

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

National Disability Services (NDS) is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using services provided by NDS or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

The organisation will provide a complaints management procedure that:

- is simple and easy to use
- is available to all members, clients and stakeholders via the NDS website
- ensures complaints are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements

OUR COMMITMENT

If a complaint is received, NDS will:

- treat the complainant with respect
- tell the complainant what to expect while the matter is being looked into
- carry out the complaint handling process in a fair and open way
- provide reasons for decisions that are made
- protect privacy

WHAT CAN A COMPLAINT BE MADE ABOUT?

A complaint can be made to NDS about the delivery of NDS services or the behaviour of personnel. From time to time, NDS consults with the sector to determine a policy position or to gauge views about an issue. A person may lodge a complaint if a consultation process was not followed or if the process was flawed; but not simply because the outcome of the consultation disagrees with their position.

NDS's members are service providers that operate disability support services. NDS does not have the authority to investigate complaints about service providers. A complaint regarding an NDS member should be discussed with the organisation directly.

PROCEDURES

MAKING A COMPLAINT

A complaint can be made in writing or verbally to:

- the staff member involved
- the State Manager or relevant national manager
- the Chief Executive
- the President

Where appropriate, complainants are encouraged to raise the matter with the staff member involved or to that person's State Manager (or relevant national manager).

The person responsible for managing the complaint in the first instance will be determined as follows.

If the complaint is about:

- a product or service delivered by NDS, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the relevant manager
- a staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the relevant manager
- a senior staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Chief Executive
- the Chief Executive, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the President of NDS

Where an NDS staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, it will be dealt with in accordance with NDS's Grievance Policy and Procedures.

Contact details of senior staff are available on the NDS website. A senior officer of NDS who receives a written complaint is responsible for managing the complaint or directing it to the appropriate person.

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

The person managing the complaint is responsible for:

1. Registering the complaint:
 - registering the complaint in the NDS complaints register
 - informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and timeframe
2. Investigating the complaint:
 - examining the complaint within 5 working days of the complaint being received
 - informing the complainant by letter within 10 working days of the complaint being received of the action to investigate and resolve it and the expected timeframe for resolution.
3. Resolving the complaint:
 - As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 20 working days of being received. If this timeframe cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons and of the alternative timeframe for resolution
 - Informing the complainant of the outcome and any options for further action if required

4. Dissatisfaction with the resolution

- If the complainant is not happy with the outcome, the matter can be escalated to the Chief Executive or President of NDS, if it has not already. If they remain dissatisfied, they may be able to lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman in their state. The Ombudsman's office will determine if it has the power to investigate the complaint.

RECORD-KEEPING

A register of complaints will be kept by NDS. The register will be maintained by the General Manager Corporate Services and will record the following for each complaint:

- Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint
- Date lodged
- Action taken
- Date of resolution and reason for decision
- Indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- Complainant response and any further action
- Lessons arising from the complaint

Copies of all correspondence and other materials received by NDS in connection with complaints will be kept for 7 years.

The complaints register and files will be confidential and access is restricted to the General Manager Corporate Services, the Chief Executive and the President.

A summary of complaints and appeals will be kept by National Disability Services and maintained by the General Manager Corporate Services. The General Manager Corporate Services will be responsible for preparing reports on complaints to the Chief Executive and the NDS Board, and maintaining records (including on complaints against the Chief Executive).

RELATED POLICIES

Grievance Policy and Procedures

Unsatisfactory Performance and /or Unacceptable Behaviour Policy and Procedures

Whistleblower Policy