

PESA COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

1.Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently, and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to members who wish to make a complaint about to or PESA, as well as those handling such complaints.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all members, contractors, and our executive committee, those receiving or managing complaints from the public and members made to or about us, regarding our events, activities, members, or our complaint handling process.

1.3 PESA commitment

The society expects all members to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from members and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
Members of the Executive committee	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	Report to the governing body on our complaint handling. Provide adequate support and direction to key members responsible for handling complaints. Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints. Encourage all members to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly. Encourage members to make recommendations for system improvements. Support recommendations for procedures, activities, and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.
Members whose duties include complaint handling (may include members of the executive committee)	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. Assist people to make a complaint, if needed. Comply with our policy and associated procedures. Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints. Provide suggestions to the executive on ways to improve our complaints system. Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.
All society members	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.	Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures. Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process. Be alert to complaints and assist those handling complaints resolve matters promptly.

2. Terms and Definitions

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our activities, members, or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. (AS/NZ 10002:2014)

Complaint handling/management system

All policies, procedures, practices, members, hardware, and software used by us in the management of complaints.

Dispute

An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organization, or a dispute between two members of the Society. The process for resolving the latter is outline in Section 25 of the Society's rules

Feedback

Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, (including via social media) about our activities or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Grievance

A clear, formal written statement by an individual member about another member or a society related problem. Resolution of grievances is done by following the procedure set out in Section 25 of the Society's rules.

Policy

A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.

Procedure

A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

3. Guiding principles

Our complaint handling system is underpinned by the values of the Society and the principles of fairness, responsiveness, and transparency.



3.1 Process for Facilitating complaints

People focus

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our activities, practices, procedures, and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame (as in AS/NZ 10002).

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it
- listened to, treated with respect by members and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

No detriment to people making complaints

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anonymous complaints

We accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided. A complaint can be raised on someone else's behalf. The Integrity Officer provides confidential support and can ensure the anonymity of the person raising a complaint.

Accessibility

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is publicised on our website and is available to our members. We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them (through their representative if this is their wish). Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g., advocate, family member, legal or community representative).

3.2 Respond to complaints

Early resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us.

When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

Responsiveness

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

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We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Responding flexibly

Our members are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

Confidentiality

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

3.3 Manage the parties to a complaint

Empowerment of members

All members managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Members are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

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We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

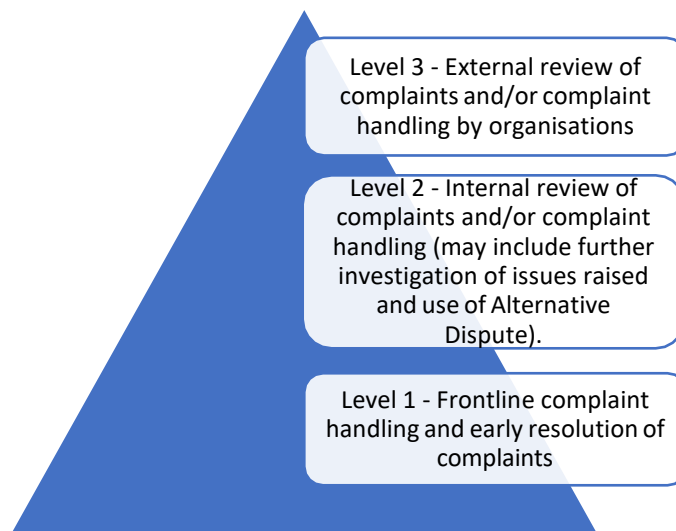
- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety, and security of our staff, and
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably or vexatiously in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman or oversight regulatory bodies).

The three levels of complaint handling



Level 1

We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible executive members will be adequately equipped to respond to negative feedback and complaints, including being given appropriate authority.

Level 2

Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint. This second level of complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:

- assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or
- facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).

Level 3

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their

complaint, they may seek an external review of our decision (by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission for example).

4 Accountability and learning

4.1 Analysis and evaluation of complaints

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by the Executive committee.

We will run annual reports on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends and make improvements as necessary and appropriate.

Both reports and their analysis will be available to members. Major changes to the complaints handling procedures will be reported to AGM.

4.2 Continuous improvement

We are committed to improving the way our society operates, including our management of the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:

- support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- annually review the complaint management system and complaint data, and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.

PESA COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

Introduction

When responding to complaints, members act in accordance with complaint handling procedure as well as abiding by the Societies rules other documents providing guidance on the management of complaints.

