

NGARUKI GULGUL LIMITED

'Standing Strong' in Darkinyung Language

Trading as:



Policies and Procedures **COMPLAINT AND COMPLIMENT** **MANAGEMENT**

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POLICY 4.B1.1P: COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

Date:	06.08.2024	Version:	5
NESA Manual:	B	Next Review:	August 2026
Related Documents:			
Relevant Legislation:			

1. Ngaruki Gulgul Central School (NG) welcomes compliments, complaints and suggestions from any person about any aspect of our education, services, programs, policies or procedures, including employed staff, contractors, and volunteers.
2. Complaints and compliments deserve acknowledgement, attention, respect, and a timely response.
3. This policy comes into effect when:
 - 3.1. a **stakeholder**
 - 3.2. informs a **staff member**
 - 3.3. of a **complaint** or **compliment**.

Stakeholder

4. A stakeholder is any person with an interest in the school.
5. A stakeholder who makes a complaint is a complainant.

Staff member

6. For this policy, a staff member includes anyone engaged by the school to deliver its services and programs, including employees, contractors and volunteers.

Complaint

7. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation related to its services or service quality, decisions, policies, procedures, charges or fees, staff members, or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
8. Complaints may be:
 - 8.1. made orally or in writing,
 - 8.2. resolved informally or formally.
9. NG will try to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

Compliment

10. A compliment is an expression of satisfaction made to an organisation related to its services or service quality, decisions, policies, procedures, charges or fees, or staff members.

Related Policies

11. Complaints that are not addressed within this policy include:
 - 11.1. reportable conduct; addressed by the *Child Protection Policy*,
 - 11.2. a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work; addressed by the *Code of Conduct* and *Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure for Employees*,
 - 11.3. unlawful discrimination, harassment, or bullying complaints; addressed by the *Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy*,
 - 11.4. whistleblowing disclosures; addressed in the school's *Whistleblowers Policy*,
 - 11.5. grievances between students, parents, carers, or other members of the school community.

Making a complaint

12. Complaints may firstly be raised directly with the person involved,
13. however, may be made to the person's supervisor, or to the principal, where:
 - 13.1. a person does not feel comfortable raising a complaint with the person involved,
 - 13.2. it is not appropriate to raise the complaint with the person involved.
14. Complainants lodging a verbal complaint will be encouraged to submit it in writing,
15. however, where this is not appropriate, the Complainant will be referred to the relevant Supervisor who will document the complaint.

Responding to a complaint

16. Complaints and compliments will be acknowledged:
 - 16.1. by the person receiving the complaint if received verbally,
 - 16.2. in writing within 2 business days of receipt if received in writing,
 - 16.3. and include an:
 - 16.3.1. explanation of the complaint handling process,
 - 16.3.2. estimate of time before further contact with the Complainant.
17. Complaints will be handled in a timely manner, considering the complexity and seriousness of the issue raised.
18. NG will suggest, as appropriate:
 - 18.1. firstly, informal resolution between the parties,
 - 18.2. secondly, restorative justice practices with the parties,

18.3. formal resolution where:

18.3.1. informal or restorative processes have not resolved the complaint,

18.3.2. the complaint is of a nature that requires investigation.

Complaint handling

19. A Complainant will not be disadvantaged through lodging a complaint in good faith, regardless of the outcome.

20. All parties will be afforded natural justice and procedural fairness in the handling of complaints including:

20.1. a clear outline of the process,

20.2. transparent complaint handling,

20.3. equal opportunity to participate,

20.4. respectful treatment,

20.5. explanation of any decision.

21. Individuals handling complaints (“handlers”) will have authority and support to carry out the process effectively, and access to training and resources to fulfil their role.

22. Appropriate confidentiality is to be observed throughout a complaint, including the handling and storage of records.

23. Individuals involved in handling, investigating or adjudicating a complaint must cease to do so if at any time they become aware they have a conflict of interest.

24. All parties are entitled to assistance from a support person, such as:

24.1. an advocate,

24.2. a family member,

24.3. a friend,

24.4. a carer,

24.5. another person.

