



# Ocean Grove Cobras Junior Football Club (OGCJFC)

## Feedback, Concerns & Complaints Policy

Version 1.0

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### 1. Purpose

Ocean Grove Cobras Junior Football Club (OGCJFC) is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all children, families, volunteers and members.

This policy outlines how feedback, concerns and complaints will be managed fairly, respectfully and in a timely manner. It supports child safety, procedural fairness and transparent decision-making. The Club encourages open communication and early resolution of issues wherever possible.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all players, parents and guardians, coaches, volunteers, committee members and spectators involved with the Club.

It applies to conduct occurring:

- At Club activities and events
- During training and matches
- At Club facilities
- In Club-related communications, including digital platforms

### 3. Guiding Principles

Feedback, concerns and complaints will be managed in accordance with the following principles:

- Child safety and wellbeing is the highest priority
- All parties will be treated with dignity and fairness
- Matters will be handled as promptly and efficiently as reasonably practicable
- Confidentiality will be maintained where appropriate and in accordance with legal and reporting obligations
- Retaliation or victimisation of any person raising feedback in good faith will not be tolerated
- Records of complaints, actions and outcomes will be maintained securely.

Responses to outcomes will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the matter.

## **4. Feedback and Compliments**

The Club welcomes constructive feedback and compliments.

Positive feedback assists in recognising volunteers, strengthening Club culture and supporting continuous improvement. The Club encourages respectful communication and values open, constructive input from players, parents, volunteers and members.

Suggestions for improvement may be provided at any time to a coach, committee member or the Committee. Feedback may inform continuous improvement of Club practices, policies and culture.

## **5. Concern Vs Complaint**

### **Concern**

A minor issue or misunderstanding that can usually be resolved through respectful discussion.

### **Complaint**

A more serious, ongoing or formal allegation that behaviour, decisions or actions have not met expected standards, Club policies or the Code of Conduct and may require formal review.

Any matter involving child safety or the wellbeing of a child or young person will be managed in accordance with the Club's Child Safety & Wellbeing Framework which takes precedent over this policy where applicable.

Concerns are encouraged to be raised early to prevent escalation.

## **6. Raising a Concern**

There is no wrong door for raising a concern.

Where the matter does not involve child safety or serious misconduct, concerns are encouraged to be raised respectfully with:

- The coach or team manager
- A relevant committee member

Concerns involving child safety, harm, grooming, bullying or risk to a child must be raised immediately with the Child Safety Officer and will be managed in accordance with the Club's Child Safety & Wellbeing Framework.

The Club encourages direct and respectful communication wherever safe and appropriate.

## **7. Informal Resolution**

Many concerns can be resolved informally where appropriate and where the matter does not involve child safety or serious misconduct.

Informal resolution may include:

- Facilitated respectful discussion between parties

- Clarification of expectations under the Code of Conduct
- Provision of guidance or support
- Monitoring behaviour moving forward

A brief record of informal resolutions may be kept where appropriate.

## **8. Formal Complaint**

A formal complaint may be required where:

- Informal resolution has not been successful
- The matter is serious
- The behaviour may breach Club policy or the Code of Conduct
- The complainant requests formal review of the matter

Formal complaints should be submitted in writing to the Committee where possible.

The Committee may determine that a matter requires formal review regardless of whether it was initially raised as a formal complaint.

The Committee will appoint an appropriate and impartial person, free from conflict of interest, to manage the complaint.

The Club will:

- Acknowledge the complaint in a timely manner
- Provide procedural fairness to all parties
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- Keep secure records of actions and outcomes

All parties are expected to behave respectfully throughout the process.

The Club aims to acknowledge the complaint within 7 days, where practicable, depending on the nature and complexity of the matter.

## **9. Child Safety Complaint**

Any complaint involving child safety or wellbeing of a child or young person will be managed in accordance with the Club's Child Safety & Wellbeing Framework and relevant legislative obligations.

Immediate protective action may be taken where required.

Where appropriate, matters may be reported to AFL Barwon, AFL Victoria, Child Protection, Police or other relevant authorities in line with mandatory reporting requirements.

Child safety concerns will always take precedence over other considerations.

## **10. Anonymous Complaint**

Anonymous complaints will generally only be progressed where:

- They relate to child safety; or

- They involve serious risk or alleged misconduct

The Club may be limited in its ability to review anonymous matters where insufficient information is provided.

Where appropriate, the Club may take protective or precautionary action based on the information available.

## **11. Conflict of Interest**

Any person involved in managing or reviewing a complaint who has an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest must declare it immediately and step aside from the process.

Where conflict of interest exists, the matter will be managed by an alternative Committee member or an appropriately independent person. Where appropriate, the matter may be referred externally.

All decisions will be made impartially and free from bias.

## **12. Escalation outside of the Club**

Matters may be referred to AFL Barwon, AFL Victoria or relevant external authorities where:

- The matter is serious or complex
- The Club does not have jurisdiction
- External reporting obligations apply
- The issue cannot be resolved at Club level

Nothing in this policy prevents any individual from raising a matter directly with AFL Barwon, AFL Victoria, Police, Child Protection or any other relevant authority at any time.

## **13. Outcome**

Where a complaint is substantiated, the Club may take appropriate and proportionate action, including:

- Facilitated discussion
- Clarification or reminder of expectations
- Behaviour agreement
- Formal warning
- Restriction from activities
- Suspension
- Referral to AFL Barwon, AFL Victoria or relevant governing bodies

Any action taken will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the matter.

Where appropriate, matters may also be addressed under the Club's Code of Conduct.

Where a complaint is not substantiated, no further action will be taken, however support or guidance may still be provided where appropriate.

## **14. Misuse of the process**

The Club expects feedback and complaints to be made respectfully and in good faith.

Knowingly false, malicious or vexatious complaints, or repeated complaints without new information, may be addressed as a behavioural matter under the Club's Code of Conduct.

This section does not apply to complaints made in good faith that are not substantiated.

## **15. Confidentiality and Record keeping**

Complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially where possible.

The Club will:

- Maintain secure and appropriate records of complaints, actions and outcomes
- Store information in accordance with privacy, child safe and legal obligations
- Share information only on a need-to-know basis
- Acknowledge that complete confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where procedural fairness, reporting or safeguarding obligations apply.

Records relating to child safety matters will be managed in accordance with the Club's Child Safety & Wellbeing Framework.

### **Related policies**

- Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- AFL Barwon & AFL Victoria Safeguarding Children & Young People Policies
- Victorian Child Safe Standards