

Compliments, Complaints and Feedback

Version No: 6

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Compliments, Complaints and Feedback

1.0 Purpose

Connectability Australia views feedback and complaints as ways to help us improve our services and create greater customer satisfaction and outcomes and is committed to supporting and encouraging people to provide positive and negative feedback and comment on the services they receive.

Our Complaints management process promotes customers to feel safe, encouraged and supported to give feedback and make complaints. Customers are encouraged to be engaged in the process, are valued and listened to with open ears, taken seriously and dealt with promptly and in ways that are culturally appropriate. Customers concerns will be treated as a priority, we will keep you fully informed and we are committed to working with you towards a satisfactory resolution.

The purpose of this policy is to outline how people are able to provide feedback and make complaints about any aspect of Connectability Australia and the process that we will take to address and/or respond to the complaint.

2.0 Scope:

This policy applies to stakeholders of the organisation including: customers, families and carers, contractors, other service providers and members of the community.

Issues raised by staff would generally be dealt with under our Grievance and Dispute Resolution policy, however from time to time staff may raise issues or provide feedback that is best dealt with under this policy.

3.0 Definitions:

Advocate: A person who promotes, supports and represents the rights and interests of a person with a disability. An advocate is often involved in acting, speaking or responding on behalf of a person with a disability but not as a legally appointed guardian. Staff cannot be advocates for clients.

Closed: A complaint will be considered closed when it has been resolved and a final decision has been made about the matter.

Complaint: Any expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation related to its products or the complaint (ISO 10002:2006) handling process, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complainant: Any person who makes a complaint.

Compliment: Expressions of praise, encouragement or gratitude about services provided or managed by the organisation.

Customer: refers to the person receiving the service and their guardian and/or representatives nominated by them.

External Advocacy Agency: Provides support to encourage and assist individuals to achieve and maintain their rights and achieve equity of access and participation in the community.

External Authorities: Independent, impartial bodies, such as the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission and the Aged Care Complaints Commission, empowered to handle complaints; although they do not act for a complainant.

Feedback: A concern where no outcome is requested or expected.

Frontline staff: Those who provide direct services to people we support.

Open disclosure: The elements of open disclosure are an apology or expression of regret, a factual explanation of what happened, an opportunity for the customer to relate their experience, and an explanation of the steps being taken to manage the event and prevent recurrence. Open disclosure is a discussion and an exchange of information that may take place over several meetings.

Person with an interest: Any person we support, family member, friend, staff member or other service provider.

Person responsible/guardian: May act as alternate decision-makers and provide emotional support. The person responsible has authority to consent only on behalf of a person who is incapable of providing consent.

Resolved: A complaint may be considered resolved when a final decision regarding the matter has been reached.

Support person: Provides emotional support during the process but is not directly involved in the complaint resolution process or outcome.

4.0 Policy:

Compliments Principles

Compliments provide

- valuable indicators of the effectiveness of a service
- useful insights about the most meaningful aspects of a service by the people receiving those services
- examples of good practice which can be shared across the organisation
- an opportunity to recognise the efforts of staff
- acknowledgement of excellence to boost morale.

Compliments Procedure

Compliments/feedback may be received in person, by phone, email, in writing or via the Connectability website. All compliments and feedback will be recorded by the person receiving them. It is important the person receiving the compliment/feedback, in whichever format, gather sufficient details to enable them to record the information.

- Where possible staff should acknowledge compliments/feedback and thank the person for their interest and feedback. If appreciation cannot be communicated verbally when the compliments/feedback is provided, it should be acknowledged in writing, if possible.
- Where a compliment/feedback is received about a specific staff member, this information is forwarded to the manager. The manager or delegate should notify the staff member to whom the compliment/feedback relates.
- Where the feedback includes a suggestion, this information is forwarded to the manager to review. The manager is responsible for ensuring the person providing the suggestion is informed how this information will be used.

Connectability Australia is committed to managing complaints in an accountable, transparent, timely and meaningful way and in the most direct way possible.

Connectability Australia supports and encourages the rights of our customers, their families/carers and stakeholders to lodge and pursue any complaint in relation to any aspect of Connectability Australia services or operations.