25. NG can determine whether a person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined to be inappropriate.

26. Where it is within NG’s responsibility, fair and reasonable remedies will be offered.

PROCEDURE 4.B1.1P: COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

Date:	20.08.2024	Version:	5
NESA Manual:	B	Next Review:	August 2026
Related Documents:			
Relevant Legislation:			

Acknowledgement

1. Acknowledge the complaint or compliment:
 - 1.1. verbally, at the time complaint is received, if received verbally,
 - 1.2. in writing, within 2 business days of receipt, if received in writing,
2. Your acknowledgement is to include:
 - 2.1. validation of the Complainant's concerns,
 - 2.2. an explanation of the complaint handling process,
 - 2.3. a copy of the complaint handling flowchart,
 - 2.4. a summary of your understanding of:
 - 2.4.1. the Complainant's issue(s),
 - 2.4.2. the Complainant's desired outcome(s),
 - 2.4.3. whether any further steps are to be taken,
 - 2.4.4. any next steps agreed to be taken,
 - 2.5. an estimate of time before the Complainant is contacted regarding their complaint (if any further steps are to be taken).
3. Informal resolution directly with the individual(s) involved will be suggested in the first instance if possible.
4. If direct informal resolution is not possible, or unsuccessful:
 - 4.1. written complaints will be encouraged,
 - 4.2. otherwise, verbal complaints will be referred to the supervisor of any individual(s) involved to document and acknowledge the complaint.

Complaint Handling

The Principal generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint needs to be dealt with by other policies
- whether it needs to be referred to anyone
- how the Complainant wants it dealt with (formal, informal, etc)

School responsibilities and requirements

1. The Principal is responsible for:

- Providing leadership in demonstrating a commitment to the resolution of complaints.
- Making any final decisions relating to complaints.
- Providing independent impartial advice and assistance to managers or supervisors who have received and are handling a complaint.

2. Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:

- Overall management and monitoring of complaints handling within their programs.
- Exercising primary responsibility for receiving and resolving complaints and any conflict in their areas in a timely and fair way.
- Advising people of their right to make a complaint where appropriate.
- Providing advice and assistance to people who have a complaint.
- Providing independent impartial and confidential information to complainants about the procedure for dealing with complaints including listening to the issues and helping the person clarify the facts.
- Conducting internal reviews of complaints in both process and content.
- Identifying systemic issues arising from complaints and making recommendations to management.
- Responding to complaints.

3. Complainants are responsible for:

- Providing a clear and honest account of their concerns and their expectations for the outcome of their complaint, including providing all relevant information and documents to assist in the investigation and/or resolution of the matter.
- Engaging openly in the complaint management process, including participating in discussions with other parties to resolve concerns.
- Responding to NG requests for information in a timely manner.
- Respecting those individuals involved in the complaint management process.

5. Resolution

The operation of the complaints handling process and findings will be reported to the Principal to improve NG's service delivery and workplace environment. Preventative and corrective action will be taken to eliminate the causes of complaints and to improve the quality of NG's policies and operating environment.

6. PROCEDURES

There are four main stages in these procedures. Generally, these stages will be undertaken in progression unless the nature of the individual complaint or the wishes of the complainant determines otherwise. 1. Feedback 2. Complaints 3. Referral

6.1. Feedback procedures

Everyone is welcome to provide feedback! You can tell us, email us, write a letter or fill out our online survey. We will respond to all feedback and it will be treated confidentially.

6.2. Raising a complaint

6.2.1. The complainant

If the complaint is received via our [website contact page](#), the receiver will forward it to the relevant Supervisor and copy in the Principal.

Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal, via email andrea@ngc.nsw.edu.au.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board, via email chair@ngc.nsw.edu.au. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the Chair.

6.2.2. The school

The Business Manager, Supervisor or Principal will acknowledge receipt of a formal written complaint as soon as practicable.

