AUSTRALIAN SIDE SADDLE COMMUNITY (ASSC)

COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY

Document status: Organisational Policy
Applies to: ASSC organisers, representatives, participants, volunteers, presenters and individuals engaging with ASSC activities.

1. PURPOSE

The Australian Side Saddle Community (ASSC) is committed to maintaining a respectful, supportive, inclusive and constructive environment for everyone involved in its activities.

As a community established to inform, support and connect people with an interest in side saddle riding, education, history and horsemanship, the ASSC recognises that disagreements and concerns may occasionally arise.

This policy establishes a clear and consistent process for receiving, considering and resolving complaints.

It aims to ensure that:

- Genuine concerns are treated seriously and fairly.
- Complaints are handled respectfully and confidentially.
- All parties have an appropriate opportunity to be heard.
- Disagreements are addressed constructively wherever possible.
- Harassment, intimidation, malicious conduct and deliberate disruption are not tolerated.
- The integrity, reputation and proper operation of the ASSC are protected.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints involving:

- ASSC organisers and representatives.
- Event participants and attendees.
- Guest speakers, instructors and clinicians.
- Volunteers and supporters.
- ASSC educational programs, clinics, demonstrations and social activities.
- Communications conducted through ASSC-managed platforms and channels.
- Conduct directly affecting the ASSC or its activities.

The policy applies to both in-person and online interactions.

3. PRINCIPLES OF FAIRNESS

The ASSC will endeavour to manage complaints according to the following principles:

Fairness: Every complaint will be considered on its individual circumstances.

Impartiality: Decisions will be based on available information and evidence rather than personal relationships, assumptions or previous disagreements.

Confidentiality: Complaint information will only be shared with people who reasonably need access to it for the purpose of addressing the matter.

Respect: Everyone involved is expected to communicate respectfully and refrain from intimidation, harassment or personal attacks.

Proportionality: Any action taken will be appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the matter.

Accountability: The ASSC will maintain appropriate records of significant complaints and the actions taken.

Good Faith: The ASSC welcomes genuine feedback and legitimate concerns raised honestly and constructively.

4. WHAT CONSTITUTES A COMPLAINT?

A complaint may involve concerns about:

- The conduct of an ASSC representative, organiser or participant.
- The administration or delivery of an ASSC event or activity.
- Communication, decisions or arrangements made by the ASSC.
- Inappropriate behaviour, harassment, bullying or intimidation.
- Breaches of ASSC policies or participation conditions.
- Conduct that materially interferes with ASSC activities or the participation of others.
- Misuse of ASSC information, resources, identity or intellectual property.

Complaints should identify the concern clearly and provide relevant information wherever possible.

5. HOW TO LODGE A COMPLAINT

Complaints should preferably be submitted in writing through the ASSC's designated contact channels.

A complaint should include, where possible:

- The name and contact details of the person making the complaint.
- A description of the issue.
- Relevant dates and circumstances.
- The names of any people directly involved.
- Supporting correspondence, photographs or other relevant evidence.
- The outcome or resolution being sought.

The ASSC may consider anonymous complaints where sufficient information is available to assess the concern.

However, anonymity may limit the ASSC's ability to investigate or respond fully.

Complaints should be directed to the designated ASSC contact person.

Where a complaint concerns that contact person, it should be referred to another appropriate ASSC representative who is not directly involved in the matter.

6. COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESS

The ASSC will generally follow these stages.

Stage 1 – Acknowledgement

The ASSC will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within a reasonable timeframe, ordinarily within five business days.

The complainant may be asked to provide further information where necessary.

Stage 2 – Initial Assessment

The complaint will be assessed to determine:

- Whether it falls within the scope of this policy.
- Whether sufficient information is available.
- Whether immediate action is necessary.
- Whether informal resolution is appropriate.
- Whether a more formal review is required.

Complaints involving immediate safety concerns, serious harassment or potential legal issues may require a different response.

Stage 3 – Opportunity to Respond

Where a complaint concerns an identifiable individual and may result in action affecting them, that person will generally be given an appropriate opportunity to respond to the relevant concerns.

The ASSC will consider the information provided by all parties.

Stage 4 – Review and Consideration

The complaint will be considered fairly and objectively.

Where appropriate, the ASSC may:

- Seek clarification from the parties involved.
- Review relevant documents and correspondence.
- Speak with witnesses.
- Consider relevant ASSC policies and event conditions.
- Seek independent professional advice.

Stage 5 – Outcome

The complainant will be advised of the outcome where appropriate.

Depending on the circumstances, possible outcomes may include:

- No further action.
- Clarification or correction of information.
- An apology or acknowledgement.
- Agreed changes to arrangements or procedures.

- A reminder of expected standards of conduct.
- Mediation or facilitated discussion.
- Restrictions on participation in particular activities.
- Other reasonable and proportionate action.

The ASSC will not disclose confidential personal or disciplinary information about another individual unless there is an appropriate reason to do so.

7. UNREASONABLE OR REPEATED COMPLAINTS

The ASSC recognises that individuals have the right to raise genuine concerns and seek appropriate review of decisions.

