

## Policy Statement

Neighbourhood Centre Caboolture Inc. recognizes the importance of complaints in improving the way it delivers its services. Neighbourhood Centre Caboolture Inc. is committed to providing a safe environment in which clients are able to make a complaint, and to ensuring that the complaints process is fair and culturally sensitive to the needs of individual clients.

Neighbourhood Centre Caboolture Inc. treats all complaints seriously. The confidentiality of the complainant will be maintained at all times, except in circumstances where there is an immediate threat to the complainant or to a person being accused, or as required by legislation. Any client making a complaint will not be treated differently or disadvantaged as a result of lodging a complaint.

Neighbourhood Centre Caboolture Inc. recognizes the need for some clients to be supported during the complaints process, and will assist them by recommending external agencies/advocate groups that can provide professional advice and support.

Information relating to the Client Complaint Procedure is available in accessible locations and is included in the Client Handbook.

Caboolture Neighbourhood Centre

9 George Street  
Caboolture Q 4510

Ph: 5495 3818

Fax: 5432 9308

Email: [reception@caboolturenhc.com.au](mailto:reception@caboolturenhc.com.au)



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# Caboolture Neighbourhood Centre

# Grievance Policy & Procedure

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# Procedure

**Clients may register a complaint in a variety of ways: verbally, over the telephone, or in writing. All complaints will be treated professionally and consistently.**

1. If a staff member or volunteer receives a verbal complaint and cannot resolve it immediately, it is to be referred to the CEO. The CEO may be able to resolve the matter informally. If this cannot be done the complainant is to be given the option of proceeding to a formal (written) complaints process.
2. If the client decides to proceed to a formal complaint, the CEO will ask the client to complete a Client Complaint Form, and will:
  - Reassure the complainant that all complaints are treated confidentially and that they will suffer no loss of service because they have made a complaint.
  - Explain the complaints procedure.
  - Remind the complainant that they have the right to use an advocate of their choice, and refer them to appropriate client advocacy services.
3. The CEO will acknowledge receipt of the written complaint to the client within 5 working days of receipt of the written complaint.
4. If the written complaint is of a serious nature, or is about the CEO, the CEO will inform the President/Chairperson of the Management Committee immediately.
5. In assessing and responding to complaints, the CEO will act fairly and justly, and ensure that the process remains transparent. The following questions should guide the CEO in deciding what actions are to be taken to respond to the complaint:

#### *What is the nature of the complaint?*

- Is it about dissatisfaction with the organisation's services?
- Is it about the treatment that the client has received from Staff or Volunteers?
- Is it about discrimination, harassment or abuse?

#### *Who is involved?*

- Is the complaint about a staff or volunteer?
- Is the complaint about another client?
- Is the complaint about the CEO or the Management Committee?
- Is the complaint about an external contractor?

#### *Is there sufficient information to make a fair judgment about what happened?*

- When was the complaint made in relation to when the incident actually occurred?
- Where did the incident take place?
- Where were any witnesses?
- Were the parties involved, in a clear physical and psychological state free from any alcohol, drug or medical influences when the incident occurred?

If the complainant alleges serious discrimination or sexual harassment by a worker or volunteer, the CEO will advise the complainant that they have the right to lodge a complaint with the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland (*Ph: 1300 130 670*). If the complaint relates to other illegal activity the client may choose to report it to the police.

If the CEO needs additional information beyond what is on the complaint form, further clarification is to be sought from the complainant. This information should be recorded in writing. The CEO will decide the course of action based on the information provided. It is preferable that grievances are resolved by negotiation and discussion between the parties, in particular by facilitated discussion between the person making the complaint and the person against whom the complaint has been made.

6. The CEO will contact the complainant within 21 working days of receiving the written complaint to discuss what action is proposed/has been taken, and will seek feedback on the complainant's satisfaction with the action.
7. If the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the complainant may request a review of the complaint by the Management Committee. The Management Committee will take all steps possible to address the complaint. The complainant will be kept fully informed of the process towards resolution.
8. If the complaint is about the CEO or the Management Committee, the Management Committee itself will address the complaint, following steps 3-6 above.
9. If, after following the above process, the complaint remains unresolved, the client is to be advised that s/he may take the complaint to an external authority, such as the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland (*Ph: 1300 130 670*), the Human Rights Commission (*Ph: 1300 656 419*) or the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.
10. If a complaint against a staff member, volunteer, CEO or Management Committee member requires disciplinary action, the relevant procedures, such as Discipline Procedure or Sexual Harassment Procedure, will be followed.
11. The complaints process, including the actions taken by the organisation to respond to the complaint, must be recorded by the CEO and stored securely in the Client Complaints file. All documents must be kept for the period stated in the Archiving and Disposal Procedure. Where relevant, knowledge gained through the complaints procedure will be used to improve service delivery within the organisation through the Planning and Evaluation Procedure.
12. The complainant may withdraw the complaint in writing to the CEO at any time. The CEO will seek to ensure that the complainant is satisfied with the decision to withdraw the complaint and, where appropriate, refer them to counselling or support services.

**As far as possible, the fact that a client has lodged a complaint, and the details of that complaint, will be kept confidential amongst the people directly concerned with its resolution. The client's permission is to be obtained before any information is given to other parties whom it may be desirable to involve in order to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.**