

## COMPLIMENT AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Drafted by	Lockie	Approved by Committee on	24/01/2023
Responsible person	Isabella	Scheduled review date	Jan-2024

### POLICY

Compliments, complaints and other forms of feedback provide valuable information on levels of client satisfaction and provide an organisation with an opportunity to improve upon all aspects of service. Feedback is to be taken seriously and seen as an opportunity for improvement.

The feedback that is recorded and handled effectively will provide valuable information in identifying areas for improvement, coordinating a consistent approach for resolution, reducing the potential for future complaints and allowing for reporting and efficient allocation of resources.

Resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity in a way that respects and values the person's feedback can be one of the most critical factors in recovering the person's confidence in service. It can also help prevent further escalation of the complaint. A responsive, efficient, effective and fair complaint management system can assist an organisation in achieving this.

If a complaint includes an allegation or incident of child abuse or harm, then the matter must be immediately reported to the Manager following the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

If the safety concern concerns the Manager, the notification must be made directly to either the Committee Chair or the Commission: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/report-an-allegation/notify-about-a-reportable-allegation/>.

If the report involves family violence or you are worried for somebody's safety, please contact Victoria Police. If your report describes potentially criminal conduct, you must report it to Victoria Police, and organisations cannot commence investigation until Victoria Police have given you clearance.

### WHAT DOES THIS ORGANISATION DO?

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is a place-based community development organisation that provides a range of services and supports to the local community. This policy applies to services that a Goonawarra Neighbourhood House staff person delivers, tutors or volunteers, and to the building, equipment and/or resources the House provides.

### DEFINITIONS

**Complaint** – Australian Standard AS/NZS ISO 10002:2014 Guidelines for Complaints Management in Organisations defines a complaint as an 'expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required'.



Compliment – a compliment is an expression of praise, encouragement or gratitude about a funded, regulated or provided service. It may be about an individual staff member, a team or a service.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Effective feedback, compliment and complaint handling system addresses the principles of visibility and accessibility, responsiveness, assessment and investigation, feedback, improvement focussed and service excellence.

An approach to compliments and complaints management supports:

- People<sup>1</sup> understand their rights and responsibilities
- Information on the compliment and complaint management process is easily accessible
- Increased satisfaction of clients in the management of their compliments and complaints
- The recording of data to identify emerging and existing trends or systemic issues
- Staff to demonstrate an awareness of feedback, compliment and complaint management processes
- GNH Team to develop the range of skills and capabilities required to manage compliments, complaints and feedback
- An organisational culture focused on effective, person-centred complaints resolution and utilising feedback for continuous improvement.

## **VISIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY**

The compliments and complaints management process will be visible and accessible to individuals and:

- Explain how and where to make a compliment or complaint, including an anonymous complaint
- Ensure the website and service sites have information on how to lodge a compliment or complaint
- Consider the specific needs of the individual or barriers they may experience
- Explain alternative complaint resolution pathways when the complaint is first lodged and when it is closed
- Explain how the organisation will manage a complaint and the expected timeframe for resolution
- Support individuals to identify and seek their preferred outcome.

## **RESPONSIVENESS**

The compliments and complaints management process will be responsive and provide mechanisms and strategies to:

- Promote service user rights, particularly those with special support needs, so they can actively participate in the compliments and complaints process

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'people' is used to refer to staff and service users or clients who receive a service from the funded organisation.

- Inform and train staff to use the compliments and complaint management system
- Support the individual in seeking the most appropriate resolution
- Ensure there is clarity about the requested outcome
- Provide a respectful, valuing and informative acknowledgement
- Actively listen, empathising and acknowledging when the service was not the best it could have been
- Monitor timeframes for resolution
- Communicate with all relevant parties about the progress of the resolution of the complaint.

## **ASSESSMENT AND INVESTIGATION**

The compliments and complaints management process will have mechanisms to:

- Assess complaints for severity, safety, complexity, impact and the need for immediate action
- Collect adequate and appropriate information
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information
- Determine who and at what level the complaint should be dealt with
- Enable complaints to be considered independently, fairly and objectively.

## **FEEDBACK**

The compliments and complaints management process will provide mechanisms and strategies to:

- Explain what happened and why, what will be done to fix the issue, and who will do it, how we will communicate our progress and how we will check that things are on track
- Explain the reasons for the decision
- Provide an apology where the organisation has failed to meet its service obligations<sup>2</sup>
- Where an apology is provided, ensure it is sincere, and accept responsibility for what occurred and the impact
- Explain the circumstances without making excuses, and summarise the key actions that will be taken
- Provide regular updates to the complainant if the resolution is delayed
- Notify the complainant of alternative complaint resolution pathways and review mechanisms
- Follow up with complainants to determine the effectiveness of the outcome, where appropriate.

