

Bundy FM Community Radio Association Inc - Complaints Handling Procedures

- “the station” shall refer to Bundy Fm Community Radio Association Inc.

1. Background

In accordance with the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia’s directions, the responsibility for handling complaints about program content rests with our station. However, Code 7 of the Community Broadcasting Code of Practice outlines the procedures that need to be undertaken to handle complaints.

If a member of the public has a complaint about program content on the station, then the complaint must first be made directly to the station.

This Instruction details the stations complaints handling process and outlines the required steps. It also includes annex “A” .

Annex A –complaints received form and the form to be used by Management;

2. Handling Complaints

If the complaint relates to content that may be defamatory, the station Management must contact our insurance company (AON) immediately, noting that we do not currently have defamation insurance.

The overall process for complaint handling should include issues such as:

- informing our listening audience about our complaints process
- informing our announcers of their responsibilities
- receiving complaints
- responding to complaints
- resolving complaints
- unresolved complaints
- notification of complaints

3. Informing Our Listening Audience

It is a requirement under Code 7 that all radio stations provide regular on-air information about the Community Broadcasting Code of Practice and how the audience may obtain a copy of the Code. It can also be located on the stations website (<http://www.coralcoastradio.net.au>), and should be updated periodically if there are any changes.

Our radio station is permitted to develop our own policy about the number of times the announcement should be played, and we have done so. The station management has agreed that the sweeper (entitled "Code of Practice") must be broadcast at least once every 24 hours.

The following provides suggested wording for such an announcement.

"This station subscribes to the community broadcasting code of practice. The code of practice outlines standards relating to program content such as news and current affairs, Australian music and sponsorship announcements.

The code also outlines the principles of diversity, independence and volunteerism as fundamental to community broadcasting.

If you have a complaint regarding something you have heard on this station, you should put your complaint in writing and send it to the station. If you would like a copy of the Code of Practice please call us".

4. Informing Broadcasters

The stations Board of Management must take full responsibility for informing all our announcers as to what constitutes unacceptable program content. This must always be communicated during the any Training Courses and backed up with documents about media law and station policy, and mentioned again at occasional workshops and gatherings. Many problems can occur at radio stations when announcers do not know the rules.

5. Receiving Complaints

Community feedback is an important way to connect with our listeners. Complaints don't need to be viewed as wholly negative, and in many cases, complaints can be constructive and can function to our station's advantage.

It is essential to ensure that a complaint is received by a board member at the station, who may be either the President/Station Manager or a Board Member.

It is most important to make sure that the complaint is dealt with properly.

The person would not bother to make the call unless they felt they had a legitimate concern. Do not be dismissive of their decision to approach the station. Assure them that their complaint will be taken seriously and will be dealt with professionally by Management.

It is reasonable and appropriate for the station to request that complaints be made in writing and relate to a specific condition of license or the Code of Practice or to our station's policies (we may also need to provide a copy of the Code of Practice.)

6. Responding to Complaints

The station management must respond to a written complaint within 60 days from the date the complaint is received. If available, the Board might listen to a log of the material in question, if it exists. (It is a condition of our licence, under the Broadcasting Services Act, that certain material should be logged)

After due consideration of the available information, the appropriate person (usually the President) should determine the station's response. This may involve the disciplining (eg. suspension) of the announcer, as well as a written apology to the complainant (NB: this should not occur in the event of a potential defamation action), or maybe a diplomatic response confirming the station's commitment to the broadcast of the material in question.

In most cases, proper consideration and an appropriate response by the station will satisfy the complainant. The formal letter should contain an invitation to the complainant to discuss the matter further if required.

7. Resolving Complaints

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the station's written response, then a number of actions may be taken, for example;

- further consideration of the complaint and a further response,
- no further response as the initial response was appropriate, or
- the option of attending a meeting on the matter.

If the complainant wishes to participate in a meeting, the presenter concerned and the station's President and Secretary should be invited to attend. The CBAA Handbook includes a chapter on Conflict Resolution for tips on how to conduct such a meeting.

8. Unresolved Complaints

The station is required by law to inform the person of their right to take their complaint to the Australian Communications Media Authority (ACMA) if the complainant is unhappy with the station's response, or if a response has not been received within the 60 day period.

For unresolved complaints, any correspondence should be addressed to:

The Manager

Codes and Conditions Section

Australian Communications Media Authority

PO Box Q500

Sydney, NSW, 1230

Tel: (02) 9334 7700

Fax: (02) 9334 7799

Annex "A"

Nature of Complaint

A complaint should relate to a licence or Code of Practice condition.

Program associated with complaint

Date and Time of Program Broadcast

Person taking the complaint

Contact Details:

Name of person making the complaint

Address

Telephone Contacts

(B/H) _____

(A/H) _____

Management's Complaint Resolution Form

Complaints Process

The whole complaints process must be completed within 60 days from the date on which the complaint was first made.

Nature of Complaint:

.....

Against:By:

.....

The appropriate person at the station is to insert dates:

- Received the verbal complaint _____
- Received the formal complaint in writing _____
- Checked the logged program material _____
(and keep the log for 60 days if appropriate)
- Sent written station response to complainant _____
- Organised follow-up with complainant (e.g. meeting) _____

- Provided ACMA contact details to complainant, if necessary _____

- Filed all paperwork for future reference _____

Name of Station Representative: _____

Position: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____