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## COMPLAINTS – GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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**Issue date:** 16 December 2013

**Review date:** September 2015

**Approved by:** Executive

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*This policy supersedes any custom or practice currently in place, or any previous policy. It is valid from the date of issue until a further policy is published and issued to replace it. This policy may only be altered by Executive.*

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## **1. PURPOSE**

This policy aims to provide a simple and transparent process for members to seek clarification or complain about the Union's financial management and governance and will include the steps which the organisation will take to collect, analyse and report on such issues.

## **2. SCOPE**

This policy applies to complaints regarding the governance and financial management of the Union. It does not apply to complaints about industrial handling of member issues or the behaviour of staff of the union unrelated to governance or financial matters.

## **3. PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 It is recognised that from time to time a member/members may wish to seek clarification about, or complain about financial management or governance issues with the Union.
- 3.2 Our Union at all levels is committed to efficient and fair resolution of complaints.
- 3.3 The proper handling of genuine complaints is in the best interests of the organisation with the potential to contribute to system and process improvements.
- 3.5 Complaints will be handled according to the following principles of procedural fairness:
  - 3.5.1. The requirement that the complaint be specific enough to be investigated and be accompanied with any evidence to substantiate the claim.
  - 3.5.2. The right of the complainant to be heard, and the right of those who are the subject of the complaint to be afforded natural justice and to preserve their reputation against unfounded or spurious allegations.
  - 3.5.3. Complainants will have access to the relevant policies and procedures.
  - 3.5.4. Complainants will be informed of the reasons for decisions and any avenues for further review internally.
  - 3.5.6. A complainant may be asked for further information or evidence during the resolution process if the complaint is not sufficiently clear.

## **4. DEFINITIONS**

*Administrative secretariat* comprises the administrative staff to whom are allocated executive assistant functions, specifically the Executive Officers and Executive Assistant.

*Complaint* is any expression of dissatisfaction or concern made to the union office by, or on behalf of, an individual member or group of members related to our governance, or financial management practices, policies or processes.

*Officer* means someone elected to a governing body of the union in an honorary capacity or to a full-time or part-time position.

*Staff* means someone employed either directly or indirectly to undertake work on behalf of the union under the direction of union personnel.

*Leadership group* means the following full-time and part-time paid elected officials: Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Branch Secretary, Branch Assistant Secretary and President.

*Union* means both of the Australian Services Union Central and Southern Queensland Clerical and Administrative Branch, and Together Queensland, Industrial Union of Employees unless otherwise indicated.

## **5. POLICY**

### **5.1 Making a complaint**

- 5.1.1 Delegates and members may make a complaint about any aspect of the union's governance and financial management.
- 5.1.2 Many concerns or requests for clarification can be resolved informally and expeditiously. Members and delegates are encouraged to raise their concerns in the first instance with Secretary, Branch Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Assistant Branch Secretary, Deputy Secretary or President, as the case may be either verbally or in writing.
- 5.1.3 If the concern is unable to be resolved informally, the member or delegate may choose to make a formal complaint. Such complaints must be in writing (for reasons of security and confidentiality, email complaints will not be accepted) and addressed to the Secretary/Branch Secretary as relevant.
- 5.1.4 Complaints must be specific enough to be investigated and be accompanied with any evidence to substantiate the claim.

### **5.2 Management of complaints**

- 5.2.1 Where it is not appropriate for the Secretary/Branch Secretary to manage the complaint, it will be referred to the President/Branch President for further action. In the event it is also inappropriate for this officer to manage the complaint it will be referred to the Chair of the Governance Committee if it is about a governance matter, or the Treasurer/Trustee if it is a financial transaction matter.
- 5.2.2 Receipt of complaints will be acknowledged as soon as practicable. A written response to the formal complaint will be provided within one month from the date of receipt, or if this is not possible then monthly written updates will be provided to the complainant.
- 5.6 In managing a complaint the Secretary/Branch Secretary will decide if the matter requires consultation with the Corporate Governance Committee or Finance Committee, or escalation to the State Executive/Branch Executive for resolution, or otherwise authorize action which will address the complaint.

### **5.3 Internal review**

5.3.1 If, after receiving the written response, the complainant considers the issue is still not satisfactorily resolved, the complainant may request the complaint be referred to the Corporate Governance Committee, in respect of a governance matter, or the Finance Committee in respect of a financial transaction matter, for determination and final decision. Providing that nothing shall prevent either of these committees from referring matters directly to the Executive for resolution or decision if deemed appropriate.

### **5.4 General**

5.4.1 Members invoking this process are expected to respect the internal processes of the Union. All parties are to keep complaints confidential and ensure any complaints or concerns can be investigated in the absence of external public comment.

5.4.2 Any information disclosed as part of this process shall be kept confidential during the process, and the parties shall not disclose sensitive information outside of the organisation.

5.4.3 Vexatious complainants, or those who do not comply with the above principles or processes contained in this policy, may be liable for discipline under the union's rules.

5.4.4 Nothing in this policy shall serve to diminish the rights of any individuals or the organisation at law, including the right to refer serious complaints directly to the relevant authority.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **6.1 Secretary/Branch Secretary**

- Receive, investigate and respond to complaints under this policy;
- Ensure appropriate action is taken to remedy issues identified through the complaints process;
- Maintain a register of financial management complaints.

### **6.2 President/Branch President**

- Investigate and respond to complaints under this policy where it is not appropriate for the Secretary/Branch Secretary to do so;
- Ensure the Financial Management Complaints Register is tabled to the Corporate Governance Committee at each meeting.

### **6.3 Chair, Corporate Governance Committee/Treasurer/Trustee**

- Investigate and respond to complaints under this policy where it is not appropriate for the Secretary or President to do so.

### **6.4 Corporate Governance Committee**

- Receive reports regarding financial management and governance complaints;
- Make recommendations to the Secretary, Council or Executive on actions to be taken to remedy issues identified through the complaints process where relevant.

## **6.5 Complainants**

- Respect the internal processes of the Union for managing of complaints and abide by the principles and procedure outlined in the policy when making a complaint;
- Ensure that all concerns or evidentiary material are provided as part of the initial complaint.

## **7. REPORTING AND RECORD-KEEPING**

- 7.1 Written complaints must be recorded in a Financial Complaints Register, which will be tabled at each meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee. All correspondence to and from the complainant relating to the complaint is to be noted in the register.
- 7.2 An electronic file, attached to the member's membership record, is to be maintained for all complaint matters.

## **8. AUTHORISATION AND REVIEW**

- 8.1 This policy is authorised by the Executives of Together Queensland, Industrial Union of Employees and Australian Services Union Central and Southern Queensland Clerical and Administrative Branch.
- 8.2 This policy was first issued in December 2013. It is due for review by December 2015.

## **9. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Financial management and accountability policy

## **10. APPENDICES**

*Nil.*