## **IMPROVEMENT FOCUSED**

The complaint management system will provide mechanisms and strategies to gather and record feedback and other information to:

- Meet any statutory, policy or procedural reporting requirements
- Improve the training and capabilities of complaint management staff
- Analyse the complaint data and identify complaint trends for performance improvement
- Monitor the time taken to resolve complaints
- Notify service providers as part of a continuous quality improvement approach

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<sup>2</sup> *Wrongs Act 1958* – section 14J provides that in the case of civil proceedings where the death or injury of a person is an issue, or is relevant, an apology does not constitute either an admission of liability or an admission of unprofessional conduct, carelessness, incompetence, or unsatisfactory professional performance.

## **SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

The compliment and complaint management system and resolution process are a part of a quality culture where compliments and complaints are an opportunity for improvement through:

- Positive attitudes towards dealing with feedback, compliments and complaints and respect for the person who has raised the matters
- Values that reinforce the commitment of the organisation to quality service delivery and encouragement for provision of feedback on what is and what isn't working
- A clear statement that no one will be adversely affected as a result of making a complaint or a complaint being made on their behalf
- A policy that enables the compliment and complaint management system to address and investigate issues relating to all employees, including senior management.
- Data analysis to identify and explore trends that highlight opportunities to improve service delivery and complaint handling
- A commitment to continued training and development of the capabilities of compliment and complaint management staff
- A commitment by the organisation's leadership to an effective compliments and complaints management process as part of a robust quality improvement framework.

*Note: For the purpose of this document, a privacy incident/complaint/breach that relates to a client, whether substantiated or unsubstantiated, is managed according to existing departments' instructions.*

## **COMPLIMENT AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

The compliment and complaint management process can be simplified into five steps:

1. Receive
2. Record
3. Acknowledge
4. Resolve
5. Communicate resolution.

### **1. RECEIVE**

- Listen – openly to the concerns being raised by the complainant.
- Ask – the complainant what outcome they are seeking.
- Inform – the complainant clearly of the complaint process and the time the process takes, and set realistic expectations.
- Accountable – be empathic towards the affected person and act on all commitments.
- Assess – create a prioritisation framework to identify situations that pose an immediate threat or danger or require a specialised response.
- Refer to the Compliment and complaint form template to assist in recording critical information at the time of first contact.

### **2. RECORD**

- Record – all information relevant to the compliment or complaint in its original and simplest form.

- Store – in a compliment or complaint management system that allows for data analysis.
- Protect – use a system that restricts access to clients involved in managing the compliment or complaint.
- Refer to the Template reporting system that can be used for reporting purposes.

### **3. ACKNOWLEDGE**

- Acknowledge – receipt of the complaint early to build a relationship of trust and confidence with the person who raised the complaint.
- Anonymity – a person may request to remain anonymous in their lodgement; therefore, contact may not be possible or expected.
- Desired outcomes – provide realistic expectations and refer the matter to other organisations identified as more suitable to handle.
- Conflict of interest – avoid this by appointing a person unrelated to the matter as an investigator.
- Timeframes and expectations – provide these to the complainant where possible.

### **4. RESOLVE**

- Involve the complainant – keep them informed of the progress of the complaint and discuss any disparities identified in the information held.
- Additional information – request when required but apply a timeframe that limits when it is to be provided.
- Extensions in time – consider only where necessary and always communicate any additional time requirements to the complainant with an explanation of the need.
- Record – continue to record all decisions or actions of the complaint investigation in the compliment and complaint management system.
- Focus – when investigating, focus on the identified complaint matters only. A complaint is not an opportunity to review the whole case.

### **5. COMMUNICATE RESOLUTION**

- Outcome – Where possible, discuss the outcome verbally with the complainant before providing written advice and allow them to make further contact following receipt of the written advice.
- Recourse – include what further action may be available to the complainant after the complaint investigation. An alternative action may be to escalate the matter with an external agency or for further review within the organisation.
- Further reviews – providing a minimum of one further review will enable the first investigation to be reviewed for soundness and allow additional information not available in the first complaint to be included.
- Opportunities – develop a mechanism or process by which complaint outcomes can be relayed to the appropriate area within the organisation for action to improve service delivery.
- Feedback – develop a process that allows for a review of the complainant’s experience of the complaints process by encouraging and enabling input on how the process by which their complaint was dealt with.



## AUTHORISATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lockie Flenley".

Lockie Flenley  
Secretary  
Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Gould".

Andrew Gould  
Chairperson  
Goonawarra Neighbourhood House Inc.