to contact an external agency for advice or help at any stage of the procedure including if they are unhappy with the way the complaint has been resolved.

Links

Complaints Record Form

Complaints register

RELEVANT MDCA POLICIES

Governance Policy

Service Delivery Policy

Community Involvement and Well-being Policy

Environmental Policy

Rights and Responsibilities Policy