

Complaints Policy

Statement

Good communication is important in building a successful, healthy and happy organisation and allows its members to do their job properly. Noteable Theatre Company (NTC) promotes open, ongoing communication among members throughout the organisation and provides a fair, clear and effective system for handling concerns, and dealing with complaints, disputes and grievances if they do arise.

Effective communication is important in helping to deliver high quality productions and to create a pleasant environment for all members.

Effective communication can also help prevent some of the events, issues and behaviour that can lead to conflicts and grievances.

1. Rights and responsibilities

All members are encouraged to make full use of opportunities for communication at NTC. This applies to systems of communication and information sharing across the whole organisation.

- a) It is the responsibility of the committee to make sure that all members are provided with information about NTC and any communication systems available to them to access.
- b) All members are encouraged to contribute by asking if they don't understand something; by telling someone if they are concerned about something; and by passing on useful information (or making suggestions if they have a good idea) to the committee.

2. Communication systems

- a) There is a range of communication systems in place at NTC. These include formal, informal, verbal and written processes.
- b) In the first instance, both the committee and NTC members are encouraged to seek clarification and understanding directly from the committee via the committee email address @manlymusicalsociety.com

3. Online communication

- a) Information can be found on the Noteable Theatre Company website. Various avenues to communicate with the committee are also available via this platform.
- b) The Noteable Theatre Company Facebook page is also a source of information and is a platform to communicate ideas and feedback to committee members.
- c) The committee encourages ideas and feedback to be channelled through the committee email address @manlymusicalsociety.com

4. Productions

- a) A Facebook page is usually set up to communicate with cast members in a particular production. Cast members are encouraged to give feedback and ideas via the committee or production team of their production.
- b) Cast members are asked to talk openly and respectfully with their colleagues to pass information, discuss situations, clarify understandings, give feedback etc. to help make sure that everyone can do the best job possible.

5. Committee meetings

- a) The President will arrange regular meetings to ensure that committee members have the chance to identify and discuss issues, learn about and discuss new information, contribute to planning etc. All committee members should participate co-operatively in meetings.

6. Feedback

It is recognised that sometimes the systems that are in place are inadequate or there may be a failure of some sort in the communications system. Any member who at any time feels that there is some breakdown in communications should tell the committee. The procedure for conflict or grievance resolution can also be used as necessary.

We aim to deal with complaints and grievances as promptly, fully and fairly as possible, and to ensure that there are effective processes in place to achieve this.

7. Procedure for making a complaint

| Steps to follow to address a complaint or grievance | |
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| What to do if you have a complaint or grievance | When to do this |
| <p>Step 1 If you feel comfortable, try to sort it out yourself with the person or people involved. You may find that there is a misunderstanding. In doing this, you should clearly identify the problem, listen to one another's explanation and point of view and if possible, agree on a mutually acceptable outcome. <i>If your complaint or grievance is resolved, end the process here.</i></p> | <p>Do this as soon as possible.</p> |
| <p>Step 2 Complete the attached complaints form and email to @manlymusicalsociety.com.au (confidential).</p> | <p>Do this as soon as possible.</p> |
| <p>Step 3 A representative from the committee will contact you within 14 days to confirm your complaint has been received.</p> | |

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| <p>Step 4 You will receive a response in writing within 30 days of your complaint. Your patience is appreciated while the committee takes this time to properly investigate the complaint.</p> | |
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8. Actions to be taken by the person sorting out the grievance (representative from the committee):

- a) Wherever practical, within 14 days of receiving your complaints form, the representative will:
- i) Confirm receipt of the complaint in writing
 - ii) If needed, make contact with you to gain further information in regards to your complaint
 - iii) Explain how the rest of the procedure works (including what will be done to protect you from victimisation)
 - iv) Decide if they are the appropriate person to continue handling the grievance – they may be too biased, or seen to be too biased, to handle the grievance. If they can't handle the complaint, they will refer you to another appropriate person from the committee. That person will talk with you and then continue the process as described below.
- b) Wherever practical, within 7 working days of your interview/receiving your complaint form, the representative will put the information they've received from you to the person/people you're complaining about and get their side of the story.
- c) Wherever practical, within 14 days of interviewing the person/people you're complaining about and no later than 30 days from the date you first approached the grievance handler they will:
- i) Discuss the complaint and the investigation at the next scheduled committee meeting
 - ii) Work out whether the matter(s) alleged in your complaint are serious enough to be disciplinary: see 'What are the possible outcomes?' below
 - iii) Work out whether they now have enough information to know whether the matter(s) alleged did or didn't happen.
- g) If they don't have enough information to know whether the matter(s) alleged in the grievance did or didn't happen, and the allegation or counter-allegation is serious enough to be disciplinary, they may need to speak to witnesses. If they decide to speak to witnesses, they will do this very carefully, so as not to breach confidentiality. They won't speak to any more witnesses than they need to speak to.
- h) They will decide how the grievance should be resolved (sorted out) and let everyone involved know. They will do this in the following way:
- i) When the complaint involves an allegation of a non-disciplinary or minor disciplinary nature, and the main facts are not in dispute, they will 'mediate' it. This means they will help you and the other person or people involved come to a joint agreement about how the grievance should be resolved.
- j) When the grievance involves an allegation of a non-disciplinary or minor disciplinary nature, and the main facts are in dispute, they will:

