

# Dealing with Conflict

## Rationale

All not-for-profit community organisations need to deal with internal conflict at various times, in the form of disputes between members or challenges to committee decisions. Every incorporated association, which every Dragons Abreast Australia member group must be, is required to include rules for the running of the organisations and means of dealing with problems which arise.

In developing this policy guideline DAA has drawn from the information provided by Justice Connect on its website for not-for-profits <https://justiceconnect.org.au/our-services/not-for-profit-law/>

This site provides free (or low cost) advice and resources for not-for-profit organisations. Rules for dealing with conflict and members' grievances vary from state to state and those applicable to your state can be found at <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/disputes>

DAA's primary role is to raise awareness of breast cancer, essentially but not exclusively through the sport of dragon boating. Membership of your state/territory dragon boat body is mandated for all member groups, either directly or through your host sporting club. As such the rules of AusDBF and your state/territory body also apply and should be referred to for on water incidents.

While DAA will help with advice when relevant, especially in advocating for our members with other organisations where this is needed, it is the responsibility of your group to resolve issues with your members. (DAA has no direct contractual agreement with any of your members.)

## Procedure

The following process is provided as a guide for when disputes arise:

- Nominate who will deal with the matter on behalf of the Committee.
- If the grievance or conflict is with the Committee or an office holder appoint an independent person or persons to oversee the complaint procedure.
- Speak to all parties involved to understand the issue/s. If appropriate request that all parties provide written details of the grievance and submit supporting information.
- Check your constitution or rules to ensure they are being followed in relation to the issue.
- Respond in a timely manner and keep all parties informed of progress.
- Acknowledge complaints and complainants with respect and courtesy and advise all parties of the procedure being followed and who is responsible for undertaking it.
- Ensure that procedural fairness is met and the privacy of the parties involved maintained.
- While it is the responsibility of the Committee to decide on the outcome regardless of who undertakes the inquiry process, the Committee is also accountable, both to the membership of the organisation and to ensure that the process and outcomes are fair.
- Remember that complainants may be able to pursue a legal process if not happy with a decision. For this reason, **it is imperative that a record of the process is kept and that this and all relevant documents are kept confidential.**
- Acknowledge that sometimes not everyone will be happy but that the organisation will be able to defend the process and decision if it is taken further.
- If as the result of a complaint it is decided that a rule is unfair or wrong, ensure that steps are taken quickly to amend the rule in the appropriate process.