



Managing Complaints and Feedback

Policy Owner:	Board
Policy approved:	2 March 2018
Policy last updated:	6 January 2020 (structural changes only)

Policy objective

To ensure all complaints and feedback relating to Oonah, the services it supplies and its employees, contractors, volunteers and Board members are taken seriously and actioned in a timely and appropriate manner.

Application of Policy

This policy applies to all Board members, employees, contractors and other stakeholders.

Policy

Oonah is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using Oonah services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organisation and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

The organisation will provide a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- is simple and easy to use
- is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders
- ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements.

PRINCIPLES

Oonah will:

- consider all complaints it receives
- treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant
- maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution
- ensure advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support
- resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- deal with all complaints in a timely manner
- keep parties to the complaint informed of progress of the complaint

- ensure that Board members, employees, contractors and volunteers are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.
- ensure all service users, stakeholders and Board members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures
- ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the progress of an issue.
- ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements.

PROCEDURES

Information for clients and stakeholders

Oonah complaints and appeals procedure is documented for clients and stakeholders on the Community Feedback Form and made available on the internet and or at the service. All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation.

The Complaints and Compliment document will contain information on the following:

- how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal
- contact person for lodging a complaint or appeal
- how the organisation will deal with the complaint or appeal, the steps involved and the timelines
- the rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person or interpreter
- how the person will be informed about the outcome of their complaint or appeal
- how to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

The information will also be made available to clients in a culturally appropriate manner. Where appropriate, verbal complaints or compliments can be provided to or by clients.

Making a complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to:

- the staff member they were dealing with at the time
- the supervisor of that staff member
- the CEO
- the Board, or
- regulation body

If the complaint is about:

- an employee, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the CEO
- the CEO, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Chair
- a member of the Board, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the whole Board.

Written complaints may be sent to the CEO, PO Box 597 Healesville, VIC 3777 or admin@hicsa.org.au. The CEO will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.

Lodging an appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organisation, or by a staff member, related to access to services or programs. An appeal should be made on the Complaints and Compliments document and submitted to the Manager.

Procedure for complaints and appeals management

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

1. Processing the complaint or appeal:

- registering the complaint or appeal the Complaints and Compliments register.
- informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame

2. Investigating the complaint or appeal:

- examining the complaint within one week of the complaint being received
- investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond
- informing the complainant by letter within two weeks of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within one month of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

3. Resolving the complaint:

- making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within one month of the complaint being received
- informing the complainant of the outcome:
 - upheld (and if so what will be done to resolve it)
 - resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
 - if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
- Informing the complainant of any options for further action if required

4. Reviewing the complaint:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal they can seek a further review of the matter by the Board within two months of the complaint being received.

5. Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will be referred to an external mediator.

Record keeping

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in the Complaints and Compliments Register at Oonah. The register will be maintained by the CEO and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- 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

Copies of all correspondence will be kept at Oonah.

The complaints register and files will be confidential, and access is restricted to the CEO and Risk and Compliance Officer.

A statistical summary of complaints and appeals will also be kept in a spreadsheet and maintained by the CEO. The CEO will be responsible for preparing a report on complaints and compliments monthly for the Board.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the CEO and Board used to:

- inform service planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- inform decision making by including a report on complaints and appeals as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas.

Complaints involving specific staff members or volunteers

The CEO has delegated responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members, volunteers or clients.

Internal complaints, where a staff member or volunteer makes a complaint concerning another staff member or volunteer, will be dealt with in accordance with the organisation's grievance, complaints and disputes policy.

External complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member or volunteer will be managed by the CEO who will:

- notify the staff member or volunteer of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the staff member or volunteer with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party
- take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member or volunteer arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in Oonah's disciplinary procedures.

Complaints involving the CEO will be managed by the Chair.

Complaints involving Board members

Complaints made against a Board member will be referred to the Chair.

The Chair or their delegate, will:

- notify the person about whom a complaint is being made of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party.

Where the Chair is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to Board.

Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may:

- deal with the matter at its meeting, or
- refer the matter to an external mediator.