

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy number: 5.01		Version number: 1.5
Date Ratified: 31/3/2021	Reviewed: Management Committee	Date of next review: 31/3/2024

1. Purpose:

Dealing effectively with complaints and appeals will help NQCWS Inc. to maintain and improve its service quality and ensure women have their issues resolved. Having a complaints and appeals process gives women a way of expressing any dissatisfaction of services provided by NQCWS Inc. and of having their concern dealt with quickly and effectively. It also provides NQCWS Inc. with the opportunity to improve its service delivery. The procedures allow us to respond appropriately and fairly to complaints and appeals received.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to staff, volunteers, members of the Management Committee, women accessing the service and all other relevant stakeholders.

3. Policy statement: Our commitment

NQCWS Inc. is committed to facilitating women's rights to make a complaint about the service, to appeal a decision it has made that directly concerns the woman, and to ensure that the woman's complaint or appeal is fairly assessed and responded to promptly.

The organisation will not discontinue or reduce services or take any recriminatory action in relation to a person who has made a complaint about any of the services or who has had a complaint made on their behalf.

4. Procedures:

4.1 Information about our complaints and appeals procedure

NQCWS Inc. wants to ensure women accessing the services feel able to voice their dissatisfaction with any aspect of the service, and to be confident that NQCWS Inc. will manage their complaints professionally and respond quickly and appropriately. All women shall be informed of their rights and the Complaints Policy and Procedure at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with NQCWS Inc.

Women shall be provided with information regarding their right to make a complaint or to appeal a decision, and the procedures that will be followed should they so do. NQCWS Inc. shall provide this information in the following ways:

- Women are informed of their right to make a complaint through the Women's Rights statement and Privacy Notice.
- Women are informed that if they would like to know more about the Complaints Policy and Procedure workers can explain this and a copy of the procedure can be made available.
- Women are offered a copy of the Women's Rights statement and Privacy Notice.
- The Women's Rights Statement and Privacy Notice are displayed on walls throughout the centre explaining that they are welcome to make a complaint or appeal.

4.2 How women can make a complaint or appeal a decision

Making a complaint or appeal:

- All complaints will be treated in a confidential manner
- Anonymous complaints can be lodged on a Compliments, Comments and Complaints form and placed in the Suggestion Box in the centre.
- Anonymous complaints will be acted upon as far as information provided will allow.
- A woman can make a complaint by speaking directly to a staff person, or by asking to speak to the Coordinator.
- All complaints will be directed to the Coordinator.
- If the complaint involves the Coordinator, the complaint will be referred to the President of the Management Committee.
- The woman making the complaint will be informed as soon as the Coordinator receives the complaint about the process for investigating and resolving the complaint internally and external processes available in Queensland.
- The woman will be provided with information regarding opportunities for appropriate support and advocacy during the complaints process. This will include consideration of her specific and diverse needs.
- The Coordinator will discuss the nature of the complaint with the woman and determine what actions can be taken to address and resolve the issues of the complaint.
- As appropriate the complaint may be referred to an external agency (such as the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Child Safety, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, Department of Justice and Attorney General or the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy).

- The woman will be kept informed of any ongoing actions and outcomes related to the complaint.
- The matter is usually considered finalised if the woman is satisfied with the response and/or all avenues of resolution have been fully explored. The final outcome is then recorded in the Complaints Register.
- The woman may choose to take the complaint no further, however has the right to request the complaint to be heard by the Management Committee or as appropriate have the complaint mediated or investigated by an external person or organisation.
- Women accessing NQCWS Inc. have the right to lodge their complaint directly with the Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy or if the matter regards privacy to the Federal Privacy Commissioner. However, women will be encouraged to explore options outlined above first.
- Women have the right to access the Queensland Human Rights Commissioner, when required, to address a grievance or dispute.

4.3 Documentation of complaints

- All complaints will be treated in a confidential manner
- The Coordinator will register all complaints on the Complaints Register.
- The Management Committee will review the Complaints Register on a regular basis.
- Meetings regarding the complaint must be minuted. The minutes must list the names of all present, the purpose of the meeting and the outcome. All proceedings of the meeting must be kept confidential unless otherwise agreed.

4.4 Review and Formal external procedure:

If the woman is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal, they can seek a further review of the matter by:

- Should a woman's complaint remain unresolved, NQCWS Inc. will refer the matter to an independent mediator, as appropriate, and as negotiated with the woman.

4.5 Using complaints and appeals for service improvement

We use information gathered from our complaints and appeals procedure to inform our decision making and planning processes by:

Complaints will be taken into consideration to constructively modify and improve services and programs as part of the quality improvement system.

5. Documents related to this policy

Related policies	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Procedure
Related procedures	
Forms or other organisational documents	Compliments, Comments and Complaints Form Women's Rights Statement Complaints Register

Policy context: This policy relates to:	
Human Services Quality Framework	Standard 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4
Other standards	N/A
Legislation or other requirements	Queensland Human Rights Act 2019