

Metropolitan Bowls Association (MBA)

Complaints, Disputes, Protests, Hearings & Appeals Policy (Adopted November 2025)

Approved by: Executive of the MBA

Review Date: November 2027

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1. Preamble

Bowls South Australia (Bowls SA) is the overarching State Authority for the sport of lawn bowls in South Australia. All affiliated Associations and Clubs operate under the Bowls SA Constitution, By-Laws, and the National Integrity Framework (NIF), which includes:

- Complaints, Disputes & Discipline Policy
- Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy
- Member Protection Policy
- Improper Use of Drugs & Medicines Policy
- Competition Manipulation & Sports Wagering Policy

The Metropolitan Bowls Association (MBA) operates within this framework. This policy governs all complaints, disputes, protests, hearings, and appeals arising from Pennant competitions and other MBA-controlled events.

Definitions

Association: The Metropolitan Bowls Association (MBA)

Complaint: An objection to conduct, behaviour, or a decision considered unfair.

Dispute: A conflict of claims or rights between two or more parties.

Protest: A formal objection or challenge regarding an act or decision.

Natural Justice: Fair and unbiased decision-making, ensuring all parties have the right to be heard.

Hearing Rule: A party must be informed of allegations and allowed to respond.

Bias Rule: Decision-makers must remain impartial and base findings on evidence.

Evidence Rule: Decisions must rely on logical proof, not speculation.

2. Jurisdiction

Body	Matters Handled
MBA	Laws of the Sport, Pennant Conditions of Play, Player Eligibility.
Bowls SA	Integrity and conduct matters under the NIF: discrimination, harassment, drugs, wagering.
Sports Integrity Australia	Child safeguarding and discrimination based on protected characteristics.
Clubs	Governance, selection disputes, and internal member grievances.
SAPOL	Criminal matters and conduct requiring police investigation.

3. Complaint Handling Principles

All complaints, disputes, and protests are managed with fairness, confidentiality, proportionality, and respect for all parties.

Where possible, matters should be resolved informally before invoking a formal process.

Informal Steps:

1. Direct Discussion – Parties should attempt to resolve the issue respectfully.
2. Seek Assistance – Either party may contact an MBA or Bowls SA Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO) for guidance.
3. Escalation – If unresolved, a formal complaint or protest may be lodged.

4. Formal Process: Complaints, Disputes & Protests

4.1 Powers of the Executive of the MBA, Hearing Panel & Appeals Tribunal

4.1.1 The Executive of the MBA has authority to fine, suspend, disqualify, or otherwise penalise any party found in breach of a Bowls SA policy, MBA rule, Law of the Sport, or Condition of Play, or for bringing the sport into disrepute.

4.1.2 The Hearing Panel, delegated by the Executive of the MBA, may impose penalties in accordance with the MBA Schedule of Fines & Penalties.

4.1.3 Appeals Tribunals are administered by Bowls SA under its By-Laws and operate with the principles of natural justice.

4.1.4 No member of the Executive of the MBA, Hearing Panel, or Tribunal shall adjudicate in any case involving a conflict of interest.

4.1.5 A complainant or respondent dissatisfied with a Hearing Panel decision may lodge a single appeal with the prescribed lodgement fee, under the following grounds:

- Denial of natural justice.
- Disciplinary measures deemed unjust or unreasonable.
- Decision unsupported by available evidence.

4.1.6 Appeals relating to Finals or double-header matches will be handled immediately by the Executive of the MBA as outlined in the Finals Procedure.

4.1.7 All other appeals must be notified to Bowls SA and heard under Bowls SA procedures.

4.2 Recording: The MBA reserves the right to record all Hearings and Appeals by appropriate means.

4.3 Suspension or Expulsion: Any suspension or expulsion must be reported to Bowls SA within five (5) days.

5. Notification Procedures

5.1 Complaints between the MBA and Member Clubs:

- Must be lodged in writing within one (1) working day of occurrence, with the lodgement fee.
- The Executive of the MBA will arrange a Hearing Panel within three (3) working days.
- MBA must notify Bowls SA within one (1) day of receiving the complaint.
- Costs will be borne by the losing party unless otherwise agreed.

