

## Complaints Management Policy

### Background

Edmund Rice Education Australia Victorian Schools Limited (VSL) is committed to ensuring its schools are communities of faith, hope and love where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion and inclusion in the interests of all students.

The Complaints Management Policy is the key document that sets out VSL's approach to managing complaints that arise about the operation of VSL schools.

VSL recognises that a known, robust and transparent complaint resolution process provides information, creates opportunities for giving and receiving feedback and provides a valuable opportunity for reflection and learning. An effective process for resolving complaints treats people fairly, is timely and provides those involved with an opportunity to present their view and to respond to issues.

### Purpose

This policy outlines the principles, expectations and requirements for managing complaints about VSL and complaints escalated to VSL about its schools.

### Scope

This policy applies to all VSL schools for complaints at the school level and to any complaints referred to VSL.

This policy does relate to complaints regarding child abuse. These complaints must be addressed in accordance with the school's child safeguarding policies and procedures.

This policy does not relate to critical incidents, emergency management, criminal offences, whistleblower or the conduct of those in religious ministry. It is also not to be used by employees to make a complaint about their workplace or employment conditions.

### Definitions

Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived issue at a school where a response or resolution is expected.

Complainant: the individual making the complaint.

### Principles

VSL is committed to handling complaints in a manner consistent with our values and The Charter for Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition, modelling the Gospel practices of forgiveness, reconciliation, and the dignity of all, by the manner in which conflict is resolved. In responding to complaints, we adopt processes that are timely, fair, restorative, and respectful.

The following guiding principles will inform and direct VSL's actions:

- complaints about a school are best received and managed at the school level in the first instance, with the parties involved expected to act in good faith and work together with respect and openness to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
- complaints are received and managed in a way that is culturally safe and sensitive to the diverse

- circumstances of children and students, providing support to vulnerable children and students.
- complainants can expect their complaint to be taken seriously, to be dealt with in a way that is culturally respectful, and to be responded to in a respectful and timely manner.
  - schools, staff members (including volunteers and contractors) will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them.
  - complainants and the person(s) against whom the complaint is made have the right to be heard and to expect that procedural fairness will be observed.
  - the complaints resolution process will seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships.
  - the interests of the school community, the complainant and the subject of the complaint will be taken into account.
  - recordkeeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations will be complied with when managing complaints.

### **Policy statement**

VSL strives to provide positive, clear and effective processes for resolving complaints between the school and complainants. This can assist in building strong relationships, dispelling anxiety and ultimately provide a settled and harmonious learning environment. The Complaints Management Policy seeks to achieve the restoration of fair and respectful relationships.

VSL schools must develop contextualised policies and procedures for managing complaints which ensures procedural fairness, are accessible to the school community, are consistent with its enrolment agreement and aligned with this policy.

Unresolved complaints can be escalated to VSL. A complaint may be raised with VCEA if there is a perceived breach of the Minimum Standards. The VCEA, as the appointed review body or Catholic schools, acts in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with the VRQA to manage alleged breaches of the Minimum Standards.

Where necessary, VSL will ensure that specialist advice and support is available to schools when dealing with serious complaints and the associated complaints handling processes.

A record will be kept of all complaints, including a record of complaints which relate to the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS).

### **Making a complaint**

Complaints about a school, its staff members, volunteers, or contactors should be made directly to the school in accordance with its complaint handling procedure. If the matter cannot be resolved at the school level, or the complaint is about the principal, complainants should contact VSL directly.

VSL will manage a complaint in accordance with the following procedure.

1. A formal complaint will be recorded in VSL's complaints management system.
2. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing, within 2 working days. VSL will endeavour to resolve the complaint within 14 days, and if this is not possible, to provide an update to the complainant every 14 days, or as otherwise agreed, until resolution.
3. VSL will investigate the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.
4. Following the determination, VSL will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the Complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted or if the Complainant does not provide any response within 30 days.
5. If the complainant does not accept the response and a satisfactory outcome cannot be agreed upon, VSL will provide the complainant with options for having the decision reviewed. The complainant will also be provided with information about where to seek external advice.
6. Following resolution, complaints will be considered from a systemic perspective and, where appropriate, a corrective action plan will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaint's investigation

revealed may require improvement.

A complaint can be referred to VSL via:

- online complaint [form](#)
- email: [ereavic@erea.edu.au](mailto:ereavic@erea.edu.au).
- telephone: (03) 9426 3200
- mail: Complaints, EREA Victorian Schools Ltd, Level 10, 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne VIC. 3004

Complaints about VSL office staff will be managed by the VSL Chief Executive Officer. Complaints about the VSL Chief Executive Officer, VSL Committee Members or VSL Board Members will be managed by the Chair of the VSL Board. Complaints about the Chair of the VSL Board will be managed by the Trustees of Edmund Rice Education Australia.

Complaints about a Christian Brother should be directed to the Christian Brothers Professional Standards Office: +61 3 8359 0134; [psa@edmundrice.org](mailto:psa@edmundrice.org).

### Anonymous complaints

VSL endeavour to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, it may not be possible to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable a review or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them and be given an opportunity to respond to them.

Where possible, complainants are encouraged to give their names and to be reassured that we will deal with complaints professionally and in accordance with procedural fairness and confidentiality. If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, an assessment will be made as to what, if any, action will be taken. Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the same manner that all other complaints are recorded.

### Policy administration

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>VSL Chief Executive Officer</b>
Policy Owner	VSL Risk and Compliance Manager
Approving Body	VSL Board
Approval Date	May 2024
Risk Rating	High
Date of next review	May 2026

Policy Database Information	
Version	1.0
Related Documents	The Charter for Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition VSL Incident Notification Policy VSL Whistleblower Policy
Superseded Documents	