Waikato Lacrosse Incorporated

6.3. Complaints Process

1. Our Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Waikato Lacrosse Incorporated (WLA) recognises Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand. We are committed to upholding the mana of Te Tiriti and giving effect to the principles of Partnership, Protection and Participation in everything we do.

2. Our Principles and Values

Everyone who takes part in our sport does so because they care about it. We expect everyone to act with good intentions, treat others with respect, and follow our policies and rules. Even so, problems sometimes come up, and we want to handle them well.

The wellbeing of children and young people sits at the centre of everything we do. They must be cared for, listened to, and treated with respect.

When disagreements happen, they can become serious if they are not addressed early. WLA is committed to supporting participants, coaches, volunteers, whaanau and supporters to take part in an environment that is respectful, safe and fair. Anyone can raise a concern or complaint and expect it to be addressed promptly and fairly. No one will be punished or treated badly for raising a concern in good faith.

This policy is built on equity, dignity, respect, and helping every person involved in lacrosse to reach their potential. The principles below guide how we apply it:

- Respect the culture of the people involved and use culturally appropriate processes to resolve issues and restore relationships.
- Try to sort problems out informally and kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) wherever possible.
- Treat others fairly and equally, in ways that keep their mana intact.
- Maintain relationships and keep each other safe.

3. Purpose of This Policy

This policy sets out how concerns and complaints are raised and dealt with at WLA. It is designed to support people to resolve small issues on their own where they can, give clear guidance on making, handling and resolving complaints, and make sure the approach we take is fair, consistent, and allows for culturally appropriate responses.

4. Who and What This Policy Covers

Who can make a complaint

A complaint can be made by, or about, anyone involved with Waikato Lacrosse Incorporated. This includes people taking part in, attending, volunteering for, employed by, or contracted to any of our activities, competitions, programmes, events or operations - volunteers, participants, supporters, club members, employees, service providers, the WLA Board, and the families and whaanau of participants.

What complaints can be about

A complaint can be about almost any conduct or decision that has affected someone - the actions of members or officials, processes that have not been managed well (or at all), disagreements between members, unprofessional or upsetting behaviour, or a failure to communicate. Common examples include organisation management issues, conflicts of interest including favouritism, off-field unsporting behaviour, disrespectful behaviour, bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, abuse of power, health and safety risks, and offensive or insulting language or behaviour.

This policy does not cover in-play decisions specific to the code, or selection and eligibility decisions.

Some serious complaints - such as illegal or dishonest conduct, harassment, bullying, discrimination, or health and safety risks - may also fall under other WLA policies (for example the Disciplinary Procedure and Appeals Policy). Where that happens, we will assess the complaint and may deal with it under the policy that best fits the issue.

If you are not sure whether this policy applies to your situation, the WLA Board or Complaints Officer can talk it through with you.

5. Try Informal Resolution First

Wherever possible, we encourage people to raise concerns directly with the person whose behaviour has caused concern. Many issues can be resolved this way, and the relationship is often better for it. It can help to talk things through with a trusted friend or family member first, both for support and for another point of view.

Any informal kōrero should be approached respectfully. Both people should have a real chance to be heard and should feel safe enough to say what they need to say. The goal is to resolve the issue and to be able to keep working alongside each other afterwards. Either person can bring a support person to help raise the concern or to be present during the conversation.

If informal resolution does not work, the next step is to raise the matter with the WLA Board or the Complaints Officer, who will work with those involved to suggest a culturally appropriate way forward. This might be a facilitated meeting or another process that fits the people and the situation.

6. Making a Formal Complaint

What you need to do

6.1 Formal complaints should be made in writing as soon as possible after the events, using the Complaints Form attached to this policy. If putting it in writing yourself is not possible, you can make a verbal complaint and WLA will help you write it down.

Who to send it to

6.2 You can choose. Complaints may be made to the WLA Board through the Chair, or to the Complaints Officer.

6.3 The Complaints Officer is appointed by the Board. The current Complaints Officer is named on the Waikato Lacrosse website at www.waikatolacrosse.co.nz. Where appropriate, the WLA Board may appoint an independent person, panel, or external investigator to handle a complaint.

6.4 Completed Complaints Forms should be emailed to chairperson@waikatolacrosse.co.nz or secretary@waikatolacrosse.co.nz.

7. How You Will Be Treated

If you make a formal complaint to WLA, you can expect the following from us:

7.1 Fairness. The people dealing with your complaint will stay neutral and listen to both sides of the story.

7.2 Respect. Everyone involved will be treated with respect and dignity, in a culturally appropriate way. Complaints will be handled sensitively, with the aim of preserving relationships and acknowledging each person's role and contribution to the sport.