6.3. Assessing a complaint

The Principal/Supervisor generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- 6.3.1. whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by other relevant policies; and
- 6.3.2. the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- 6.3.3. whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Ombudsman, Police, Department of Community and Justice, or other

relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

6.4. Managing a formal complaint

The Principal/Supervisor generally will manage a formal complaint by:

- 6.4.1. advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- 6.4.2. if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- 6.4.3. collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- 6.4.4. making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- 6.4.5. advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal/Supervisor and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

6.5. Complaint resolution

6.5.1. Preliminary advice to the complainant

The Complaint Handler shall assist the complainant by sensitively and carefully understanding the complaint, explaining the options available and helping the complainant decide if they want to proceed to an informal conciliatory or formal internal investigation process as outlined in Option 1 and Option 2 below.

6.5.1.1. Option 1 – Resolution through conciliation

If the complainant chooses to seek resolution through an internal conciliation process then the following steps are appropriate:

- a. The complainant may approach the other party directly or ask the Complaint Handler to approach the other person or persons on their behalf. If a third party is to be involved in resolution, a trained conciliator/mediator will be involved to assist the parties.
- b. If the other person or persons admit to the behaviour or the acts complained about, and an agreement between the parties is reached, the complaint is resolved.
- c. Even if the person does not admit to the behaviour or acts complained about, the parties may be able to agree to an

outcome that is acceptable to the complainant and the other parties.

- d. If an acceptable outcome is reached the Complaint Handler will be responsible for ensuring that the appropriate people who need to know about the outcome are appropriately informed so that the outcome is implemented and followed. As matters handled this way are usually minor, resolution would generally include an apology and agreement not to repeat the behaviour or actions complained about.

6.5.1.2. Option 2 – Resolution through an internal investigation

If the complainant chooses to seek resolution through the internal and formal investigation process the following steps will be followed.

1. The investigator (Complaint Handler/Supervisor in the first instance) will interview the complainant and the allegations will be particularised in writing. During this interview and in any consequent stages of the process an appropriate support person may support the complainant.
2. The investigator will put the allegations in full to the other party or parties.
3. If there are any disputes over facts, the investigator will interview any witnesses and gather evidence that will assist in making a finding and gather any other relevant evidence that will assist in making a finding. Based on the facts of the matter the investigator will make a finding whether the complaint has substance.
4. A report documenting the investigation process, the evidence, the findings and a recommended outcome will be made to the Principal. The Principal will assess the report, consult with any appropriate parties (not the parties to the complaint) and implement an appropriate outcome.
5. The Principal will advise the direct parties to the complaint and any other relevant parties of their decision.

7. REFERRAL OF COMPLAINTS

In general, NG will consult with the complainant to identify how the complainant wishes the complaint/grievance to be handled and the outcomes the complainant is seeking without reference of the matter to third parties.

However, where the conduct complained about amounts to serious misconduct (e.g. serious risk to the health and safety of employees or clients), to a criminal offence, or

where mandatory reporting is legislated, the School has an obligation to deal with the matter under the relevant rules and to refer the matter to the Police or other agency for investigation e.g. WorkCover.

Complaints and grievances may also be lodged to:

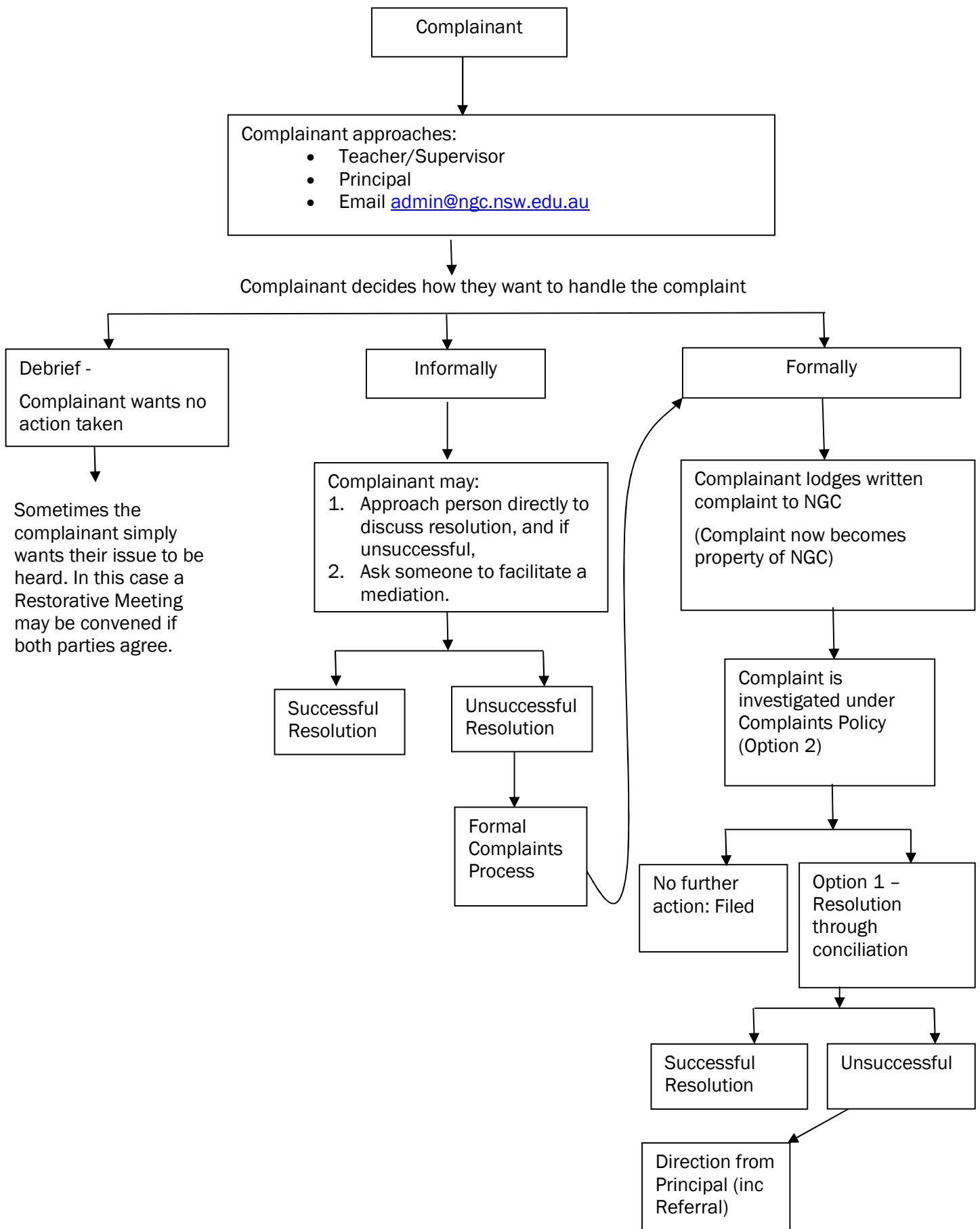
[Australian Consumer Law \(ACL\)](#) is a single, Australia-wide law that governs and protects fair trading practices, introduced on 1 January 2011. ACL is a sub-section of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*, and is administered and enforced by the [Australian Competition and Consumer Commission \(ACCC\)](#)

The [Competition and Consumer Act 2010](#) sets out terms for fair and competitive business trading - including returns, refunds and warranties - and defines consumer and business rights and responsibilities.

8. CONTACT

If you have any queries about this procedure, contact the Principal on 02)4343 5000 for advice.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FLOWCHART



Record of Policy Review:

<i>Date Policy was Issued</i>	<i>Date of Review</i>	<i>Reason for Review</i>	<i>Lead Reviewer</i>	<i>Additional Comments</i>
Jul 2014		Policy creation		Original document
	Mar 2015	Formatting and separation of employee grievances	Principal	
	Jun 2017	Logo and wording to reflect school environment	Principal	Split from YC
	Mar 2020	Legislative changes	Principal	expectations for stakeholders regarding complaints or allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct (requirement 3.6.1) and a whistle-blowing statement.
	Aug 2024	NESA Manual update	Principal	Readability changes, update to new policy structure