

Complaints Policy

SYDNEY MARITIME MUSEUM LTD T/A SYDNEY HERITAGE FLEET

Policy Statement

SYDNEY HERITAGE FLEET is committed to providing a supportive and safe environment for volunteers, staff, and the community. This Complaints Policy ensures concerns are addressed respectfully, transparently, and in line with Australian law and global best practices.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Provide a process for making, managing, and resolving complaints.
2. Ensure all complaints are treated fairly, confidentially, and promptly.
3. Uphold the rights of volunteers, staff, and stakeholders to voice concerns.
4. Promote continuous improvement through feedback.

Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers, staff, stakeholders, and members of the community interacting with SYDNEY HERITAGE FLEET.

Definitions

- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction regarding an action, decision, or service of SYDNEY HERITAGE FLEET.
- **Complainant:** The person making the complaint.
- **Respondent:** The individual(s) or group against whom the complaint is made.

Principles

1. **Fairness:** All complaints will be handled impartially.
2. **Accessibility:** The complaints process will be easy to understand and accessible to all.
3. **Confidentiality:** Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
4. **Timeliness:** Complaints will be addressed promptly and efficiently.

5. **Continuous Improvement:** Feedback will inform organisational improvements.

A complaint is procedurally and materially distinct from a dispute.

A complaint is when someone expresses dissatisfaction about something that has happened.

A dispute is when 2 or more people or groups have differing opinions or disagreement about something.

Dispute Resolution provisions are provided for by the Sydney Maritime Museum Constitution but those provisions and the provisions of this Complaints Policy operate separately and will not be intermingled.

Procedure

1. Making a Complaint

Complaints can be made to: The **SHF Commodore** in any of the following ways:

- **Verbally:** In person or via phone.
- **In Writing:** By email.
- **Anonymously:** By post to the Administrative Office at Wharf 7.

If the complaint is about the SHF Commodore, it should be addressed to the Board.

Complaints received by the Board which are not about the Commodore will be referred to the Commodore.

Contact Details:

- Phone: 02 8204 3500
- Email: commodore@shf.org.au or board@shf.org.au
- Address: Wharf 7, 58 Pirrama Rd Pyrmont NSW 2009

Complaints should be both put forward and responded to in good faith and with a genuine spirit of cooperation.

This includes early and genuine efforts by complainant, respondent and/or the Sydney Heritage Fleet to offer a suitable and reasonable outcome or resolution.

2. Acknowledging the Complaint

- Receipt of complaints will be acknowledged within 5 business days of being read by the Commodore or the Manager of Board Business.
- The complainant will be informed of the next steps and estimated resolution timeframe.

3. Assessing the Complaint

Complaints will be assessed to determine:

- The merit of the complaint
- The severity and complexity of the issue.
- Whether additional support (e.g., interpreters or advocates) is needed.
- Potential risks to any parties involved.

4. Resolving the Complaint

The Sydney Heritage Fleet aims to resolve and handle complaints as informally and cordially as possible. This is to ensure the process is accessible, constructive and cooperative for both complainant, the respondent and the organisation.

However, depending on the severity of the matter or the progress towards resolution, complaints may be handled more formally and/or escalated by the SHF Commodore or Board on the following basis:

- **Informal Resolution:** Where appropriate, complaints may be resolved through discussion and mutual agreement.
- **Formal Investigation:** For serious or unresolved complaints, a designated staff member, volunteer or external investigator will conduct a formal review.
- **Escalation:** If the complainant is dissatisfied either with the findings or the outcomes offered by the SHF Commodore, they may request the matter to be escalated to the Board of Directors for review.

Once a complaint has been reviewed by (or if it is submitted in the first place to) the Board there is no further escalation possible within the framework of this Policy.

Complaints which allege criminality or corruption cannot be resolved by this policy. Concerns or allegations about criminal or corrupt conduct should be handled through the SHF Whistleblower Policy or referred to an external authority such as the police.

5. Timeframes

- **Acknowledgement:** Within 5 business days.
- **Initial Assessment:** Within 15 business days.
- **Resolution:** Within 30 business days (longer timeframes will be communicated if necessary).

6. Outcomes

Outcomes may include:

- An apology.
- Corrective action or policy change.
- Mediation between parties.
- Dismissal of the complaint if unfounded.

Not every complainant will be satisfied by the findings made by the Commodore or by the Board and may not be satisfied by the outcomes and resolutions available to either the organisation or the respondent even where the complaint is upheld.

The complainant will receive a written summary of the resolution and their rights to escalate if dissatisfied.

7. Unreasonable conduct by complainants

The Sydney Heritage Fleet will refer to the NSW Ombudsman's manual, 'Managing Unreasonable Conduct by a Complainant' in assessing whether the conduct of a complainant is unreasonable. That document will also be used to manage responses to ongoing correspondence that is unreasonable or to correspondence which seeks to further debate a complaint which is generally unreasonable.

8. Record-Keeping and Confidentiality

- All complaints will be recorded in a secure system.

- Records will be kept for **7 years**, in compliance with privacy laws.

9. *External Review*

If internal resolution is unsatisfactory, complainants may contact an external body such as:

- **The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC)**
- **Fair Work Ombudsman**

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every **2 years** or sooner if required by changes in legislation or feedback from stakeholders.

Approval

This policy was approved by the Board of Directors in December 2024.