

Compliments and Complaints Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide external stakeholders with an avenue to lodge compliments and complaints about the Electrical Trades Union Victorian Branch (ETU), its officers and staff and to provide clear guidelines to stakeholders, ETU officers and staff on how complaints and compliments will be handled.

Additionally, the ETU requires a mechanism by which complaints and compliments can be recorded and notes made, indicating any outcomes and actions achieved.

Scope

This policy will apply to all complaints and compliments, except internal whistleblower complaints which are handled under a separate policy.

Process Owner

General Manager Business Services

Department

Finance

Date

1 August 2016

Policy

The ETU has identified the need for a formal complaints and compliments policy to be established, as well as a process by which these can be recorded.

The aim of this policy is:

- To resolve complaints about the ETU in a fair and efficient manner.
- To provide for a process that enables the recording of all compliments and complaints about the ETU in one central database.
- To report on data for the purposes of transparency and to use the information to further improve the service provided by the ETU.
- To review and analyse the ETU's processes in order that ongoing improvements can be made.
- To assist officers and staff in improving their skills when dealing with complaints.
- To record compliments for the purpose of reward and recognition.

Who Can Complain or Compliment the ETU

This policy applies to any complaints and compliments from persons outside the ETU about the ETU and its officers and staff, including complaints and compliments from:

- ETU members

- ETU contractors and suppliers
- The general public

Complaints and Compliments Included In This Policy

The following is a list is a guide to the types of complaints and compliments included in this policy:

- Complaints and compliments made by a member about an officer or staff member conduct. For example: rudeness, misconduct, exceptional service, unnecessary delays and conflicts of interest
- Complaints made by a member about breaches of policies or procedures. For example: repeated failure to return phone calls, or incorrect charging of member fees
- Complaints and compliments about the timeliness of ETU merchandise supply
- Complaints or compliments made by contractors or suppliers about officer or staff conduct
- Complaints made by members about breaches of privacy
- Anonymous complaints

Matters Not Included in This Policy

The following is a list of matters that are not dealt with under this policy:

- Complaints by ETU officers or staff about other ETU officers or staff (*these should be handled under existing Human Resources policies*)
- Compliments by ETU officers or staff about other ETU officers or staff
- Members whistleblower complaints

ETU's General Responsibilities

The ETU recognizes the right for stakeholders to complain and the responsibility it has to address those complaints.

The ETU also recognizes the importance of supporting officers and staff who have had a complaint made against them. This includes having a transparent and documented procedure, an efficient process and a system to record and monitor complaints. This policy is designed to ensure that the complaint investigation process is impartial, and that in relevant circumstances, the outcome of the investigation results in positive improvement in the service provided by the ETU. Any officer or staff member who has a complaint made against them should be made aware of the support offered by the ETU, including the EAP service provided through Protect.

The ETU will also ensure the confidentiality of officer or staff details and complaint details when investigating a complaint under this policy. Only the State Secretary, the Complaints and Compliments Manager (General Manager Business Services), the relevant officer or staff member manager and those officers or staff members who are investigating or assisting in the investigation of the complaint, or are a party to the complaint will be able to access records and information regarding that complaint.

State Secretary's Responsibilities

The State Secretary is responsible for:

- Providing leadership in demonstrating a commitment to the resolution of complaints and the recording of compliments to the ETU

- Ensuring there is an effective, timely, impartial and just process for dealing with complaints
- Making, where necessary, final decisions about complaints about the ETU

Complaints and Compliments Manager Responsibilities

The Complaints and Compliments Manager is responsible for:

- Administrating and overseeing the policy
- Directing complaints received from the public website to the relevant manager or panel
- Reporting on data collected under the policy
- Conducting audits on the outcomes of complaint investigations
- Exercising primary responsibility for receiving and resolving complaints in a timely and fair way
- Analyzing complaints to determine any systematic issues which may impact the quality of work done by the ETU
- Providing advice and assistance to people who have a complaint

Manager's and Team Manager's Responsibilities

The Managers and Team Managers are responsible for:

- Exercising primary responsibility for receiving and resolving allocated complaints in a timely and fair way
- Advising people of their right to make a complaint where appropriate
- Providing advice and assistance to people who have a complaint

Officer and Staff Members Responsibilities

All ETU officers and staff are responsible for:

- Referring complaints, where appropriate, to the relevant person identified in this policy
- Providing a clear and honest account of the events that led to the complaint
- Engaging openly in the complaint handling process
- Respecting those individuals involved in the complaint handling process

Complainant's Responsibilities

Complainant's are responsible for:

- Providing a clear and honest account of their concerns and their expectations for the outcome of their complaint, including providing all relevant information and documents to assist in the investigation of the matter
- Engaging openly in the complaint handling process
- Respecting those individuals involved in the complaint handling process

Definitions

Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made under this policy to or about the ETU, relating to our service, and can be made verbally or in writing.

