Know your rules: a committee self-check

Know your rules, keep your volunteers · Interact Community Dispute Resolution Service (ICDRS)

> Work through this together as a committee in 30 to 45 minutes, with your rules (constitution), by-laws and policies in hand. General information, not legal advice. Your own rules may differ from the model rules, so check yours.

Part A: Which rules apply to us?

Model rules unchanged, or our own rules? Date last changed:

Are we affiliated with a peak or state body? Which of its rules and policies bind us?

Do we have by-laws or policies on disputes (code of conduct, member protection, grievance procedure)? Where are they kept?

If our rules are silent on disputes, which model rules fill the gap?

Part B: Internal disputes: grievance procedure

Question	What our rules say	Rule
Who can use it?		
Time limit to try to sort it out first?		
Is there a mediation step? Required or on request?		
How is the mediator chosen? Does it still say National Mediator Accreditation System (NMAS) or "registered mediator"?		
Who pays for mediation?		
What happens if it's not resolved?		

Tip: NMAS has transitioned to the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS), finalised on 1 July 2025. Read any reference in your rules to NMAS, a "registered mediator" or www.msb.org.au as AMDRAS and www.amdras.au. Use the national register at www.amdras.au to confirm that a person claiming to be a mediator is accredited.

Part C: Internal disputes: disciplinary action

Question	What our rules say	Rule
Grounds for disciplinary action?		
Who decides, and how do we make sure they're unbiased?		
What written notice, and how far ahead?		
How is the member heard?		
What outcomes are allowed? Any limit on suspension?		
Is there an appeal, and who hears it?		
What happens to a grievance on the same matter meanwhile?		

Part D: Disputes with people who aren't members

Our rules don't cover these. Tick the ones that could affect us:

☐ Parents and families ☐ Spectators ☐ Non-member volunteers ☐ Hirers ☐ Contractors and suppliers ☐ Neighbours ☐ Other clubs or groups ☐ Council, school or peak body

Do we have a dispute resolution policy that covers non-members? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what does it say about…	Our policy says
Who it applies to	
Who speaks for us, and who steps aside if connected	
First steps and timeframes	
Using a facilitated conversation or mediator, and who pays	
Records	
Links to our code of conduct, complaints and member protection policies	
When it's a police matter	

If no, who would act for us, and would we try mediation first?

Part E: Our agreed process: how we do things here

Question	Our agreed way	Who
Who can people talk to first, with no form needed?		
Who on the committee responds, and within how many days?		
How do we listen without taking sides?		
When do we offer a facilitated conversation or mediation, and who do we call?		
How and where do we keep brief, factual notes?		
How does someone with a conflict of interest step aside?		
How do we tell members about our process?		
What induction and training do new committee members get after each annual general meeting (AGM)?		

Part F: Our next steps

☐ Agree our process at the next committee meeting and share it with members

☐ Gaps we found: _____

☐ Changes to propose at our next AGM: _____

☐ Induction for new committee members after the AGM: our rules, our dispute policy, conflicts of interest, and how we do things here

☐ Book Conflict Management First Steps (CMFS) for leaders for our new committee after the AGM (see "How ICDRS can help" on the last page)

☐ Who else needs training (conflict coaching, CMFS for teams)? _____

☐ Ask ICDRS for help with our dispute resolution policy

Contact ICDRS for help: icdrs@interact.support · 1300 079 345 · icdrs.interact.support · No formal complaint needed.
ICDRS is a project of Interact Support Inc, a social enterprise not-for-profit · ARBN 646 924 156

How ICDRS can help

Interact Community Dispute Resolution Service (ICDRS), a project of Interact Support Inc

ICDRS helps clubs, incorporated associations, community groups, owners corporations and workplaces deal with conflict early and fairly, before it costs you good volunteers. Our mediators are accredited under the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS). We work online across Australia, and in person by arrangement.

Ask a Mediator

Not sure what to do next? Tell us briefly what's happening and an AMDRAS Mediator calls you back to talk through your options, free. No formal complaint needed.

Mediation

An independent mediator helps the people involved talk it through and reach their own agreement. It starts with a private preparation meeting for each person (pre-mediation), then usually one online session of up to three hours. The mediator doesn't decide who's right.

Facilitated conversations

For group situations, such as a divided committee or tension between two teams, a facilitator runs a structured, safe conversation so everyone is heard.

Conflict coaching

One-to-one, one-hour sessions for a committee member, volunteer or member who wants help to handle a conflict themselves, or to prepare for a difficult conversation.

Conflict Management First Steps (CMFS) workshops

Practical workshops, online or in-house. CMFS for leaders is for committee members and club leaders: how to listen without taking sides, respond early, keep good notes and know when to call for help, and a good induction for a new committee after your annual general meeting (AGM). CMFS for teams is for volunteers, members and staff who work together.

Dispute resolution policy help

Plain-English help to review or write your grievance procedure and dispute resolution policy, including disputes with people who aren't members.

What it costs. We quote upfront and quote pre-mediation and mediation separately, so you know the costs before you start. Partner and club rates apply for affiliated groups. Ask us for a quote.

How to get help

Email: icdrs@interact.support · Phone: 1300 079 345 · Website: icdrs.interact.support

Request a service online: forms.cloud.microsoft/r/8MHxQcYbDn

Guide for committees: icdrs.interact.support/handling-conflict-in-clubs

Tell us your group's name and, if you're affiliated with a peak or state body, which one, so we can apply the right rates.

Family law disputes go to Interact Online Family Dispute Resolution at interact.support. In an emergency or if anyone is in immediate danger, call 000.