



Complaints and Feedback Policy

1. 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that Psychology for a Safe Climate (PSC) handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our employees and volunteers to ensure they handle complaints in accordance with the principles and processes of our complaint handling system.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers, including members of the PSC Board, who receive or handle complaints from the public, service participants or customers about PSC, our products, services, activities, employees and volunteers.

As a member-based organisation, when we address complaints from our members, we take care to ensure our complaint handling policy and procedure fits with other requirements that might be in our Constitution or relevant legislation.

This policy does not apply to complaints from members or about members which are covered by the Grievance Procedure in PSC's Model Rules.

1.3 Organisational commitment

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

Who	Commitment	How
Executive Director	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Report to the governing body on our complaint handling, including trends and issues arising from complaints.● Provide adequate support and direction to employees or volunteers who are handling complaints.● Encourage employees and volunteers to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.● Support recommendations for improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.

Who	Commitment	How
Any employee or Board member who handles a complaint	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 handling system.
All employees and volunteers	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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.

2. 2. Terms and Definitions

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, employees or volunteers, and the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. As well as complaints being made directly to our organisation, some complaints (or at least negative comments) may be made on social media.

Complaint handling system

All policies, procedures, practices, employees, volunteers, hardware and software used by us in the handling of complaints.

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.

3. 3. Guiding principles

Our complaint handling system is modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into organisational culture.

3.1 Facilitating complaints

People focus

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.

People making complaints will be:

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

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, on our website (if available). We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

The person making a complaint may be assisted by a representative by giving consent to PSC to deal with their nominated representative. Where this consent is received by PSC, we will communicate with the persona who is complaining through their representative. Appropriate representatives would include a family member or friend, or an advocate from an organisation that supports vulnerable communities.

As this complaint handling process is not a legal process, PSC will not be able to handle a complaint if the person complaining wishes to engage legal representation.

No charge

Complaining to us is free.

3.2 Responding to complaints

Early resolution

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.

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 employee or volunteer 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.

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

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.

3.3 Managing the parties to a complaint

Complaints involving other parties

Where our services are contracted out, we expect contracted service providers to have an accessible complaint handling process. We take complaints about the actions of our employees and volunteers but we will also take complaints about the actions of our service providers.

Empowerment of employees and volunteers

All employees and volunteers who are handling complaints are empowered to implement our complaint handling system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Employees and volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint handling system.

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 employees and volunteers, 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 employees and volunteers 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 the internal or external complaint options available to them. External consideration of a complaint involves referring the matter to the relevant Ombudsman or regulatory body.

The three levels of complaint handling

Complaints will be dealt with on one or more of the three levels detailed below.

Level 1

We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible staff or volunteers who have complaints raised with them will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Level 2

Where this is not possible, we may decide to refer the complaint to someone more senior within our organisation who will be appointed by the PSC Board to consider the complaint. This second level of complaint handling may provide for the following internal mechanisms (as appropriate):

- assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or
- facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).

Level 3

Where PSC is not in a position to consider a complaint due to its complexity or our limited resources, or where the person is unhappy with the outcome of a complaint we have handled, we may need to refer the person complaining to other complaint pathways. There are health care complaint entities in each state and territory or there may be other relevant regulatory bodies we can refer to.

4. 4. Accountability and learning

4.1 Analysing and evaluating 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 PSC Board.

We will report to the Board on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified

Analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

4.2 Monitoring of the complaint handling system

We will continually monitor our complaint handling system to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system

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Complaint Handling Procedure

Introduction

When responding to complaints, employees and volunteers act in accordance with complaint handling procedures as well as any other internal documents providing guidance on the handling of complaints.

Employees should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

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



1. Receiving the complaint

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information. We will also assign a unique identifier/number to the complaint file.

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.

2. Acknowledging the complaint

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.

3. Assessing and investigating the complaint

3.1 Initial assessment

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. 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.

3.2 Investigation

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.

We will keep the person making the complaint up-to-date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. The actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

4. Determining the outcome and providing reasons for the 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.

5. Closing the complaint

5.1 Documenting the complaint

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint
- 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

5.2 Analysing data

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the Executive Director to enable analysis of the effectiveness of our complaint handling process.

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