

## **MONARO FOLK SOCIETY (MFS)**

### **GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINTS/DISPUTE POLICY**

#### **BACKGROUND/CONTEXT**

MFS is a non-for profit community organisation which is governed by an executive committee elected annually by the members.

The MFS upholds that in all environments there are differences to how each individual would see the world – what one person sees as acceptable may be intolerable to another which can provide challenges for the way members integrate the Society's primary principle of inclusivity. This policy procedure aims to outline a guideline for the times when differences of opinion or grievances or complaints/disputes may be addressed between individual or communal parties at all levels within the MFS. All members have access to the MFS Rules of Association (including 3: Objects and Purposes, Code of Conduct ..... available on the website mfs.org.au).

***The ideal human environment is not the absence of conflict....  
it is the way in which these are resolved.***

This policy applies to all MFS programs and activities. The guiding principles of the MFS include a commitment to work together in a friendly, honest and courteous way to each other at all times.

#### **POLICY**

The MFS is committed to ensuring that all members of the organisation are free to lodge a complaint/grievance/dispute. Such matters are to be dealt with promptly, fairly and non-threateningly to moving towards a resolution if possible. Treatment of disputes, complaints and grievances will be fair to all relevant parties, and will be responded to courteously with a high priority for resolution.

The MFS endorses a hierarchy of responsibility for the handling of conflicts and grievances.

**Members** – each member is responsible and answerable for her/his behaviour and conduct.

**Group Leaders** – are responsible for the respectful and inclusive nature of the group for all participants. When Group Leaders receive a complaint from individuals this is to be addressed promptly with all discussion to be passed on to the President or a member of the Executive Committee FYI/consideration/action.'

**President** – has responsibility for the management of the MFS and for unresolved conflicts/grievances/disputes that are not resolved at previous levels.

**Executive Committee** – has legal responsibility for ensuring that the MFS is acting in accordance with its Rules of Association and Code of Conduct.

The MFS accepts that any person accused of inappropriate behaviour is entitled to be told the nature of the accusation, and given the opportunity to respond, before any action is taken against him/her (i.e. in accordance with natural justice principles).

## **PROCEDURES**

This outlines the process to resolving grievances/complaints/disputes in a fair, equitable and prompt manner. The aim is to bring about a resolution as quickly as possible for all parties involved. If this is not possible then a formal grievance process is also provided.

In the first instance, an aggrieved/concerned party is to raise her/his complaint/dispute at the most appropriate level. Ideally this would be with the person directly involved. If this is not resolved then **if both parties agree** the matter can be referred to the leaders of the relevant group. It is important for the Committee to be copied into all discussions (FYI only, and not for action *until* one party seeks the Committee input). Then if no resolution is achieved, the Committee is aware of the details of the dispute and can proceed in implementing appropriate steps from an informed position. All matters are to be handled in a confidential manner.

Only if the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, can the issue be taken to the next level in the hierarchy. Each party is to take every reasonable effort to resolve the issues amicably and appropriately. The process would be for the aggrieved/concerned party to state the nature of the grievance and give the other an opportunity to respond, before proceeding further.

In the case, where a resolution cannot be achieved then the matter will be referred to the President who shall delegate two Office Bearers of the Committee (not a party to the dispute) or an external mediation service to assist in resolving the ongoing matter(s). The initial process would be to facilitate a dialogue with each individual party in working towards a further joint dialogue. In light of the principles of respecting difference and individuality, of being honest and collaborative, each party is to enter every stage of the process to bring about a mutually negotiated resolution. All parties are to agree to and abide by the resolution obtained.

Where there is refusal by any of the parties in the dispute to participate in the process, or where there is no resolution, then the Committee will decide whether any party is acting in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the Society. Suspension of rights and privileges of Membership or expulsion from the Society in accordance with Section 13 of the Rules of Association may then be considered.

## **REFERENCES:**

Rules of Association of MFS  
Code of Conduct

Approved by MFS Committee, January 2013