

# **Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure**

## **The Food Co-operative Shop Ltd (“The Food Co-op”)**

This Policy is a Board (Management Collective (MC)) approved policy of The Food Co-op.

This Policy was approved by the MC on the 13th September 2017

This Policy will be reviewed by the MC on the September 2018

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### **Scope of Policy**

1. This policy sets out the Food Co-op’s approach to complaints and compliments from its members and customers about the Food Co-op products and services. It is based on the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s *Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling (2009)*.
2. This policy does not deal with grievances between employees and members, management and members or member to members. These are governed by the Grievance Policy and Policy Procedures.
3. This policy does not deal with any potential breach of the law for example sexual assault, physical violence, threatening behavior, fraud, theft. If an incident or grievance involves the possible breach of the law the matter should be referred by the person affected or a witness to the relevant authorities.

### **Rationale**

The Food Co-op is committed to providing a safe and inclusive place for members and community; and adhering to the core principles of Co-operation<sup>1</sup>. However, we acknowledge that there may be situations where we do not meet the standards we aspire to. In these circumstances we respect the rights of individuals to make a grievance and to have those grievances taken seriously and for those grievances to be dealt with in a fair, transparent and confidential manner. We need to be open to feedback both positive and negative from people in our community. Receiving a grievance is an important way for us to learn what is needed to help improve the Food Co-op.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

## **Definitions**

**Compliment – any expression of satisfaction with the Food Co-op’s administration, a staff member, process, goods or service or resource**

**Complaint – any expression of dissatisfaction with the goods or services provided by the Food Co-op, including a poor or positive experience with a member of staff**

**Employee - means a person or member paid in wages by the Food Co-op**

**Member - means a member of the Food Co-op**

**Recurring issue – any matter that, if not identified and appropriately addressed, has the potential to recur and generate complaints, or has a negative impact on members and customers.**

## **Guiding Principles:**

### ***Principle 1: Providing high quality services***

The Food Co-op aims to provide high quality food and service and encourages members of the public to tell us if for some reason they are not happy with food and service provided by the Food Co-op. The Food Co-op also encourages members or customers to tell us if they have received good food or service. Compliments can be made in the same way as complaints, but rather than investigating, the compliment will be communicated directly to relevant staff.

### ***Principle 2: Complainants to be treated fairly and with respect***

All complaints will be received in an equitable, fair, confidential and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the person/people with the grievance and other involved persons.

### ***Principle 3: Privacy and personal information to be protected***

The complaint, the complainant's personal information, and any details relating to the complaint are regulated by the laws relating to freedom of information and privacy. The Food Co-op is generally prohibited from using or disclosing such information, unless required to do so by law.

### ***Principle 4: Complaints and compliments procedure to be accessible and responsive***

The procedure for making a complaint or compliment will be clearly accessible on our website (<http://foodco-opshop.com.au/compliments-or-complaints/>). We will also provide this information when dealing with the public generally where appropriate.

### ***Principle 5: Complaints to be dealt with efficiently***

We aim to deal with complaints efficiently with managers and staff will be given regular reports on complaints and, if complaints remain unresolved, will escalate to the Board.

### ***Principle 6: Using complaints and compliments to improve our service***

Complaints and compliments provide direct information about how the members and customers view our services. We will integrate this information into our daily business and will provide regular reporting of complaints and compliments to the Board and feedback to Food Co-op staff.

This information will help us:

- identify recurring issues
- make improvements to our systems and processes
- identify learning and development needs for staff, and
- review and evaluate workloads and work practices.

## Procedures

1. Complaints or compliments can be made by sending an email to [food.coop.shop@gmail.com](mailto:food.coop.shop@gmail.com) or by calling (02) 6230 7505.
2. The Food Co-op manager will acknowledge the complaint within three working days of receipt.
3. The complainant will be given contact details of the team reviewing the complaint, and complaints will be addressed within 21 days of receipt. If the complaint cannot be addressed within this time, a Food Co-op manager will contact the member or customer to report on progress and explain the reason for delay.
4. Consistent with the principles of fairness and respect, the Food Co-op will:
  - ensure that the complaint is investigated by a person other than the staff member who is the subject of the complaint (including escalating the matter to the Board if the complaint is made about the manager of the Food Co-op)
  - treat complaints on their merits and with an open mind
  - objectively evaluate facts or evidence given in support of a complainant
  - disclose any apparent or actual conflict of interest
  - treat any fresh complaint on its merits, and
  - ensure that complainants will not be adversely treated because they have made a complaint.
5. The Food Co-op will explain the outcome of the investigation to the complainant. If the complainant is not satisfied, the complainant will be given an opportunity to respond to the decision before the complaint is formally resolved.
6. Where the Food Co-op is found to be at fault, remedies may include (but not limited to):
  - a refund or vouchers for defective goods
  - a written or verbal apology to the complainant
  - a review and potential revision of Food Co-op policy or procedures, and
  - performance management procedures if related to an employee.

## **Vexatious grievances**

It is expected that all grievances are made in good faith and are not motivated by intent for personal gain, personal interest or a grudge. However, should a subsequent investigation reveal that a grievance to be vexatious, for example an accusation that the complainant knows to be false, any investigation underway will be terminated immediately and the grievance closed. If a vexatious grievance is made by a Board member, employee or member, disciplinary measures will be taken.