

Feedback, Complaints, and Appeals Policy and Procedure

Policy Statement

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

If a complaint is related to a critical incident, the response must reflect the incident management process

Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and our governing body, receiving or managing complaints from the public and clients made to or about us, regarding our products services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

HSQF Related Standards

Human Services Quality Standard Indicator 5.1

Human Services Quality Standard Indicator 5.2

Human Services Quality Standard Indicator 5.3

Human Services Quality Standard Indicator 5.4

Organisational Commitment

This organisation expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
Manager/President	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	Report to the Management Committee on our complaint handling. Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints. Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints. Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.



		Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements. Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.
Staff whose duties include complaint handling	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. Assist people to make a complaint, if needed. Comply with our policy and associated procedures. Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints. Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve our complaints management system. Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.
All staff	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.	Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures. Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process. Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.

Terms and Definitions

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. (AS/NZ 10002:2014)

As well as complaints being made directly to our organisation, remember that some complaints (or at least negative comments) made be made on social media.

Complaint handling/management system

All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

Dispute

An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

Feedback

Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Grievance

A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

Policy

A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.

Procedure

A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

Procedure

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame (as in AS/NZ 10002).

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it
- listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

No detriment to people making complaints

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anonymous complaints

We accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

Accessibility

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised and provided at intake into the refuge. We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance. Feedback is collected regularly at case management meetings.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

Respond to complaints

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us.

When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

Responsiveness

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible,
of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay

- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Confidentiality

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety and security of our staff, and
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman or oversight regulatory bodies).

We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, any complaint received is given to the Manager. When this is unsatisfactory to the complainant this can be escalated to the President for assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or facilitated resolution.

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of our decision by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, Human Rights Commissioner (Qld).

Analysis and evaluation of complaints

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the Management Committee.

We will run regular reports on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below



Receive

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information.

The record of the complaint will document:

- Contact information of the person making a complaint and the date received
- Issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want
- Any other relevant information, and
- Any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

Acknowledge

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within 5 working days. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint.

Assess and investigate

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed. When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

Investigating the complaint

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. We may:

- Give the person making a complaint information or an explanation
- Gather information about the issue, person or area that the complaint is about, or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action we took
- The reason/s for our decision
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review or appeal.

Close the complaint: document and analyse data

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint



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- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes

Related Policies and Procedures

Advocacy Policy and Procedure

Client Rights and Responsibilities Policy and Procedure

Human Rights Policy and Procedure

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure

Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure

Supporting Documents

Service Framework

Client Feedback Form

Child Feedback Sheet

Review

This document was last reviewed on 17/7/25



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