Compliments

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction made to or about the ETU its officers or staff, relating to our service, procedures or policies. In order for a compliment to be recorded under this policy, it must, in most instances, be made in writing.

Complainants

A person who makes a complaint under this policy.

Principles

The Australian Standard

The ETU has aligned the principles of this policy with the guiding principles of the **Australian Standard: Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations (AS ISO 1002-2006)**.

These are; visibility, accessibility, responsiveness, objectivity, confidentiality, a customer-focused approach, accountability and continual improvement.

Visibility and Accessibility of the Policy

The ETU will ensure that information about how and where to complain is well publicised. With that in mind, a summary of the policy will be clearly outlined on the ETU website with a hyperlink to the full policy and an email link for those people who wish to provide a compliment or lodge a complaint. Additionally, information about the policy will be publicised in the ETU News from time to time. Officers and staff members should also make members aware of the policy, where appropriate, and a complaint form will be available in soft and hard copy for those people requesting one.

Complaints will be accepted weekly, by phone and in person, as well as in writing, via email, mail, website posting and fax. In this way, there should be no barriers to those people wishing to lodge a complaint under this policy. Access to the policy will be free of charge.

Responsiveness and Timeframes

A complaint or compliment will be acknowledged within 48 hours of a person lodging it. As a general rule, less serious complaints which can be handled informally, will be resolved and responded to within five (5) working days and more serious complaints that require investigation will be resolved and responded to within 20 working days.

Complaints should be prioritised according to their urgency. For example, complaints involving serious health and safety issues or serious detriment should be addressed immediately. In all instances, complainants, ETU officers and staff members should be kept informed and updates on a regular basis.

Objectivity

Complaints about the ETU should be dealt with in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. This will involve allowing all parties to the dispute an opportunity to be heard, and where relevant, gathering information or evidence to assist in the decision-making process. Resolutions will be passed on the information available and what is fair and reasonable in all of the circumstances.

Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information concerning the complaints should be available where needed and only for the purposes of addressing the complaint. Generally, details of the complaint and the officer or staff member details will only be made available to the officer or staff member against whom against whom the complaint is made, the manager, organizer or panel who is addressing the complaint (or any manager they consult to assist in resolving the complaint) and the Complaints and Compliments Manager, for administrative purposes. If requested, the officer or staff member's manager to the State Secretary may access this information.

Any staff members is entitled to have access to all complaints made about them, upon request.

A brief note that the complaint has been lodged and its reference number on the Complaints and Compliments database should be recorded in a central database.

Accountability and Continual Improvement

The ETU will record all complaints and compliments under this policy in a centralised database. This will ensure that all compliments and complaints lodged and all actions taken will be accounted for. The data collected under this policy (not including private or personal information) will be used for reporting purposes. Data will be publicized in the ETU's annual report and will be used to report to Executive and Council, and to the ETU as a whole.

The Complaints and Compliments Manager will provide regular reports to the State Secretary about complaints and compliments received under this policy, including any systematic issues identified. The Complaints and Compliments Manager will periodically conduct audits on the handling and outcomes of complaints or compliments lodged under this policy. This policy will ensure the continual improvement of the ETU's policies and procedures, as well as the complaints and compliments policy itself.

The Complaints and Compliments Manager

The ETU's General Manager Business Services will be the Complaints and Compliments Manager for this policy, with the Assistant State Secretaries serving as back up whenever the General Manager Business Services is unavailable.

The Complaints and Compliments Manager role is primarily administrative, being responsible for the overseeing of the policy, directing complaints or compliments received via the website to the appropriate manager, organizer or panel, reporting on data collected and performing audits.

The Complaints and Compliments Manager will play no role in the investigating and resolving of complaints under this policy, unless a complaint is made against one of their own reportees.

Benchmark for Staff Conduct

The ETU's Code of Conduct and any relevant policies and procedures will be used to guide investigators when considering complaints under this policy. The investigator will need to decide whether an officer or staff member's conduct is in accordance with the Code of Conduct policies and procedures, and if not, to take appropriate action to remedy the situation.

Complainants Behaving Unreasonably

Occasionally, a person who makes a complaint under this policy may be viewed as not acting reasonably. This may include where an officer or staff member receives multiple complaints from a person regarding the same issue, even after a full response has been provided. In these instances, generally only one complaint should be recorded, which is then updated as new correspondence or information is received.

