



General Dispute Resolution and Resolving Complaints Policy

Every member of the ARA has a responsibility to support a positive, healthy environment for members to enjoy their hobby and to assist in resolving complaints when they arise.

ARA members have a right to a safe, productive, harmonious and fair recreational environment and to raise complaints and have them dealt with in a respectful, effective and timely manner.

This policy is also designed to assist ARA Members, their affiliate Group Leaders and Committee members assess initial complaints and work to resolve them or refer more serious matters to the appropriate authorities.

This policy applies to all ARA Members and should be used in conjunction with:

- The ARA Constitution
- The ARA Code of Conduct

This policy aims to ensure that ARA members are able to address disputes and complaints between members without breaching the ARA Code of Conduct.

Please also bear in mind that there is no obligation for ARA members to agree with one another on many issues that will not affect their respective enjoyment of their hobby.

In some instances where differences may affect members enjoyment of their hobby, it is important to remember that there is no obligation for you to share their hobby with people with whom you cannot get along. (It's supposed to be for fun remember?) Pick and choose who you do your hobby with a mind towards enjoying the time you spend with others doing your hobby.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an ARA-related problem or concern for which an ARA Member seeks resolution about matters such as: interpersonal conflict, difficulties concerning the application of ARA rules or policies, or perceived unfairness in the ARA.

Self Resolution using Plain English

Complaints are best dealt with as soon as the matter arises and as close to where the problem arose as possible. The ARA has adopted the approach of Plain English to help members resolve complaints as quickly as possible. This is how Plain English works:

Discuss the complaint with the other person(s) involved using Plain English and try to resolve the issues directly. Sometimes people behave inappropriately without realising, or make decisions without considering the repercussions. Directly and promptly telling them of your concerns will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.

Plain English– 6 Steps to Clear Communication

As the speaker:

1. State the purpose of the conversation
2. Describe the behaviour specifically
3. Describe the effect of the behaviour on you
4. Give the other person an opportunity to respond
5. State what you would like them to do differently, and
6. Return responsibility to the person and offer support.

As the listener:

1. Have the conversation
2. Act respectfully
3. Clarify critical information
4. Don't argue thoughts, feelings or perceptions
5. Respect reasonable requests, and
6. Cut the other person some slack

Seek advice

If you are unsure about how to handle the problem yourself, or just wish to get more information about what you can do, talk to other ARA Members, your affiliate Club Leaders or the ARA Committee.

Resolution

In most cases your complaint will be resolved at this point, in which case nothing more needs to be done.

Resolution through your affiliate Club Leaders

If you are not able to resolve the matter at this stage, or if you feel unable to do so, you should talk to your affiliate Club Leaders about the complaint. They occupy positions of authority and trust among the people that you share your hobby with and may be able to help.

Assessment

Having raised the complaint with your affiliate Club Leaders, they will need to decide whether the matter can be resolved at the local level or, if the matter is complex or more serious assistance from the ARA Committee and/or external agencies may be warranted.

If the complaint relates to any of the following matters it should be referred the ARA Committee or directly to external authorities for further action:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying), harassment or discrimination – this may be directly referred to appropriate external authorities if deemed necessary;
- Serious misconduct (e.g. threatening or obscene phone calls, assault or threatened assault) – These are criminal behaviours and should be reported to the police in the first instance;
- Corrupt conduct, including fraud – ARA Members should report any matter that they suspect on reasonable grounds may concern corrupt conduct directly to external authorities or to the ARA Committee for their consideration;
- Child protection related matters – ARA members should directly notify authorities of any allegation of “reportable conduct” and any “reportable conviction” i.e. any sexual offence

or misconduct committed against or in the presence of a child, or assault, neglect or ill-treatment of a child, or behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child.

Who should handle the complaint?

There may be circumstances where your affiliate Club Leader is not the best person to deal with the concern. For example, the complaint may be about the affiliate Club Leader (if they are an ARA Member) or they may have or be perceived to have a conflict of interest in the process. In such cases, you should seek advice from the ARA Committee about who should manage the complaint.