The organisation is committed to the following complaints management principles:

- assisting people to make a complaint in whatever way is meaningful for them;
- complainants have the right to access interpreters, advocates, a support person to assist them to lodge a complaint;
- complaints can be lodged without fear of retribution;
- protect confidentiality and privacy of complainants;
- complaints are assessed fairly, objectively and professionally;
- openness and accountability;
- complaints are resolved in a timely manner;
- ensure the application of 'procedural fairness and natural justice for all involved;
- encourage the development of harmonious partnerships;
- integrate complaints information into the organisations improvement process.

Connectability Australia expects that most complaints/feedback will be able to be addressed and responded to by the people directly involved or at a support worker/middle management level, with only the most serious or unresolved complaints being dealt with by the Chief Executive Officer.

However, where complaints require investigation or more formal review we will ensure that sufficient resources are allocated as a means to ensure that complaints are proficiently managed and investigated and will only allocate suitably skilled and qualified employees to investigate and manage complaints.

Complaint Management stages include:

- acknowledgment of receipt of complaint
- complaint assessment;
- investigation of complaint;
- complaint response;
- communicating the decision; and
- complaint closed.

Connectability Australia has a complaints brochure that outlines policy and procedures in an easy to understand format.

In addition, Connectability Australia is committed to open disclosure principles which attempt to address and balance the interests of customers, managers, organisations and other key stakeholders. The principles are:

1. Open and timely communication
2. Acknowledgement
3. Apology or expression of regret
4. Supporting and meeting the needs and expectations of customer and their families
5. Supporting and meeting the needs and expectations of staff
6. Review and quality improvement
7. Reporting to the Board
8. Compliance with privacy and confidentiality legislation.

4.1 Understanding complainants

Effective complaint resolution requires responding to the complainant's needs as a person as well as responding to the identified problem. How a complainant is treated during the process can be as important as fixing their problem.

It is important everyone has an understanding of the possible barriers that might interfere with the complaint resolution process.

There are many reasons people may complain, generally it is because they want certain things, for example: to feel secure, be listened to or receive an explanation.

4.2 Managing Expectations

Complainants and complaint handlers may have different expectations. What is seen as a satisfactory outcome for one may not necessarily be seen the same way for the other. Problems can arise when an individual's expectations are not met.

It is important to ensure the complainant's expectations about the handling and likely outcome of their complaint are realistic. Individual expectations should be identified as soon as possible after the complaint has been received.

Discussions should involve seeking clarity around roles and responsibilities, and expectations in terms of outcomes and timeframes.

All interactions between the complainant and the complaint handler should be fair and respectful, providing adequate information throughout the process and on the progress of the complaint. The complainant will be provided with a central contact during the course of the complaint.

It is expected that all parties to the complaint will maintain appropriate privacy and confidentiality during the course of the complaint.

5.0 Procedures

5.1 Any individual, stakeholder or agency wishing to lodge a complaint against services, management or employees of Connectability Australia will be provided with information regarding the organisation's Complaints Management policy and process. Any complaint will be heard with open ears and a willingness to assist the complainant. Complainants will be given the opportunity to respond via a number of methods, i.e. verbally, in person, phone, face to face or in writing.

Contact details are:

26 Warabrook Blvd

Warabrook NSW 2304

Phone: 4962 1000

Email: contact@connectabilityaus.org.au www.connectabilityaus.org.au

5.2 Information will be provided in a format that is easily understood and considered effort will be provided to ensure the complainant is fully informed of the complaint management process. Complaints may be lodged by a third party on behalf of another person, if their permission and consent has been given.

5.3 Connectability Australia will afford all complaints the highest standard of confidentiality. Complaint matters will only be discussed with those on a need to know

basis and will not be a matter of discussion between any other individuals. All documentation will be retained in a secure place.

5.4 All staff will handle complaints with:

- courtesy and encouragement;
- sensitivity to the needs of complainant;
- efficiency and effectiveness;
- timeliness- complaints received will be formally acknowledged within two business

(2) days of receipt and the complaint responded to within thirty (30) days;

- empathy - understanding others feelings and perspective of issues involved;
- communicate mindfully;
- provide details regarding external support agencies that may assist them with complaints resolution if required. Some of these bodies are listed in this policy.

5.6 The following details relating to the complaint will be documented in Connectability Australia Complaints Register:

- information about complaints;
- any action taken to resolve complaints; and
- the outcome of any action taken.