Anonymous Complaints

A complainant may lodge an anonymous complaint under this policy. The complaint may be completely anonymous; that is, complainants are not required to provide their personal information, or they may request to keep their details from the person against whom they are lodging the complaint.

Although the ETU will accept anonymous complaints, this may limit the ETU's capacity in investigating and resolving the complaint. Where possible, a complainant who wishes to lodge an anonymous complaint should be made aware of these limitations.

Complaints About the State Secretary

Any complaints made about the State Secretary should be directed by the Complaints and Compliments Manager to the President, who will then determine, in consultation with the Branch Executive as required, any steps to be taken to deal with the complaint. The Branch Executive may consider appointing an external panel for this purpose, which may include a representative from the National Office.

Complaints About Members of the Branch Executive or State Council

Any complaint about members of the Branch Executive or State Council should be directed to the President to investigate and resolve. Complaints about the President will be dealt with by the Branch Executive who may consider appointing an external panel for this purpose.

Managers Discretion

In some cases, it may not be immediately apparent as to whether a compliment or complaint should be recorded under this policy.

Although the ETU seeks to provide clear guidelines for this policy, there will be times when a manager will be required to use their discretion as to whether to record a compliment or complaint. In the case of compliments, these will be recorded if they are received in writing; however, a manager may use their discretion to record a verbal compliment or complaint. This is the exception to the rule and should only be recorded under special circumstances. For example, a person may wish to provide positive feedback about a specific officer or staff member, but is unable to do so in writing due to poor literacy.

Recording Compliments and Complaints

A database will be utilized to record and monitor the compliments and complaints. All compliments and complaints that fall within this policy must be recorded in the database.

The purpose of the database is not to monitor officer or staff performance, but simply to allow for a process by which the ETU can have a record that compliments and complaints have been actioned.

The database will contain information about the compliment or complaint, including:

- The name of the person making the complaint or giving the compliment
- The contact details of the person making the complaint or giving the compliment
- The date the compliment or complaint has been made
- The name of the officer or staff member about whom the compliment or complaint has been made
- The name of the manager, officer or panel to whom the compliment or complaint has been assigned
- A description of the compliment or complaint
- The complainant's desired resolution
- A record of all actions taken on the compliment or complaint
- Any documents relating to the compliment or complaint
- The outcome of the complaint
- The date the complaint was finalized
- Any comments or observations about systematic issues identified by the complaint
- Any comments or other matters the complaint investigator thinks ought to be included

Only those investigators assigned to a complaint will be given access to the details of the complaint. The Compliments and Complaints Manager will maintain the database.

Procedure

When to Record a Compliment

In general, compliments should only be recorded if they are received in writing. In some instances, a manager may use their discretion to record a verbal compliment, but this is the exception to the rule.

How to Record a Compliment

If a manager directly receives a compliment about an officer or a staff member, they should record the compliment on the Compliments and Complaints Form available from the ETU website. Once they have recorded the compliment, they should forward the compliment to the relevant officer or staff member for their own records.

If an officer or staff member receives a compliment about themselves directly from a member, they should forward the compliment to their manager so that it can be recorded in the database.

If an officer or staff member receives a compliment about another officer or staff member directly from a member, they should forward the compliment to their manager so that it can be recorded in the database and a copy forwarded to the relevant officer or staff member.

Reward and Recognition of Compliments

Compliments may be rewarded and/or recognized.

When to Record a Complaint

In order for a complaint to be recorded it must adhere to the definition of a complaint outlined in this policy.

Where a complaint is made during a telephone call or direct personal contact, and an officer or staff member is able to resolve the complaint directly with the person who is making the complaint, there is no need to record it under this policy.

Where a person is not satisfied with the resolution offered by an officer or staff member and asks to speak to a supervisor, the call must be escalated to the relevant manager and generally recorded into the database. Furthermore, all complaints received in writing (including email), will be forwarded to the relevant manager and will be recorded in the database.

How to Record a Complaint

If a complaint is received and it falls within the definition of a complaint for the purposes of this policy, it should be forwarded to the Compliments and Complaints Manager who will normally allocate the complaint for investigation by the officer or staff members direct manager. That manager will then be responsible for investigating and resolving the complaint. If a manager is uncertain about how to deal with the complaint, it is advisable to seek advice from the General Manager Business Services. Complaints lodged via the website will be routed to the Compliments and Complaints Manager for allocation.

The Compliments and Complaints Manager will log the compliment or complaint in the Compliments and Complaints database, recording all relevant information. The allocated manager/investigator will then be responsible for updating the complaint upon its completion.

