



FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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 services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

Responsibility

Autism Camp Australia Ltd (ACA) expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. Both positive and negative feedback, complaints and disputes should be seen as opportunities for improvement for the organisation. This policy provides guidance on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system. This policy recognises that people need to feel safe to make a complaint.

Who	Commitment	How
CEO and Chair of the Board	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. - 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 (may include CEO and Chair of the Board)	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 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.	<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.



		- Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.
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Guiding principles

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

- clear and regular communication about how to provide feedback including how to make a complaint;
- the use of feedback and complaints to continuously drive service improvements;
- regular, proactive and inclusive feedback systems;
- effective complaints management and resolution;
- transparent dispute management; and
- access to independent information, support, advice and representation to ensure people are able to provide feedback or make a complaint.
- The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

People focus

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.

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. 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

Information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is on our website. We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are



easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance. 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

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of 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.

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.



Responding flexibly

Our staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to program delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives. 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.

Managing The Parties To A Complaint

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).



Level 1 - We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible staff 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 escalate the complaint to the CEO of our organisation. This second level of complaint handling will provide for 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 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 for example).

Accountability and learning

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting to management and the governing Board of Directors. 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; and
- systemic issues identified.

Reports will be provided to our CEO and to our governing body for review, at least annually.

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints and identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system. Monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

We are committed to improving the way our organisation operates, including our management of the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:

- support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints;



- implement best practices in complaint handling;
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff;
- regularly review the complaint management system and complaint data; and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.

Terms and Definitions

Complaint - An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about ACA, 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)

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.

External Framework

Autism Camp Australia is committed to its obligations under the National Standards for Disability Services, Standard 4: Feedback and Complaints; and the need for Autism Camp Australia to clearly communicate, and have effective systems in place to, address and resolve issues raised by individuals, families, friends, carers and advocates.

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