Any relevant legislation and/or regulations should be considered when responding to complaints and feedback.

The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below



1 Receive

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information. We will also assign a unique identifier/number to the complaint file.

The record of the complaint will document:

- Contact information of the person making a complaint and the date received
- Issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want
- Any other relevant information, and
- Any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

2 Acknowledge

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within 5 working days. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint. If the complaint is assessed and determined to be a grievance, the grievance procedures outlined in Section 25 of the Society rules will be followed rather than this complaints procedure.

3 Assess and investigate

3.1 Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed. When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated, or urgent the complaint is
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and

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- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

3.2 Investigating the complaint

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. We may:

- Give the person making a complaint information or an explanation
- Gather information about the issue, person, or area that the complaint is about, or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

We will keep the person making the complaint up-to-date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

4 Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action we took
- The reason/s for our decision
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- Any options for review that may be available to the complainant.

If the complaint is assessed and determined to pertain to a dispute with a fellow society member, or to be a grievance, the procedure set out in Section 25 of the Society's rules will be followed, rather than the complaints procedure. The person making the complaint will be advised of this decision and the relevant procedure.

5 Close the complaint: document and analyse data

5.1 Document

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes.

5.2 Analyse data

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored, and reported to the President of our Executive Committee.

Draft PESA FEEDBACK/COMPLAINT STRATEGY

PROPOSAL: Website Feedback portal

A dedicated section of the website will be devoted to allowing members to contact the organization.

When people click on the feedback link they will be presented with a form that asks why they seeking to contact PESA. Each button leads to a slightly different set of further questions.

Nature of feedback to PESA

Feedback/General enquiries

Link to feedback form

Complaint

Link to Complaint form (Complaint form has a hyperlink to PESA Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure document).

Confidential/Sensitive Issue

Link to Safe Space Policy and advice to contact IntegrityOfficer@pesa.org.au

Feedback and enquiry form

Name:

Email Address:

Feedback for PESA: [open text box]

Upon submission of the feedback form we will send an automatic message

Thank you for getting in touch with PESA. We appreciate you taking the time to contact us. Please accept this message as receipt of your feedback. We may follow up this message if your message has indicated that this is required.

Complaint form



The image above depicts PESA's complaints process. You can read our complaints policy and procedures here [hyperlink to policy and procedures documents]. You are welcome to raise a complaint on behalf of another person.

If the complaint is of a sensitive nature and you would prefer to make a confidential statement, please see the safe space policy [hyperlink]. Rather than using the complaints form below please contact integrityofficer@pesa.org.au. The Integrity Officer can raise a complaint for you so that you remain anonymous in the complaints process.

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Name:

Email Address:

Are you making this complaint on behalf of another person?

Please describe your complaint or the issues that you are raising, and the outcome being sought. [Open text box].

Is there any other relevant information that you would like to provide? [Open text box]

You do require any additional support (other than any you may have described above)? [Open text box]

Upon submission of the complaint form we will send an automatic message:

Please accept this message as receipt of your complaint. We will get in touch to resolve this issue. If the matter is deemed to be serious an independent assessor will be assigned to resolve this complaint.*

*(*Independent from those involved in the complaint)*

Following consideration of this complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact and advise you:

- *The outcome of the complaint and any action we took*
- *The reason/s for our decision*
- *The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and*
- *Any options for review that may be available to you.*

If your complaint is assessed and determined to pertain to a dispute with a fellow society member, or to be a grievance, the procedure set out in Section 25 of the Society's rules will be followed, rather than the complaints procedure.

Be please aware that there are other avenues available to support you.

You are welcome to contact our Safe Spaces Integrity Officer integrityofficer@pesa.org.au who offers confidential support.

Crisis Support is available from organisations such as Lifeline 13 11 14 (Australia)

If you feel at the completion of this process that your complaint is not resolved the [Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission](#) can be contacted to investigate the conduct of this organization.

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DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version 1		
Prepared by	Rachel Buchanan, PESA Treasurer	16/08/2022
Consultation	The PESA Executive Committee	16/08/2022
	Christoph Teschers	01/12/2022
	Bruce Haynes	01/12/2022
Endorsed	PESA Executive Committee	07/12/2022
	AGM	10/12/2022
Responsibility for further Action	PESA Executive Committee – Policy and Procedure to be reviewed Dec 2023	