



Complaints Handling

Complaints Handling Policy

Guiding Principles for Handling Complaints

To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program that meets our legislative and regulatory obligations and is in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018), and the Australian complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014) and the **Complaints Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people**, published by the National Office for Child Safety (Child-focused Complaints Handling Guide).

When managing a complaint or an appeal, the **College** always aims to apply the following Guiding Principles as set out in the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018), and aspires to the values enshrined in **The Charter for Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition**.

These principles are mirrored in the Australian complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014) in more detail, however, in the interests of ensuring that complaints handling at the **College** is as simple and efficient as possible, the **College** uses the (ISO 10002:2018) Guiding Principles.

Commitment	We are actively committed to defining and implementing a complaints handling process.
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Capacity	We make sufficient resources available for, and are committed to, complaints handling, and we manage those resources effectively and efficiently.
Transparency	Our complaints handling process is communicated to staff, volunteers and contractors, the College community and other relevant interested parties. We provide individual complainants with adequate information about the handling of their complaint.
Accessibility	We aim to make the complaints handling process simple and easily accessible to all. We make information available in relation to the details of making and resolving complaints and all complaints handling information is easy to understand and use.
Responsiveness	We address the needs and expectations of potential complainants with respect to complaints handling.
Objectivity	We address each complaint, on its merits, in an equitable, objective, and unbiased manner through our complaints handling process.
Charges	Access to our complaints handling process is free of charge to the complainant.

Information Integrity	We ensure that the information about our complaints handling process is accurate and not misleading, and that data collected is relevant, correct, complete, meaningful and useful.
Confidentiality	Personally identifiable information about complainants is only made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint within the College and, unless the complainant consents, actively protected from disclosure.
Complainant Focused Approach	We aim to put ourselves in the shoes of the complainant and understand the complaint from their point of view. We adopt a complainant-focused approach with respect to handling complaints and are open to feedback on our complaints handling process.
Accountability	We have established, and maintain, accountability for, and reports on, the College's decisions and actions with respect to complaints handling.
Improvement	One of the College's permanent objectives is the increased effectiveness and efficiency of our complaints handling process.
Competence	Our staff have the personal attributes, skills, training, education and experience necessary to handle complaints.

Timeliness	The College handles complaints as quickly as possible given the nature of the complaint and the process used.
Respectful	Complaints are resolved in a manner that is respectful of the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made.
Restorative	When dealing with a complaint, we aim to restore relationships which may have broken down.

We also apply the Guidelines set out in the Child-focused Complaints Handling Guide, to ensure that our complaints handling system upholds the rights of children and young people and meets the requirements of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards in the following ways:

1. Embedding children’s rights, safety and wellbeing into the complaints process: creating a child-rights focused complaints culture is the first step in handling complaints involving children and young people.
2. Reporting responsibilities: our complaints handling system clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of our staff and volunteers in meeting their obligations to report and take action to protect the safety of children and young people.
3. Sharing information and communicating with stakeholders: the **College** recognises the importance of sharing information in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and of fulfilling our legislative responsibilities concerning information sharing. We maintain awareness of what information we can share, with whom, and when and how it should be communicated.
4. Confidentiality and privacy: we comply with our legislative obligations to maintain confidentiality and protect the personal information and privacy of children, young people and adults.
5. Managing risks – complaints and incidents: we monitor and reassess the risks to children and young people throughout the complaints process.

6. Conducting investigations involving children and young people: complaints are properly investigated and taken seriously, and children's rights are safeguarded throughout the investigation process. Investigations are planned, fair, proportionate and thorough, with findings supported by the available evidence.
7. Being fair and objective: an adult's opinion is not prioritised over a child's in the event that they differ; children and young people are listened to without judgement and their views are taken seriously.
8. Explaining outcomes and review options: the types of outcomes that are available for different complaints are explained to complainants; the final outcomes of a complaint, the reasons and options for review are clearly explained to the complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint.
9. Record keeping and complaints data: the **College** keeps full and accurate records about complaints involving children and young people, in line with our record keeping obligations. These records are analysed to improve service and identify trends and risks.

In particular, we recognise that children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. The following principles guide the participation of children and young people in any decision-making processes, including our complaints handling process. Participation should:

- bring them no harm
- be voluntary and informed having regard to their age, maturity and capacities
- be responsive to their individual needs
- be respectful of culture and diversity
- be meaningful
- take into account any ethical considerations at the outset and as the process unfolds
- address power imbalances
- include continuous reflection.

Transparency and Accessibility

It is important that information about how to complain is made publicly available.

The **College** has implemented the following steps to encourage feedback, and to make it easy for people to lodge a complaint.

- EREA has developed Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures, which applies to all EREA-governed schools, including **St Edward's College**. The EREA Complaints Handling Policy is available on our public website.

- Our Child Safeguarding Complaints Management policy and procedures set out the avenues available to students to make a complaint and the avenues available to parents/carers and other **College** community members to make a child safeguarding-related complaint. A child-friendly version of this policy is provided to students and made publicly available.
- All staff are made aware of the importance of capturing and recording critical feedback. Many complaints are received via telephone, in person, or via email, and the ability of our staff to recognise a complaint, and to capture it effectively, is a central feature of our Complaints Handling Program.
- We have developed a **Complaints Handling Guide**, which includes details of how to make a complaint. This plain English guide is provided to complainants to assist them during the complaints resolution process.
- Complaints or disputes do not need to be in writing. Insisting that complaints are in writing can be a disincentive for the complainant.
- Where we identify that a complainant has limited literacy skills, we give them help in expressing their complaint or dispute more clearly.
- Where complainants have special needs, the availability of interpreters and staff who are cross-culturally trained or trained to cater for special needs are provided.

We also encourage feedback from all members of the **College** by providing the option to make an anonymous complaint, or make a complaint using a pseudonym, in accordance with **Australian Privacy Principle 2**.