Ultimately, you are involved in re-enactment for fun and if the individuals and leaders that you share your hobby with aren't prepared to give you a fair go, you should really consider whether they are worth spending your precious recreational time with. You may be happier and better off amongst other people.

Mediated resolution with external assistance

If you or your affiliate Club Leader considers that the complaint cannot be resolved without further external assistance, the ARA recommends external assistance such as the involvement of mediation or dispute resolution specialists through Community Justice Centres (CJC).

CJC staff will review the basis of the complaint, what has been done to date and to work out how the complaint can be resolved and the situation improved. Both you and the other person/s involved will be specifically asked for your recommendations about how the situation may be resolved and improved. If the complaint is resolved by mutual agreement between the parties at the CJC, the CJC Staff may record basic details, such as: names of parties, date, location, nature of issue and agreed resolution.

Rights and responsibilities for resolving ARA complaints

All ARA Members

All ARA members have the **right** to:

- Enjoy their hobby in a safe and healthy environment
- be treated fairly and with respect

All ARA members also have the following **responsibilities**:

- ensuring their behaviour is consistent with the Code of Conduct
- to recognise their role in achieving a harmonious recreational environment
- to take responsibility for their own actions and treat others with respect and sensitivity
- if the actions of others cause them concern, to attempt to resolve differences directly with the people involved as soon as they arise
- to report any behaviour they consider improper.

ARA Members with a complaint

ARA Members with a complaint have the **right** to:

- raise the complaint and have it dealt with promptly, fairly, and respectfully
- pursue the complaint through external agencies and/or authorities.

ARA Members with a complaint have the following **responsibilities**:

- to attempt to resolve differences directly with the people involved as soon as they arise
- to take prompt action in accordance with this policy
- to ask for realistic outcomes
- to actively contribute to the resolution process

- not to raise frivolous, vexatious or malicious complaints.

ARA Members against whom a complaint has been raised

ARA Members against whom an ARA complaint has been raised have the **right** to:

- be informed promptly of the details of the concern
- have the opportunity to respond to the concern
- have a fair and impartial consideration of the concern
- be protected against any vexatious or malicious concerns.
- Seek external support.

Respondents have the following **responsibilities**:

- to actively contribute to the resolution process
- to assist the parties to reach a fair outcome as quickly as possible.

The ARA Committee

The ARA Committee is responsible for:

- ensuring that established procedures are followed
- ensuring compliance with relevant laws, regulations and standards
- providing support and advice to all ARA Members about the resolution of ARA complaints.

The ARA and its Committee does not involve itself in all aspects of re-enactment by its members and therefore will not become involved in debate or disputes between ARA Members that are outside of the ARA scope and objectives.

The ARA and its Committee is involved supporting the common interests of its members and will not participate in disputes about matters that are personal differences in opinion or approach towards re-enactment. The ARA will only become involved in debate and disputes that affect the common interests of its members.

The ARA takes its Code of Conduct seriously and members should be mindful to not breach the Code of Conduct in the course of enjoying their hobby or debating/disputing with others.

Disciplinary action

Disciplinary processes should not be confused with procedures for resolving complaints. Disciplinary procedures are totally separate and defined in the ARA Constitution. In some cases, however, as a result of the complaint, disciplinary action against an ARA Member may be commenced.

The ARA Committee will commence disciplinary proceedings where appropriate and will, if necessary, report any concerns to the officer managing the disciplinary process and or the appropriate external authorities.

Disciplinary action can also be taken against an ARA Member if their complaint is proven to be frivolous, vexatious or malicious.

Keep it in perspective

ARA Members do re-enactment for recreation and fun. It is not mandatory. When it stops being fun, have a good look at what you are doing and who you are doing it with and honestly ask yourself “Is it worth doing this hobby with these people?”

The ARA Committee is committed to this Policy and undertakes to lead by example.