

CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

POLICY

Suzuki Talent Education Association of Australia (NSW) (Suzuki) is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using Suzuki services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organisation and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

The organisation will provide a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- 1) Is simple to use;
- 2) Is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders; ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly;
- 3) is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice; and
- 4) Complies with legislative requirements.

DEFINITIONS

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction with the agency's policies, procedures, charges, employees, agents and or quality of services.

PROCEDURES

Suzuki will:

- 1) Consider all complaints received;
- 2) Treat all complaints with respect, recognising that the issue of the complaint is important to the complainant;
- 3) Maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution;
- 4) Ensure advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support;
- 5) Resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- 6) Deal with all complaints in a timely manner;
- 7) Keep parties of the complaint informed of progress of complaint;
- 8) Ensure that Board members, staff and volunteers are given information about the complaint's procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints;
- 9) Ensure all teachers, students, parents, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures;
- 10) Ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the process of the issue; and
- 11) Ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning improvements.

Information for Consumers and Stakeholders

In the first instance, less serious complaints and/or most verbal complaints will be dealt with informally over the phone. A progress note will be made of the complaint and the resolution.

For more serious and formal complaints, Suzuki complaints and appeals procedure is documented for clients and stakeholders below and on Suzuki's website (www.suzukimusicnsw.com.au).

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regard to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation.

Complainants may nominate a Suzuki staff member they want as the key contact regarding the complaint.

Making a Complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to:

- 1) The staff member they were dealing with at the time;
- 2) The executive officer; or
- 3) The Board.

If the complaint is about:

- 1) A staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Executive Officer; or
- 2) The Executive Officer, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the President of the Board or their nominee.

Written complaints may be delivered to the office (Unit 1/1 Central Ave, Thornleigh NSW 2120) or sent to PO BOX 4489 Thornleigh NSW 2120. The Administration Officer will be responsible for receiving the correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.

Lodging an Appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with the decision made by the organisation. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the Executive Officer.

Procedure for Complaints and Appeals Management

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

- 1) Processing the complaint or appeal:
 - a. Registering the complaint or appeal on the Complaints Data Base; and
 - b. Informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and provide them with information about the process and time frame.
- 2) Investigating the complaint or appeal:

- a. Examining the complaint within 5 working days of the complaint being received;
- b. Investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond; and
- c. Informing the complainant by letter or email within 10 working days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 15 working days of being received. If this timeframe cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative timeframe for resolution.

3) Resolving the complaint:

- a. Making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 15 working of the complaint being received;
- b. Informing the complainant of the outcome;
- c. Upheld (and if so, what will be done to resolve it)
- d. Resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
- e. If no further action can be taken, and the reason for this;
- f. Informing the complainant of any options for further actions if required.

4) Reviewing the complaint:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal, they can seek a further review of the matter by writing to the President of the Board within 5 working days of the date of the resolution letter.

5) Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will be referred to the NSW Deputy Ombudsman:

NSW Deputy Ombudsman

Community and Disability Services Commissioner

Level 24, 580 George Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: 02 3286 1000

nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au

Record Keeping

A record of complaints or appeals (Complaints Data Base) will be kept in a data base on Suzuki's intranet or secure computer system. The register will be maintained by the Executive Officer and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- 1) Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint;
- 2) Date lodged;
- 3) Action taken;
- 4) Date of resolution and reason for decision;

- 5) Indication of complainant being notified of the outcome;
- 6) Complainant response and any further action.

Copies of all correspondence will be kept in the complaints file.

The Complaints Data Base and files will be confidential and access is restricted to the Executive Officer.

The Executive Officer will be responsible for preparing a report on complaints each six months to the Board.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the Executive Officer and the Board to:

- 1) Inform service planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- 2) Inform decision making by including a report on complaints and appeals as a standard item on staff and Board meeting agendas.

Complaints Involving Specific Staff Members or Volunteers

The Executive Officer has delegated responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members or volunteers.

Internal complaints, where a staff member or volunteer makes a complaint concerning another staff member or volunteer, will be dealt within accordance with the organisation's Staff Grievance Procedure.

External complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member or volunteer will be managed by the Executive Officer who will:

- 1) Notify the staff member or volunteer of the complaint and its nature;
- 2) Investigate the complaint and provide the staff member or volunteer with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised;
- 3) Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party;
- 4) Take any further action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member or volunteer arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in the organisation's disciplinary procedures.

Complaints involving the Executive Officer will be managed by the President of the Board.

Complaints Involving Organisation Members of the Board

Complaints made against a member of the Board will be referred to the President. The President will:

- 1) Notify the person about whom a complaint is being made, of the complaint and its nature;
- 2) Investigate the complaint and provide the member with the opportunity to respond to any issues raised;

- 3) Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party.

Where the President is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be referred to the Secretary of the Treasurer.

If the matter remains unresolved, the Secretary of the Treasurer will raise the matter at the next Board meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may:

- 1) Deal with the matter at its meeting; or
- 2) Refer the matter to the process outlined in the Suzuki Constitution.

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Haruo Goto

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