The Compliments and Complaints Manager will acknowledge the complaint within 48 hours and the manager/investigator will notify the officer or staff member at the most appropriate time. In all instances, the manager will attempt to notify officers or staff as soon as practicable, but this time can change according to the particular circumstances of the complaint.

Note that the Compliments and Complaints reference number should be recorded in the centralised database, but that for privacy reasons details of the complaint or compliment should not be recorded there.

How to Deal with a Complaint

Process

In the first instance, the investigator should familiarise themselves with the complainant's claims and make a note of the complainant's desired outcome.

For less serious complaints, an informal outcome-focused approach will be adopted. These complaints should be responded to and resolved in five (5) working days. For more serious matters, a more evidence based approach may be necessary and will be responded to in 20 working days.

In dealing with a complaint, an investigator will gather information regarding the matter, which may include speaking to the officer or staff member against whom the complaint has been made, examining file notes and seeking advice or information on relevant policies and procedures. If appropriate, the investigator may also speak to any witnesses to the event/s.

After the investigator has gathered the information required, they should make a decision on an appropriate outcome. At all times, the investigator will need to approach the complaint with independence of mind. It is important in every instance that the person who is the subject of the complaint, is provided with an opportunity to respond to it before the complaint is finalised.

Outcomes

The outcomes will vary according to the information received. Possible outcomes could include an apology and an undertaking to conduct training if an investigator determines that an officer or staff member was at fault, or an acknowledgement of a complainant's dissatisfaction and a letter explaining that no further action will be taken if an officer or staff member was not found to be at fault. The investigator may offer advice or guidance to the officer or staff member concerned, or reallocate a case if the manager believes that the relationship has broken down too far to ensure a fair and effective investigation.

In some instances, the investigator may determine that action is required under then ETU's Discipline Policy, depending on the seriousness of the officer or staff member conduct. If this occurs, steps will be taken in accordance with the Discipline Policy and, if appropriate, a copy of the report may be placed on the officer or staff member's file.

Where complaints may indicate a systematic or policy issue, the investigator should record this issue, including any recommendations.

Once an investigator has made a decision on the most suitable outcome, they should consult with the Compliments and Complaints Manager and then communicate that decisions to all parties in the dispute.

If the investigation reveals that the complaint may have been unfounded or unwarranted, the complaint is to remain on the database, as the purpose of the database is for the ETU to record and note that a complaint has been actioned and whether or not the complaint was upheld.

What if the Complainant is Dissatisfied With the Outcome

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the investigator's decision and wishes for the complaint to be escalated further, it can then be escalated to the relevant one-up manager. In order for this to occur, the complainant must generally put their complaint in writing, including reasons why they are not satisfied with the ETU's response. These complaints will be handled by the appropriate senior manager or may be allocated to an appointed panel.

In some circumstances, the complainant may have difficulty putting their complaint in writing (poor literacy or disadvantaged), in which case, the matter can be escalated verbally to the appropriate senior or executive manager.

The process for escalation in this procedure are all the escalation processes possible.

What if the Officer or Staff Member is Dissatisfied With the Outcome

If an officer or staff member is not happy with the outcome of an investigation or is dissatisfied with how the investigation was conducted, they should discuss the matter with their relevant manager or the State Secretary.

Reporting

The State Secretary and Branch Executive will receive monthly summary reports on complaints and compliments received under this policy. The report will include:

- Complaints and compliments received under this policy, with categorisation to include the areas of membership, administration, organisers and business dealings
- Any systematic issues or areas for improvement identified as a result of complaints handled.

Each year, in the ETU Annual Report, the State Secretary will report on complaints and compliments received under this policy.

Communication and Training

| The table below refers to the communications and training needs of this policy. | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-----|---|
| | A | B | C | D |
| Management | | | YES | |
| Organisers | | YES | | |
| Finance | | YES | | |
| ITC | | YES | | |
| Membership | | YES | | |
| Administration | | YES | | |
| Legal | | YES | | |
| Contractors | | YES | | |
| Visitors | | YES | | |

On the launch of a new Policy & Procedure, staff in the following categories **must** be trained in the P&P within two weeks:

- B. Need to use the P&P to complete essential work tasks; and
- C. Need to be aware of the P&P for compliance reasons (eg Equal Opportunity)

Staff in the following categories should be scheduled for awareness training or communication within 3 months:

- A. Need to be aware the P&P exists

Staff in the following categories must be trained in all relevant P&P's at induction and at least once in every calendar year thereafter:

- C. Need to be aware of the P&P for compliance reasons (eg Equal Opportunity)