



# Murrumba State Secondary College

## Complaints policy

### Rationale

Educational success is dependent upon effective partnerships between parents, students and the college. Working together is a part of our strategic vision and at the heart of what we do each day at Murrumba State Secondary College. To achieve this partnership honesty, openness and trust are required. We need to be able to talk to each other when we have concerns, so that issues can be worked out. During the course of your child's education you may have concerns or complaints relating to our college. It is important to us that you share these concerns with us so that we can endeavour to put things right. We need to understand what the issues are and then be able to talk them through. As a result you may gain a better understanding of why we make particular decisions. Your feedback is important to us and your contribution can always help us improve our business.

### How to raise a complaint

Murrumba State Secondary College is committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. We want to hear your concerns and we aim to deliver an education where open communication is a major part of our relationship with you and your family. If your complaint is with your child's teacher or relates to an issue concerning your child's experience at college, make an appointment with that teacher as soon as possible through the college administrative office. Share the information you have about the problem with the teacher. Give the teacher an opportunity to tell you all he/she knows about the incident or problem. Together, both the parent/caregiver and the teacher should then take steps to resolve the incident or problem. Together, both parent/caregiver and the teacher should take the steps necessary to resolve the complaint at this level. The teacher will make a record of the concern or complaint and report your meeting and any outcomes to their supervisor. You can raise an issue with any member of our college staff. Contact the college office to make an appointment to see the relevant person. When making the complaint or raising a concern, it is in the best interest of complaint resolution to ensure that you:

- Provide complete and factual information in a timely manner;
- Deliver your complaint in a non-threatening and non-abusive manner; and
- Not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or include deliberately false or misleading information.

Please be aware that if you make a complaint about a member of staff, that in most instances the staff member will be told of the complaint and offered the right of reply. You also have the right to have a support person participate in the process and may choose to access the assistance of an advocate, interpreter or a third party (as agreed between you and the Principal) when raising your concern or complaint. All members of our college community are encouraged to deal positively and sincerely with concerns or complaints as they are raised. We will listen and we will ask questions to make sure that we understand fully your concern or complaint. We will usually take notes to assist in following up your concern or complaint.

### Process for managing concerns or complaints

There are generally four phases in managing a complaint or a concern, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint or concern outcome. In most situations these can be worked through quickly as one process.

## **Phase 1:**

### **Receiving and clarifying the complaint**

All members of staff can receive concerns or complaints. Try to state your concern or complaint calmly, clearly and courteously. Being aggressive will not assist the issue.

When a staff member receives a verbal complaint they will/may:

- Listen carefully to the issues you raise and make sure they understand what you are saying
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure they are clear in their understanding of what you have said.
- Summarise the main points you have raised.
- Explain a relevant college policy or procedure as related to the concern or complaint raised.
- Work out an action plan with you in relation to: what they will do; what you should do; what your child should do; and when you will talk again if necessary.
- Tell you that they may access the support of another party in investigating the complaint, if they feel this is needed or refer the matter to an appropriate person.
- Offer an apology and / or recognition of the effect of the situation has had on you or your family as appropriate.
- Resolve the complaint as soon as possible. In most circumstances this will be immediate but in others it may require further investigation.

If your verbal concern or complaint is not resolved you may consider putting your concerns or complaint in writing and forwarding it to the college for action. In general, if you advise that you prefer the complaint be in writing, the member of staff will take no further action until your written complaint is received. When a written complaint is received it is date stamped and forwarded to the Principal. Please be aware that when raising a concern or complaint anonymously you may limit the college's capacity to adequately manage the situation or fully investigate the issues raised. If your complaint relates to a report of harm (whether physical, emotional or sexual) of a student under the age of 18 years, or the matter relates to possible criminal activity, the matter must be dealt with immediately and reported to the Principal or Principal's supervisor advising them of all the particulars known (in relation to sexual abuse, as prescribed in section 365 of the Education General Provisions Act 2006.)

## **Phase 2:**

### **Deciding how to handle the complaint**

When a member of staff receives a complaint they will:

- Begin the process of making an assessment about your concern or complaint from the moment it is received.
- Make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or a complaint.
- If they are not the Principal, they may refer your concerns or complaint to the Principal.

The Principal will then decide whether to:

- Take no further action.
- Attempt to resolve your concern or complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation.
- Refer your concern or complaint to the relevant internal or external agency as required. Some matters are so serious that they may need to be referred to DET, District Office or the QLD Police Service.

- Initiate an investigation of the concern or complaint within the college, if further information is required.

Some matters may require further investigation, in this instance you will be advised as to the next contact time.

The Principal has the final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to college management issues under their jurisdiction. The concern or complaint can however be referred to another member of staff for action. (eg. a Deputy Principal, Business Services Manager or nominated staff member) If your concern or complaint relates to departmental policy, or a departmental policy position, you may be advised to take your complaint to the relevant District or Regional Office. If your concern or complaint is in relation to official misconduct, student protection, staff grievances or perceived breach of privacy, the complaint is directed to the Workforce Standards and Performance Unit and the Administrative Law Branch. The Principal ensures that records are kept of a complaint and any referral of a complaint for either internal or external review.

### **Phase 3: Finding out about the concern or the complaint**

In this phase the person managing the concern or complaint will gather the facts about the issues while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned. A key principle in understanding any concern or complaint is to understand context and cause. You can assist the college by providing as much information as you can.

When investigating a concern or complaint our college staff may need to talk to other people in order to get a complete picture of the situation. As they do this they begin to explore options to resolve the concern or complaint with you. You can assist the college by focussing on a positive resolution to the matter. Your information will be treated confidentially where possible, however if investigation by an external agency is required information will be passed on.

Please be aware that if you are raising a concern or complaint about an individual that this person will usually have the right to be made aware of the concern or complaint.

- Our staff will investigate concerns by:
- Collecting and analysing information
- Working collaboratively with all people involved
- Finding the facts relating to the matter
- Identifying any contributing factors to the matter
- Consulting the relevant policy on issues that relate to the concern or complaint
- Documenting the investigation report or outcome

### **Phase 4: Making a decision**

In this phase the member of staff managing your concern or complaint will use facts that have been gathered to make a decision about the way forward that is fair to all. Murrumba State Secondary College will work to put things right for you and we appreciate your support in helping us to do this. We will want to make sure that you understand the decision and accept the resolution.

## **Phase 5: Review**

If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint, you are encouraged to discuss it further with college Principal and /or are advised to contact the Principal's supervisor, the Assistant Regional Director, at the District Office. Further review of the decision is available from the Office of Education Queensland and the Queensland Ombudsman as described in Education Queensland's ***Making a Complaint*** policy document.

### ***Our commitment to you***

We are committed to listening to your concern or complaint and dealing with the issues you raise in a positive and supportive manner. We welcome all your feedback as it helps us learn how we can do things better for you. We will try to make sure that your concern or complaint is resolved quickly, however sometimes more complex issues take time to investigate thoroughly. We will always endeavour to ensure that you understand what we are doing and why we are doing it.