



**EDMUND RICE EDUCATION  
AUSTRALIA**

# **Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines**

## **How to make a complaint**

**Approved by EREA Board: 24 September 2018**

# **EREA Complaints Management Policy Guidelines**

## **Introduction**

Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) recognises that from time to time there might be instances where individuals or organisations disagree with the way EREA or one of its schools has handled matters and may wish to lodge a complaint. Such individuals may include parents, students, suppliers, local residents, and other external bodies with whom EREA or its schools have dealings.

EREA encourages honest feedback and takes valid complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. EREA acknowledges that complaints present an opportunity to improve service delivery and is committed to resolving complaints in an efficient, fair and timely manner. EREA recognizes that its complaints handling procedures must be fair to the complainant as well as the person about whom the complaint is made. The Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines are designed to assist people to understand our complaints handling processes.

## **What is a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to EREA, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

## **EREA's Commitment**

EREA is committed to handling complaints in a manner consistent with The Charter for Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition, modelling the Gospel practices of forgiveness and reconciliation by the manner in which conflict is resolved. This involves respecting, where reasonably appropriate, confidentiality and adopting the principles of natural justice.

To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2014 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations).

Our program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to EREA's commitment.

## **Informal Complaints Resolution**

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved at the school level through informal discussions with appropriate staff members.

While complaints received by EREA are likely to be more formal in nature, informal complaints may still be received from time to time. Even if an issue is able to be resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate rectification action.

## How Do I Make a Formal Complaint?

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

1. Sending an email to [complaints@erea.edu.au](mailto:complaints@erea.edu.au).
2. Writing a letter to Edmund Rice Education Australia addressed to “The Complaints Manager”.
3. Telephoning Edmund Rice Education Australia to register your concern.

All formal complaints will be logged into our online complaints management system and managed in accordance with the following procedure. EREA will accept anonymous complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is sufficient information provided.

NB. All school-related complaints \* must be addressed to the school Principal in the first instance and with reference to the school’s Complaints Handling Policy.

\* Such complaints may relate to matters of enrolment, student exclusions, school fees, student behaviour management and local community concerns related to the school site.

## Our Internal Complaints Handling Process

**Step 1** – Valid formal complaints are promptly logged through our online complaints management system where they are screened by one of our Complaints Officers \*, or in the case of complaints against the EREA Executive, by the EREA Complaints Manager.

**Step 2** – Valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing, as soon as practicable (within 10 business days), and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date.

**Step 3** – The Complaints Officer \* will commence an investigation (within 10 business days of step 2) into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness and natural justice, and make a determination.

**Step 4** - Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Officer\* will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant (within 20 business days of a determination in step 3). The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

**Step 5** - If the initial response is not acceptable the matter will be reviewed internally by the Executive Director or the Executive Director’s delegate (within 14 business days of receipt of a written complaint about the determination in step 4), who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The matter will be closed if the response of the Executive Director, or their delegate, is accepted. If the response of the Executive Director or their delegate is not accepted by the complainant, the matter may, at the direction of the complainant, be referred to the process outlined in step 7.

**Step 6** - Valid complaints received, either verbal or written, will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement (at a time appropriate under the circumstances).

**Step 7** - If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives such as external mediation or conciliation.

*\* Where complaints relate to school operations, the appropriate EREA Regional Director will act as the Complaints Officer. Where complaints relate to EREA National or Regional Office operations, the appropriate EREA National Director will act as the Complaints officer.*

### **Who Handles Complaints?**

At the school level against:

- (a) a student / young person, parent or volunteer – the Principal of a School / Network or his/her delegate;
- (b) a teacher – the Principal of a School / Network or his/her delegate;
- (c) a member of the Senior Leadership Team of a School – the Principal of a School / Network or his/her delegate;
- (d) the Principal of a School Network – the EREA Regional Director / Chair Youth+, or his/her delegate;
- (e) a Member of a School / Network Board - the Principal of a School / Network and the EREA Regional Director / Chair Youth+, who will work with the Chair of the School / Network Board;
- (f) the Chair of a School / Network Board – the EREA Regional Director / Chair Youth+.

At EREA National and Regional level against:

- (a) a non-school employee of EREA – the Deputy Executive Director of EREA or his/her delegate;
- (b) a member of EREA Executive – the Deputy Executive Director of EREA or his/her delegate;
- (c) the Deputy Executive Director of EREA – the Chair of the EREA Board or his/her delegate;
- (d) the Executive Director of EREA – the Chair of the EREA Board or his/her delegate;
- (e) a member of the EREA Board – the Chair of the EREA Board or his/her delegate;
- (f) the Chair of the EREA Board – the President of the EREA Council or his/her delegate;
- (g) a member of the EREA Council – the President of the EREA Council or his/her delegate;
- (h) the President of the EREA Council – external investigation only.

## Complaints relating to Child Protection

There may, at times, be concerns or complaints relating to EREA's Child Protection Program, for example regarding a school's management of a child protection incident.

When a child protection-related complaint is received by EREA, it must first determine if the complaint triggers mandatory reporting to the relevant police and/or child protection agencies relevant to each state & territory throughout Australia. If so, EREA must undertake that report.

In formalising a mandatory report, EREA will use reasonable endeavours to follow its Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Incidents in that jurisdiction.

Child protection complaints that do not raise concerns of unreported abuse, or a risk of abuse at a school, will be managed in the same manner as other complaints received by EREA. The complaints will be recorded to ensure that any further developments relating to the same incident or issue are monitored.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant to a person against whom a complaint is made. EREA will use its reasonable endeavours to maintain the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

## Related Information

EREA Complaints Handling Policy

EREA Complaints Handling Program – *CompliSpace web-enabled content*

EREA Privacy Policy and Annexure – *with CompliSpace web-enabled content*

EREA Conflict of Interest Policy and Guidelines

EREA Code of Conduct

For further information, contact **EREA Complaints Manager** via any of the following:

Emailing [complaints@erea.edu.au](mailto:complaints@erea.edu.au)

Phoning (03) 9426 3200

Writing to the EREA Complaints Manager at **PO Box 91, Richmond VIC3121**

The EREA Complaints Handling Policy can be found at [www.erea.edu.au/about-us/policies](http://www.erea.edu.au/about-us/policies) and in the **Principals' Policy Reference Guide** on the [EREA National Policy Plus site](#).