7.3 Communication. Everyone involved will be kept up to date as the process moves along and informed of the outcome.

7.4 Confidentiality. We will not share information about your complaint without your consent, unless fair process or the law requires us to share it. If sharing becomes necessary, we will discuss that with you first.

7.5 Restoration. Our goal is to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of everyone involved, restore mana, and keep relationships across the sport and the wider community as healthy as possible.

7.6 Acknowledgement. Anyone who admits fault or is found to be at fault after a fair process, will be asked to acknowledge that fault and the harm caused, and to apologise.

7.7 Support. Both the person making the complaint and the person complained about can have support throughout the process. Anyone involved can bring whaanau or other support people and may seek independent legal advice or representation at their own expense at any stage.

8. How WLA Will Handle Your Complaint

8.1 When a complaint is made directly to us, we will acknowledge receipt promptly.

8.2 Depending on the nature of the complaint, we will contact you to talk through next steps, what support you might need, and any concerns about the welfare, wellbeing or safety of a child.

8.3 We will let you know that your complaint, and the information that goes with it, will be shared with the people within WLA who are responsible for addressing it, and with the person or organisation complained about.

8.4 Complaints will be raised with the person being complained about in a way that protects their dignity and mana, and that of their whaanau and wider community. If you are not willing to have your complaint or identity shared with that person, we will let you know that this may limit how fully the complaint can be resolved.

8.5 If the complainant is under 18, we will normally encourage them to involve a parent or guardian in the process.

8.6 If the person complained about is under 18, their parent or guardian must be notified and must normally be present at any discussion about the complaint.

8.7 Someone from WLA will ask you how you would like your complaint addressed, what process you would prefer, and what outcome you are seeking. Working from the principles in this policy, we will then design a process that fits the people involved as far as is reasonably practicable.

8.8 We will clearly explain the resolution process we propose to use, including who will be involved, and seek your agreement to that process before putting it in place.

8.9 Resolution processes WLA may use include asking the person or organisation complained about to consider the issues raised and provide a written explanation for their actions, facilitating a kōrero between the parties, or running a formal decision-making process.

When WLA may decide not to proceed

Consistent with Schedule 2 of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022, WLA may decide not to proceed further with a complaint where:

8.10 the complaint appears to be without foundation or there is no apparent evidence to support it.

8.11 the person making the complaint has an insignificant interest in the matter.

8.12 the conduct, incident, event, or issue giving rise to the complaint has already been investigated and dealt with under this policy or another WLA policy; or

8.13 there has been an undue delay in making the complaint.

If WLA decides not to proceed, we will let the complainant know in writing, with reasons.

9. WLA Decision-Making Process

When WLA runs a decision-making process to resolve a complaint, the following applies.

9.1 Before the process begins, we will give the complainant and the person, or organisation complained about an overview of the process, the identity of the decision maker, and the expected timeframe.

9.2 We may ask the parties and other relevant people for further information, in a way that feels comfortable to them.

9.3 The decision maker will usually meet separately with the complainant and with the person complained about. Meetings will be at a time, place and format that suits the people involved, as far as possible, and people can bring whaanau and other support people.

9.4 We will aim to schedule these meetings as soon as possible, ideally within four weeks of receiving the complaint. Where face-to-face is not possible, meetings can be held by phone or video conferencing if everyone agrees and has access to the technology.

9.5 Decisions will be made carefully and reasonably, based on the facts and consistent with any rules that apply. Findings will be made on the balance of probabilities.

Conflicts of interest

9.6 Anyone with a conflict of interest in a complaint - whether direct, indirect, financial, personal, or whakapapa-based - cannot act as a decision maker on that complaint. They must declare the conflict as soon as they become aware of it, and the WLA Board will appoint an alternative decision maker. This requirement applies to all

officers, Board members, and any person appointed to investigate or decide a complaint.

The written decision

The decision will be recorded in writing in plain language, and will set out the issue, any policy or rule that applies, the process that was followed, the decision (whether the complaint is upheld or not), the facts and evidence relied on, the reasons for the decision, and any penalty or outcome for any party.

9.7 If the issues or outcome are likely to affect the interests of other parties, we will do our best to get their views, or those of a representative sample, so the full picture is considered.

9.8 We will promptly provide a copy of the decision to both the complainant and the person or organisation complained about and explain any appeal process. We will discuss the outcome so that everyone understands the decision, why it was made, and what happens next.