5.7 Complaints will be resolved within a practicable timeframe - ideally the organisation will diligently work to resolve the complaint within thirty (30) working days of receipt. Persons who have lodged complaint will be regularly updated and advised of progress within agreed intervals (e.g. weekly). If it is perceived that a delay may be experienced, this delay will be clearly articulated in writing to complainant.

5.8 Investigation of complaints will not be conducted by a person about whom a complaint has been made.

5.9 Connectability Australia will undertake to fully inform any employee that is the subject of a complaint of the nature of the complaint and of the process being implemented to resolve complaint. If required, the employee

concerned will be provided with a seven (7) day timeframe in which to submit a written response and/or seek further advice.

5.10 If a complaint is received that alleges criminal activity or provides information about possible criminal activity, is considered to be a reportable incident to the NDIS Commission or mandatory report it must be referred to the CEO immediately. The CEO will inform the Board of Directors and will also contact the police or other relevant authorities.

5.11 Where a complaint relates to a member of Connectability Senior Management the CEO may engage an external investigator to manage the complaint on the organisations behalf.

5.12 If the complaint relates to the CEO, the Board of Directors can be contacted initially on chair@Connectabilityaus.org.au.

6.0 Advocacy and support for people using the service

People who access supports and services provided by Connectability have different types of support networks. Some people have families who are closely involved in their lives or may be reliant on legally appointed guardians to make particular decisions for them. Other people are represented by advocacy services and for some customers these advocates are their only support network.

An advocate must represent the best interests of a person, and in the absence of a family member or any other person having a close relationship with the person, may be the contact person for issues or complaints made by or relating to the person. Other people may be the passive recipients of informal advocacy support, and in this case, Connectability will have to consider what information about a person is appropriate for sharing with an informal advocate.

Information on the use of an advocate is included in the Feedback and Complaints brochure. Staff ensure customers are aware of their right to use an advocate, and remind them of this option whenever appropriate including if a complaint is lodged. Individuals

can make contact with any of the following bodies should the complaint remain unresolved or at any time during the process:

Australian Human Rights Commission (CTH)

Phone: (02) 9284 9600

Complaints Infoline: 1300 656 419

TTY: 1800 620 241

Email: complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au Website: www.humanrights.gov.au

Aged Care Complaints Commissioner

Phone: 1800 550 552

9 am to 5 pm weekdays or leave us a phone message.

If you need an interpreter:

Tell us when you call and we will arrange to use the [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS\)](#) or, for people who speak an Indigenous language, the [Aboriginal Interpreter Service \(AIS\)](#) or the [Kimberley Interpreting Service \(KIS\)](#).

Alternatively, please call the TIS directly on **131 450** and ask them to transfer you to our number 1800 550 552.

People who speak an Indigenous language can contact the AIS on **1800 334 944** or the KIS on 08 9192 3981.

If you are hearing or speech impaired contact us through the [National Relay Service](#): TTY users: phone **1800 555 677** then ask for our number 1800 550 552

Speak and Listen users: phone **1800 555 727** then ask for our number 1800 550 552

Internet relay users: connect to the [National Relay Service](#) and enter 1800 550 552. Email:

Online complaints form at

<https://www.agedcarecomplaints.gov.au/internet/accc/publishing.nsf/Content/online-complaints-forms>

National Aged Care Advocacy Line

Phone: 1800 700 600

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Commission

Phone: 1800 035 544

www.ndiscommission.gov.au

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

A hotline for reporting or complaining about the abuse or neglect of a person with a disability at home, in the community, or in any other location. The hotline will refer a complainant to a relevant state or local agency where necessary.

Free call: 1800 880 052

TTY: 133667 then ask to speak with 1300 00 3224

Email: hotline@workfocus.com

National Disability Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)

For people with a disability who wish to make a complaint about their rights being infringed in a disability employment service or by a disability advocacy service.

Free call: 1800 880 052

TTY: 1800 301 130 (free call)

National relay service: 1800 555 677

Website: www.jobaccess.gov.au

Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS)

A community legal centre specialising in legal and rights issues for people with a disability.

2C/199 Regent St

Refern NSW 2016

Phone: (02) 9318 0144

Freecall: 1800 666 611

Email- info@idrs.org.au

Website: www.idrs.org.au

People with Disability Australia Incorporated

For people with a disability who wish to make a complaint about their rights being infringed.

