



## Complaints Handling Policy Policy Number: P005

### Background

The Management Committee of the Port Macquarie Community College has sought to provide a fair and well researched policy to deal with suggestions, complaints and allegations. As the College falls under the governance of the Adult and Community Education Unit in the Department of Education and Communities (DEC), it was decided that the current policy developed by DEC met the Committee's approach and requirements to the management of suggestions, complaints and allegations.

The approach of the policy is described as follows.

A professional response to suggestions, complaints and allegations, leads to improvements and creates confidence in the outcome.

Complaints, as well as compliments and other constructive feedback, create opportunities for an organisation to improve its services and prevent future problems.

The DEC *Complaints Handling Policy* sets out the framework for that professional response. It requires staff to use professional judgement and a balanced consideration of the rights and needs of the parties. It encourages systems improvement to prevent recurrence of problems.

These procedures emphasise the necessity of dealing with complaints in terms of the potential seriousness of the complaint rather than on the basis of the category of the person who made the complaint. This means that aggrieved staff, students or community members will be treated on equal terms. (p.1)

### Procedure

The Complaints Handling Policy distinguishes the following categories for complaint:

- Protected disclosures
- Protection and support of children and young people
- Anti-discrimination
- Other alleged serious breaches of legislation, policy, procedure or contract
- All other suggestions and complaints

For the first four categories please refer directly to the policy.

### All other suggestions and complaints

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Complaints, suggestions and other feedback from the people who use the College services are welcomed. They help staff to meet expectations, remedy problems and improve systems. The concerns of employees are also important.

A suggestion or complaint can be lodged by any person who is a user or potential user of College services including student, a parent or caregiver, an employer or other community member, any staff member, contractor or volunteer.

The suggestion or complaint can be about any aspect of the service provided or not provided, the behaviour or decisions of other staff, or about workplace practices, policies or procedures.

**Except if the matter is serious and warrants investigation, attempts should be made to resolve the problem before lodging a complaint.** Prior to making a complaint the person should raise their concern with the relevant staff member at an appropriate time and place, and seek resolution.

A suggestion, complaint or allegation can be made orally or in writing. If oral, it may need to be put in writing and assistance will be provided if needed.

**Suggestions or complaints are logged in the Complaints Register by the person receiving the suggestion or complaint.**

Steps in resolution:

1. Matter resolved at first point of contact (orally or written) and outcome is recorded in the Complaints Register.
2. If the matter is not resolved in the first instance, then further action is noted and forwarded to the General Manager.
3. If the matter is a complaint against the General Manager then it is referred to the President of the Management Committee.

### **Letters to General Manager**

Where a person writes to the General Manager or Management Committee with a suggestion, complaint or allegation, it will be assessed and the appropriate procedure identified. The addressee of the letter (or their representative) will determine the appropriate officer to whom to refer the letter for response. That person will identify the appropriate step to commence action.

### **Current Copy of the Policy**

A recent copy of the policy is filed in the PMCC Policy Manual. It is recommended that the most recent copy of the policy be downloaded from the DEC website to ensure the most up-to-date version is in use.

### **Supporting Documents:**

Complaint Form  
Feedback Form  
Course Evaluation Form

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