5.2 Complaints between Members or Clubs:

- Must be lodged in writing within one (1) working day of failed informal resolution.
- MBA must notify Bowls SA within one (1) day.
- Bowls SA may assume jurisdiction depending on the issue.

5.3 Pennant Finals Procedures:

- Any protest regarding Pennant Finals must be lodged within fifteen (15) minutes of match completion.
- Lodgement must be in writing, accompanied by the lodgement fee, and submitted to the Manager of the Day.
- MBA must notify Bowls SA within one (1) day of lodgement.
- Hearings follow Finals Procedures outlined in Section 7.

6. Hearing Panel Procedure

6.1 Composition & Attendance:

- Chairperson and at least two members, appointed by the Executive of the MBA.
- One member must possess experience with the relevant rule or policy.
- Attendees include the complainant, respondent, witnesses, and permitted support persons.

6.2 Scheduling & Notification:

- Hearings will be scheduled within three (3) working days or as soon as practicable.
- The Executive of the MBA must provide written notice detailing:
 - Allegations and supporting evidence.
 - Hearing date, time, and venue.
 - Rights of both parties to call witnesses and provide evidence.
 - Possible penalties.
 - Prohibition of legal representation (support persons only).
 - Requirement for parental attendance if a minor is involved.

6.3 Conduct of Hearing:

1. The Chairperson will open the Hearing, state its purpose, and read the complaint.
2. The respondent will confirm understanding and state agreement or disagreement.
3. Both parties present evidence and question witnesses.
4. Witnesses remain outside until called.
5. The Panel may:

- Question any witness.
- Request additional evidence.
- Dismiss disruptive individuals.

6. Panel deliberates privately on the balance of probabilities.

7. Decision announced or reserved, with written confirmation within forty-eight (48) hours.

6.4 After the Hearing:

- The Chairperson submits the decision to the Executive of the MBA and Bowls SA.
- Written notice is sent to all parties detailing outcomes, penalties, and appeal rights.
- Decisions take effect after the seven (7)-day appeal period expires.

7. Finals Hearings

7.1 Any dispute or protest during Finals must specify the rule or law being challenged. The Manager of the Day must immediately refer the matter to an available Hearing Panel.

7.2 Decisions are made immediately and communicated to both parties. Appeals must be lodged within thirty (30) minutes of notification, accompanied by a non-refundable fee.

7.3 The Executive of the MBA member designated as Appeal Tribunal will determine the appeal within thirty (30) minutes or as soon as practicable. The decision is final.

8. Appeal Tribunal Procedure

8.1 Non-Finals appeals are managed by the CEO of Bowls SA.

8.2 Appeals must be lodged within seven (7) days of the Hearing Panel decision, using the appropriate form and fee.

8.3 Grounds for appeal must be clearly stated. Late or incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

8.4 The Tribunal follows procedures consistent with those of the Hearing Panel.

8.5 Decisions are final and binding on all parties.

8.6 Appeal fees are refunded only if the appeal is upheld.

9. Disciplinary Measures

Disciplinary measures may apply to both individuals and organisations. All sanctions must be fair, reasonable, and consistent with the Bowls SA and MBA Constitutions.

Individuals:

- Verbal/written apology or warning.
- Counselling or education.
- Withdrawal of awards or results.
- Suspension or termination of membership.
- Fine or deregistration.
- Any action deemed appropriate by the Executive of the MBA.

Organisations:

- Written warning or fine.
- Suspension of rights, funding, or privileges.
- Withdrawal of sanctioning or event hosting rights.
- Recommendation to Bowls SA for membership suspension.

10. Documentation & Review

All complaints, hearings, and appeals are documented and stored securely for at least five (5) years. This policy is reviewed biennially by the Executive of the MBA or earlier if required by changes to law or Bowls SA governance frameworks.

Document Control

Version	Date Approved	Approved By	Next Review
2.0	November 2025	Executive of the MBA	November 2027

Appendix A Complaints, Protests, & Disputes Lodgement Form

Appendix B Notice Of Appeal Lodgement Form

Appendix C Schedule of Fines & Penalties