Phone: (02) 9370 3100

Freecall: 1800 422 015

TTY: 1800 422 016 freecall

Website: www.pwd.org.au

Email: dris@pwd.org.au

Anti-Discrimination Board (NSW)

Hunter Office

Suite 5, Level 5, 400 Hunter Street, Newcastle NSW 2300

Phone: (02) 4903 5300

TTY: (02) 4929 8419

Tollfree (NSW): 1800 670 182

Website: www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au

Disability Advocacy NSW

Newcastle

Phone 4927 0111 or 1300 365 085

Email: newcastle@da.org.au

Website: <http://da.org.au/>

Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC)

Phone: 1800 043 159

Office of the Australian Information Commission (OAIC)

Phone: 1300 363 992

7.0 Compliments and feedback

Compliments and feedback can be provided in person, by phone, email, in writing or via the Connectability Australia website. Please refer to the Compliments and Feedback P&P.

8.0 Conflict of Interest

Staff should inform a manager and seek supervision and support when the complaint concerns a potential or perceived conflict of interest by the complainant, subject of the complaint or the complaint handler; it if concerns:

- them, even if they have been able to resolve it;
- someone who is their relative or friend; and
- the carer, guardian, advocate of the complainant.

These complaints must be referred to a more senior person immediately and confidentiality should be strictly maintained.

If the complaint is about a staff member's coordinator, team leader or senior member of the team, the complaint should be referred to that person's manager for handling.

9.0 Responsibilities

9.1 The Connectability Australia Board of Directors is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

9.2 The CEO is responsible for ensuring that:

- all stakeholders are aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to the making a complaint and managing a complaint.
- all employees, volunteers, students, team leaders and managers have been provided with training in relation to this policy as required.
- ongoing support and guidance is provided to all employees in relation to implementing this policy.
- Providing an annual report to the Board of Directors.

9.3 The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that:

- all complaints and feedback are dealt with and recorded in accordance with this policy.
- providing a bimonthly report to the Board of Directors.
- Complaints and feedback data is analysed annually and used to inform systems improvements.

9.4 Coordinators, Team Leaders and Senior Workers are responsible for ensuring that:

- they attempt to resolve and address any complaints or issues raised with them in line with their authority.

9.5 All employees are responsible for ensuring that:

- viewing complaints and feedback as opportunities to improve the organisation.
- they attempt to resolve and address any complaints or issues raised with them in line with their authority.
- are aware of and understand this policy and procedures and seek clarification if they do not understand.
- they follow the policy and procedures outlined in this policy.

9.6 Participants, families, carers and other important stakeholders are responsible for:

- Using this complaints process to raise issues with the organisation.

10.0 Equity and access considerations

Staff, volunteers and students are to ensure that services are provided with sensitivity to, and awareness of, people with culturally diverse or indigenous backgrounds, and cultural practices. This is to be carried out without deviating from Connectability's Complaints Management policy and procedure or legislative responsibilities. Information provided to a person, their family/carer, person responsible or other support person about legal rights, options and support services, must be provided in a format that suits their individual communication needs.

11.0 Communication

Communication about this policy should be implemented in a way that suits each person with regard to their cultural background e.g. use of an interpreter or easy to read documents. This policy will be:

- communicated to the key internal and external stakeholders of Connectability;
- communicated to Connectability Australia staff through professional development opportunities;
- accessible through Connectability Australia’s internal intranet and website.

12.0 Breaches of Policy

Staff are expected to follow this policy. Failure to follow Connectability Australia policies and procedures will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy resulting in gross misconduct could result in instant dismissal.

13.0 Policy review

This policy will be reviewed in consultation with stakeholders every 3 years.

Version	Date	Author	Reason	Sections
6	December 2018	D. Vallette	Review to include Aged Care and open disclosure	All
5	August 2017	M Holcombe	Due for review	All
4 (draft)	August 2014	S Harvey	Include new Sections 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, 10.0 and 11.0	Sections 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, 10.0 and 11.0
3	August 2012	K Stace	Due for review	All
2	June 2008	S Harvey	Due for Review	All
1	April 1996	C Morris	New Policy	All

Implementation of this policy will be reviewed through staff meetings, support and supervision and annual budget processes.

i The three core principles of natural justice or procedural fairness are:

- the right to be heard fairly;
- the right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker; and
- the right to have the decision based on relevant evidence