What happens after a decision

Where a decision affects an employee's employment, WLA will deal with them in line with their employment agreement and employment law. Contractors will be treated fairly and reasonably, and in line with the terms of their contract. Volunteers will be treated fairly, reasonably and respectfully when any decisions are made about their future role in the sport.

Decisions can leave people with strong feelings about reputation, rights and mana. WLA will hold a kōrero with those affected about what can reasonably be done to restore relationships and mana, and will look at what support people may need, especially if there are concerns about health, wellbeing or safety.

All matters relating to a complaint will be recorded in writing and kept on a confidential complaint file. This includes the formal complaint, any response, notes of meetings or conversations, relevant documents, committee minutes, the decision, and any outcome.

Sharing information with other parties

WLA will only share details of a complaint with other parties or agencies (such as NZ Police or Oranga Tamariki) in line with best practice on information sharing and confidentiality, and after talking with the complainant. This applies both before and after a complaint has been resolved. All collection, storage, use and disclosure of personal information will be carried out in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020.

10. The Sport Integrity Commission and Sports Tribunal

In addition to this policy, anyone affected by an integrity issue - such as bullying, harassment, discrimination, abuse, or poor handling of a complaint by an organisation - can raise it directly with the Sport Integrity Commission (Te Kahu Raunui).

The Commission provides a free, confidential and independent complaints service. You can contact them on 0800 378 437 or through sportintegrity.nz.

Where a complaint relates to a selection or eligibility decision, the Sports Tribunal of New Zealand may be able to help. WLA acknowledges the role of both bodies and the appeal rights they provide.

11. Reporting a Breach of WLA Policy

If you want to report a possible breach of any WLA policy, please follow the procedure set out in this Complaints Policy.

12. Keeping Records

Records and documents about complaints, investigations, and outcomes will be kept securely, in paper or digital form, for a general period of seven years. This may be longer if law, safeguarding obligations, insurance requirements, or ongoing proceedings require it. All records will be held in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020.

Before any records are destroyed, WLA will consider requests for those records to be provided to people involved in the case. We will redact anything that would breach someone's privacy before sharing it.

13. Appeals

13.1 Anyone directly affected by a decision under this policy may lodge a written appeal within 10 working days of receiving the decision.

13.2 The appeal must clearly state the grounds for the appeal and include any information that supports it.

13.3 Appeals will be heard by an independent Appeals Panel appointed by the WLA Board. No one involved in the original decision can sit on the Panel, and no one with a conflict of interest in the matter can sit on the Panel.

13.4 The Appeals Panel may uphold, vary, or overturn the original decision.

13.5 The decision of the Appeals Panel is final, subject to any external review rights available to the parties (for example, through the Sport Integrity Commission or the Sports Tribunal of New Zealand).

Complaints Form

Please complete this form and email it to chairperson@waikatolacrosse.co.nz or secretary@waikatolacrosse.co.nz

Your Details

Name	
Phone	
Email	
Address	

Your Affiliation

Club	
Regional Organisation	
Age	☐ Under 18 ☐ 18 years or over

Your role (tick all that apply)

☐ Participant	☐ Coach/Assistant Coach	☐ Manager
☐ Employee (paid)	☐ Administrator (volunteer)	☐ Official
☐ Other volunteer	☐ Parent	☐ Supporter
☐ Support Person	☐ Other (please specify)	

Details of the Person Complained About (Respondent)

Name	
Club	
Regional Organisation	
Age	☐ Under 18 ☐ 18 years or over

Respondent's role (tick all that apply)

☐ Participant	☐ Coach/Assistant Coach	☐ Manager
☐ Employee (paid)	☐ Administrator (volunteer)	☐ Official

☐ Other volunteer	☐ Parent	☐ Supporter
☐ Support Person	☐ Other (please specify)	

Nature of the Complaint (tick all that apply)

☐ Club/organisation management	☐ Unfair decision	☐ Coaching issue
☐ Verbal abuse	☐ Bullying	☐ Sexual harassment
☐ Racism	☐ Discrimination	☐ Physical abuse/assault
☐ Other (please specify)		

Date(s) of the Incident(s)

Where the Incident Took Place

☐ Competition	☐ Training	☐ Other (please specify)

What Happened (please describe the incident or complaint)

Witnesses (if any)

Name	
Contact Details	
Name	

Contact Details	
Name	
Contact Details	
Name	
Contact Details	

What Has Been Done So Far (any steps taken to resolve the matter or keep people safe)

If You Have Contacted Any Agency (e.g. NZ Police, Oranga Tamariki, Sport Integrity Commission)

Who	
When	
Advice provided	

Your Confirmation

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Document Management

Document Approval

Date	Author	Action
May 2026	Leon Green	Approved by WLA Board

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