However, repeated or unreasonable complaints can place significant demands on a small community organisation and interfere with its ability to conduct its activities.

The ASSC may identify a complaint or pattern of communication as unreasonable where there is evidence of conduct such as:

- Repeatedly raising matters that have already been appropriately considered and answered, without providing new relevant information.
- Making excessive or repetitive demands for responses.
- Using complaints primarily to intimidate, harass or personally attack organisers or representatives.
- Making allegations without reasonable supporting information while refusing to provide clarification.
- Repeatedly contacting multiple representatives about the same resolved matter in a manner that is unreasonable.
- Attempting to disrupt ASSC activities through persistent or vexatious communications.

Where appropriate, the ASSC may:

- Provide a consolidated written response.
- Nominate one contact person for further correspondence.
- Establish reasonable communication boundaries.
- Decline to repeatedly revisit matters that have been properly addressed, unless significant new information is provided.
- Seek independent advice where the conduct is serious or persistent.

A complaint will not be considered unreasonable merely because it is critical, uncomfortable, unsuccessful or contrary to the views of the ASSC.

8. HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND REPUTATIONAL CONDUCT

The ASSC expects all individuals engaging with its representatives and activities to communicate responsibly and respectfully.

The following conduct is not acceptable:

- Harassment, bullying or intimidation.
- Threatening, abusive or persistently hostile communications.
- Deliberately disrupting ASSC activities.

- Targeting organisers, volunteers, presenters or participants.
- Knowingly circulating false information about individuals or the ASSC.
- Impersonating ASSC representatives or misrepresenting authority to speak on behalf of the Community.
- Interfering with established relationships, sponsorships or activities through improper or misleading conduct.
- Misusing confidential information obtained through ASSC participation.

Where credible concerns arise, the ASSC may document the conduct, seek clarification, obtain independent advice and take reasonable action within its authority.

The ASSC will distinguish between legitimate criticism, differences of opinion and conduct that may constitute harassment, intimidation or other inappropriate behaviour.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prevent lawful criticism, honest opinion, legitimate complaints or respectful discussion about side saddle activities.

9. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Where appropriate and safe to do so, the ASSC may encourage informal resolution of disagreements.

Possible approaches include:

- Direct clarification through an appropriate ASSC representative.
- A facilitated discussion.
- Mediation by an independent person.
- Written clarification of the respective positions.
- An agreed arrangement to prevent further unnecessary conflict.

Mediation will only be considered where it is appropriate to the circumstances and both parties are willing to participate.

The ASSC will not require individuals to participate in mediation where there are reasonable concerns about intimidation, harassment or an imbalance of power.

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Any person responsible for considering a complaint must disclose an actual or reasonably perceived conflict of interest.

Where a complaint involves an ASSC organiser or designated contact person, an alternative person should be appointed to consider the matter wherever reasonably practicable.

For significant matters, the ASSC may seek independent external assistance to support a fair and objective process.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

The ASSC will maintain appropriate records of formal complaints and their outcomes.

Records may include:

- The original complaint.
- Relevant correspondence.
- Supporting information and evidence.
- Responses from involved parties.
- Actions taken.
- The outcome and any agreed follow-up.

Records will be stored securely and access restricted to authorised individuals.

Information will be retained and handled in accordance with applicable privacy and record-keeping obligations.

12. REVIEW OF DECISIONS

Where a person believes a complaint has not been handled fairly, they may request a review in writing.

A review request should identify:

- The original decision.
- The reasons a review is being requested.
- Any relevant new information.
- Any procedural concerns.

Where practicable, the review should be undertaken by someone who was not directly responsible for the original decision.

A review is not an automatic opportunity to restart a matter that has already been properly considered. There should be reasonable grounds for reconsideration.

13. EXTERNAL ADVICE AND REFERRALS

The ASSC recognises that some matters may fall outside its ability or authority to resolve.

Where appropriate, individuals may be directed to independent professional advice or relevant external organisations.

Matters involving potential criminal conduct, serious threats, unlawful discrimination or other legal issues may require referral to appropriate authorities or professional advisers.

14. POLICY ADMINISTRATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be administered by the authorised representatives of the Australian Side Saddle Community.

The policy may be reviewed and updated as the ASSC develops its activities, services and organisational arrangements.

All individuals engaging with ASSC activities are expected to respect the principles and procedures outlined in this policy.

15. OUR COMMITMENT

The Australian Side Saddle Community was established to inform, support and connect people who share an appreciation of side saddle riding and its traditions.

We welcome constructive discussion, differing perspectives, genuine feedback and opportunities to learn.

We are equally committed to ensuring that our organisers, presenters, participants and supporters can engage with the Community in an environment that is respectful, safe and free from intimidation or deliberate disruption.

Respect for others, integrity in communication and a shared commitment to preserving side saddle traditions are fundamental to the ASSC.

AUSTRALIAN SIDE SADDLE COMMUNITY

Preserving the art, history, and beauty of a bygone era through the timeless elegance of side saddle.