

ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND OF WA (INC.)

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to establish mechanisms for clients to lodge complaints and to have these addressed and appropriately resolved if at all possible. Complaints are seen to play an important role in contributing to service improvement in the Association. The policy has been framed around natural justice principles and individuals' rights as they are specified within the context of: the Association's Mission and Values Statements; the WA State Disability Services Act (1993); Standard 7 of the State Disability Services Standards (1993); the Commonwealth Disability Services Act (1986); and Standard 7 of the Commonwealth Disability Services Standards (1986).

This policy applies to all service areas of the organisation but does not deal with matters that might fall more appropriately under the criminal or penal code.

2.0 STATEMENT

The Association is committed to ensuring that all Association clients are free to discuss their concerns and lodge complaints without prejudice. Clients are welcome to involve another individual as an advocate at any point in the process. Complaints will be dealt with promptly, fairly and in a positive way, and resolved if at all possible. Clients, staff and volunteers undertake to ensure that the treatment of complaints and concerns will be: respectful of the dignity of both parties; handled in confidence (both discussions and records); fair to both the Client and respondent; responded to courteously; and given high priority for resolution and remediation.

Dr Margaret Crowley
Chief Executive Officer

26/02/2007

Date

First Adopted 2000
Reviewed 2004 & 2005 after consultation with the Client Advisory Committee

PROCEDURE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following procedures support the provisions of the Complaints Policy. They are to be implemented to ensure the Association meets its policy objectives of enabling clients to lodge complaints and then appropriately responding to such complaints.

2.0 INITIAL STEP

It is expected that clients will, in the first instance, raise their complaint directly with the person or directorate concerned. Complaints may be lodged via: the telephone either on the main switchboard number (9311 8202) or the feedback/comment telephone line (9311 8219); in print; Braille; electronic formats; or preferably by directly approaching either the staff member concerned, or if the complaint involves a volunteer, to the volunteer's immediate supervisor.

It is hoped that in most cases, in the context of the continuous improvement of services, and with good will on all sides, the issue will be quickly resolved and require no further action.

3.0 COMPLAINTS OFFICER

All complaints that cannot be immediately resolved may be formally raised by the Client with one of the following designated Complaints Officers: Director: Client Services and Director: Training, Employment and Information Services.

At the commencement of their discussion, the Complaints Officer will advise the Client that the:

- complaint will be recorded on a form or, if a written complaint has been provided, this will be attached to the form;
- form will be sent to the relevant Director;
- relevant Director will be required to respond and record his/her actions on the same form.

4.0 RECORDING

The Complaints Officer will complete the relevant form and read the completed form to the Client. The form will require the following:

- a description of the complaint including details and dates of attempts made up to this point to have the complaint resolved; or
- a written complaint as an attachment (if provided), and
- the Client's name; and
- the Client's signature if possible; and
- the signature of the Complaints Officer.

5.0 FIRST REFERRAL

The Complaints Officer will forward the completed form to the relevant Director or to the Chief Executive Officer if the complaint concerns a Director. One copy of the form will be placed on the Confidential Complaints Management Resource File in the Chief Executive Officer's Office. A second copy of this form will be provided to the Client.

6.0 ADDRESSING

The Director receiving the complaint form will make every effort to address, and if possible, resolve the complaint as quickly as possible. The Client will receive a written reply within 14 days of lodging the complaint with the Complaints Officer. This reply will outline action taken to date.

7.0 REPLYING

The Director will complete the complaint form with details of the action taken and will attach a copy of his/her written reply to the form. This form will be forwarded to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer, within five days, and subsequently placed on the Complaints Management Resource File.

8.0 REFERRAL TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Client will also be advised that if not satisfied with the outcome, he/she may refer the matter, accompanied by a statement outlining his/her dissatisfaction, to the Chief Executive Officer. The referred complaint may be submitted in print, Braille or electronic formats. The Chief Executive Officer may use a variety of methods to achieve resolution, which may include meeting with all parties involved or the use of an external mediator. The Chief Executive Officer will undertake to reply in writing to the Client within 14 days of receiving the referred complaint.

9.0 REFERRAL TO BOARD

If, after all the previous processes have been exhausted, the Client feels that the issues have not been appropriately resolved, the Client may put a complaint forward for the consideration of the Board. The referred complaint may be submitted in print, Braille or electronic formats. On receipt of the complaint the Board will, in the first instance, request the Chief Executive Officer to prepare a detailed response to the complaint and describe details of action taken to date by staff of the Association. The Board will make a decision about what further action, if any, is required and will respond to the Client within 4 weeks of its consideration of the matter.

10.0 EXTERNAL AGENCY OR MEDIATOR

If the Client remains dissatisfied with the Board's response, the Board will indicate other avenues open to the Client to seek resolution of the issues, such as the Office of Health Review under part 6 of the Disability Services Amendment Act (1999), or Advocacy Agencies such as People with Disabilities or the Citizens Advice Bureau mediation service. The Board may also choose to use an external mediator and will bear costs involved, to a specified amount. The Board will not however, pay for any legal costs.

11.0 REPORTING

A non-identifying summary of any complaints will be regularly tabled at Management Committee meetings to inform future service improvements.

APPENDIX

- Main Switchboard Number: (08) 9311 8202
- Feedback/Comment Line: (08) 9311 8219
- Toll Free (for WA country callers) 1800 658 388

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