

WARRAGUL REGIONAL COLLEGE

ADDRESSING PARENT

COMPLAINTS POLICY (OTHER)

APRIL 2012



RATIONALE

Involving parents in their child's education is critical to children's development and learning. It emphasises fostering positive relationships with parents and families and developing strong school community partnerships. Schools are required to establish a policy and procedures to address parents' concerns and complaints in consultation with the school community. The policy and procedures must be consistent with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) regulations.

PURPOSE

The 'Addressing Parents' Concerns and Complaints policy has been developed to ensure that Warragul Regional College (WRC) has procedures in place to address concerns and complaints promptly, consistently and fairly. The school's approach to addressing concerns and complaints is based on the WRC values and seeks to:

- Provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- Build relationships between students, parents and staff
- Provide a safe working environment for staff

The concerns and complaints covered by this policy and associated procedures include issues related to:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Student Engagement Policy
- Incidents of bullying and harassment
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Student grouping
- Communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Other school-related matters except as detailed below.

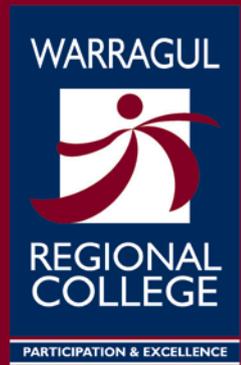
This policy and associated procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights or review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools' Reference Guide published by DEECD. Those matters include:

- Student discipline and expulsion
- Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- Complaints by DEECD employees related to their employment
- Student critical incidents
- Criminal matters

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GUIDELINES

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue arises
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced

The school will address concerns and complaints received from parents:

- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly or within the timeline mutually agreed by the complainant
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and DEECD's regulatory framework

Raising Concerns or Complaints

In the first instance a complainant should telephone or write to:

- The relevant Team Leader or Learning Manager for student related matters
- The Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues

Contact with members of staff should be made through the school office on 03 5623 9900

Help With Raising Concerns or Complaints

Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.

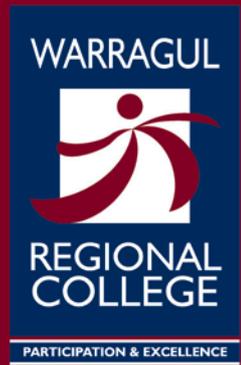
- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the school representative addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

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Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints Information

When a complaint is made the following details should be recorded, even if the complaint appears minor.

- Name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing)
- A brief description of the concern or complaint
- Action taken on the concern or complaint
- The outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures

However, in the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in an Assistant Principal / Team Leader / Learning Manager / teachers diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

Addressing Concerns and Complaints

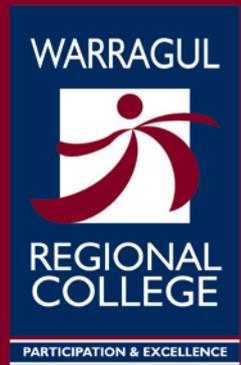
The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of DEECD.

- The school will give the complainant a copy of DEECD 'Parent Complaints Information' pamphlet
- The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process, or through other complaints processes by DEECD.
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the school representative who receives the complaint.
- The school will acknowledge all written complaints by telephone or in writing, and will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- The school representative will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by an Assistant Principal or relevant staff member.
- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need sufficient time to investigate and resolve the matter.

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- Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the DEECD Gippsland Regional Office which may take more time. The school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays.
- In all cases, the school will try to resolve the concern or complaint within 20 school days.

Remedies

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. At its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:

- An explanation or further information about the issue
- Mediation, counselling or other support
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- To change its decision
- To change its policies, procedures or practices
- To cancel a debt (such as school payments)
- The refund of monetary amount previously paid

The school will implement the remedy as soon as possible

Referral of Concerns or Complaints

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint they should contact the college Principal. If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the college Principal, they should contact the DEECD Gippsland Regional Office by telephone or in writing. Gippsland Regional Office PO Box 381, Moe, Victoria, 3825

Corner of Kirk and Haigh Streets, Moe 3825 Telephone: (03) 5127 0400

The officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint, and the complainant's opinion as to why the school did not resolve the matter to their satisfaction.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, the school and the Gippsland Regional Office working together, the Regional Office may refer the matter to DEECD's Group Coordination Division. The Division will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint, and the complainant's opinion about why the school and regional office did not resolve the matter to their satisfaction. The Division will ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the concern or complaint. Where the complainant is unable to provide a written account, the officer from the Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided.

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Communicating to Parents and the School Community

The college will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy-to-understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

The information will include:

- How a person can make a complaint
- The complainant's responsibilities
- The information that is to be provided by the complainant
- The contact details of the school representatives with whom the complainant can lodge their concern or complaint
- The process and timeframes for managing complaints

The college's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- Published on the school's website
- Printed in a leaflet given to parents when their child enrolls
- To also give the complainant a copy of the DEECD 'Parent Complaints Information' pamphlet.

The school will:

- Brief all members of staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints
- Provide staff with training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- Ensure that staff who manage complaints are informed of their responsibilities to demonstrate the personal attributes of the 'Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's Guide to Complaint Handling For Victorian Public Sector Agencies'

Monitoring the Parents' Concern and Complaints Policy

The college will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies and procedures and operations.

The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- Identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- Assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- Use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents
- The school council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

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REFERENCES

- Warragul Regional College Policies and Procedures documents
- DEECD addressing parents' concerns and complaints affectively guidelines.
[http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY AND GUIDE S Addressing parents concerns.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDE_S_Addressing_parents_concerns.pdf)
- DEECD guides to practical advice about issues to consider when managing parents' concerns or complaints
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcschoolinformation.htm>
- DEECD parents' concerns and complaints information pamphlets
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcmoredinformation.htm#H2N10160>
- DEECD dignity and respect statement
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/schacc/dignityrespectstatement.pdf>
- Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's Guide to Complaint Handling For Victorian Public Sector Agencies <http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/www/html/93-foreword.asp>