- i) Tell you and the other person/people involved about what might have happened had the grievance been proved one way or the other
 - ii) Warn you and the other person/people involved about the disciplinary consequences of any victimisation or harassment on either side flowing from this incident
 - iii) Tell you and the other person/people involved about your right to appeal
 - iv) Monitor developments
- k) When the grievance involves an allegation of a more serious nature they (or a committee member) will work out whether, on the 'balance of probability', the breach of policy, the unjustified treatment, discrimination or harassment did or didn't happen. They will then make a decision about how the complaint should be resolved. This will usually involve a disciplinary measure against one or more members. The type of discipline will obviously depend on the level of breach/problem that has happened. Discipline could range from a verbal apology for a less serious incident, through dismissal from the society for a very serious incident or series of incidents. Discipline will be imposed in a fair and consistent manner across the organisation: see under 'disciplinary action' below for more about what type of discipline to expect. They will consider if there is a need to use a mediator to help everyone readjust to working effectively together. For the next few months they will monitor the outcome to make sure there are no further repercussions.

9. What are possible outcomes?

- a) Joint agreement: As explained above, many conflicts or grievances will be able to be settled by joint agreement between the people involved. The committee representative who handled the grievance will write a confidential report. This report will be filed in a confidential grievance filing system in the NTC files. Only the NTC committee will have access to this, and only when necessary.
- b) Not enough proof to be able to act: If there is not enough proof to work out who is telling the truth, no disciplinary action will be taken. Instead, the committee may decide to keep a closer watch on the people involved.
- c) Of course, anyone involved in the grievance has a right to appeal: see under 'Appeals' below.

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10. Disciplinary Action

- a) If the person sorting out the grievance decides that there has been a breach of one of our policies or standards, NTC may discipline the person or people who breached the standard or policy.
- b) If your grievance consists of lies, you can be disciplined.
- c) If the person or people you complained about are found to have committed a breach of one of our policies or standards, they can be disciplined.
- d) The level of discipline will depend on such things as:
 - i) The seriousness of the breach
 - ii) Whether they/you know what they/you were doing and intended to do
 - iii) Whether they/you have been officially warned or disciplined before about this type of breach
 - iv) Whether there are any circumstances that mean they/you should not be disciplined at all, or not disciplined so seriously.
- e) Discipline could involve one or more of the following:
 - i) A written apology
 - ii) An official warning
 - iii) Loss of promotion position on the committee

- iv) Loss of position on the production team
- v) Loss of position in a production

- vi) Loss of membership
- vii) A record of the grievance and the resulting disciplinary action will be placed on NTC files.

11. Points to remember when addressing complaints and grievances

- a) Cast members can't do a good job if they are in conflict with someone in the production, or if they feel that the production team or committee or anyone else is unfairly treating them, or that they are being discriminated against or harassed.
- b) Any cast member who feels uncomfortable or concerned about any behaviour, decision, issue or event should use the procedure above so that the situation can be sorted out as quickly as possible.
- c) Members of the public also have the opportunity to make a complaint if necessary, and to be assured those complaints will be addressed as quickly and effectively as possible.
- d) There is an evaluation process initiated by the committee which seeks feedback about the handling of complaints and grievances in our workplaces and services and which provides information for planning ongoing quality improvement.
- e) All committee members, NTC members and members of the public should be able to easily access information about all these processes.

12. Appeals

- a) The person who handles an appeal will generally 're-hear' the grievance, by going through the same steps as the person who handled the original grievance. However, they may decide to interview more witnesses if they think they will be able to help.
- b) They may confirm the original decision or overturn it.
- c) In addition, if they believe that anyone involved, including the original complaint handler, mishandled the situation in a way that breaches this grievance procedure, they may recommend disciplinary action against that person.

Who else can help?

At any time during a grievance you are involved in you can get advice from any legal representative.

You can get advice if you are the person who has the grievance or if you are the person who has been 'accused' of doing something wrong.

In addition, at any time during your grievance you have the right to contact an external agency for advice or help. You can also do this if you are unhappy with the way the grievance has been resolved.

Date August 2019

Date for review August 2020