



Connect and Explore

Comments and Complaints Policy

Purpose

Connect & Explore actively seeks and values all feedback to feed into our continuous improvement program. We endeavour to receive comments and resolve complaints in a way that promotes clear, honest and open communication and acknowledges the importance of sensitivity, confidentiality and impartiality in the facilitation of complaints resolution.

Scope

Applies to all comments and complaints received from clients / customers, members of the public, donors, volunteers suppliers, partners, funders and external organisations including customers of internal Connect & Explore departments.

The policy is not designed to address complaints relating to:

- criminal activity e.g. Fraud
- staff grievances
- child protection

Our complaints system aims to:

- Help people understand their rights and what they should expect of services.
- Give people the confidence to complain, when needed, by addressing power imbalances that people can face when raising issues.
- Be accessible and easy to navigate.
- Enable other stakeholders (such as advocates and workers) to make complaints and ensure issues can be addressed when people with disability are unable or unwilling to make a complaint.
- Support the resolution of complaints and when possible provide an escalation pathway when needed.
- Ensure that quality and safety issues are appropriately managed.
- Enable the identification of systemic issues and drive improvement actions

Policy Statement

Connect & Explore is an open and accountable organisation committed to providing an accessible comments and complaints process for all clients /customers, members of the public, donors, volunteers, suppliers, partners, funders and external organisations. We believe comments and complaints are a valuable element in understanding expectations of clients, customers and stakeholders. While recognising expectations will not always be met we encourage and promote the right of clients / customers and stakeholders to provide us with their comments and complaints.

We are committed to regular monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the comments and complaints process to ensure feedback becomes part of our risk assessment and continuous improvement processes.

We are also committed to facilitating regular staff/ client surveys to proactively identify potential areas of dissatisfaction or complaints.

Principles

- the comments and complaints process provides ease of access to make a comment/ complaint

Comments/complaints may be expressed in any form (spoken, written or communicated by other means). All clients/customers, as it is practical to do so are informed of the comments/complaints process and have assistance as required in accessing the process.

- the comments and complaints process is confidential

The person making the comment/complaint may be identified or choose to be anonymous. Only people directly involved in the complaint, helping to resolve it or completing a risk assessment will have access to the information about the complaint and only information that is necessary and lawful will be collected. All documentation will be filed confidentially.

- the comments and complaints process affords natural justice

All parties to a complaint will be treated in a respectful manner and have equal opportunity to participate in the complaints process. No complainant will be victimised or discriminated against as a result of making a complaint.

- the comments and complaints process is transparent

The complainant will be informed of the response to their complaint, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions at each stage of the process. The process consists of 3 stages:

Stage 1 - First contact. We believe the most effective and fastest way to resolve complaints and achieve client/customer satisfaction is to deal with the issues at the point the complaint is received.

Stage 2 - Internal progression. When the complaint cannot be resolved at the first point of contact it will be referred to the next appropriate internal level.

Stage 3 - External body. If the complaint cannot be resolved internally to the complainant's satisfaction they will be encouraged to contact the relevant external body (eg NSW Ombudsman office or National Disability Insurance Scheme)

All reportable incidents will be communicated and reported as required.

Aim

1. Always have readily available comments / complaints forms (via email or post)
2. Acknowledge any complaint in a timely manner
3. Provide progress feedback on the status of a complaint
4. Keep the concerned party and relevant stakeholders informed of progress in handling a complaint through to the resolution of the issue (as far as possible).
5. Treat complaints with fairness and confidentiality (please see Privacy, Confidentiality and Data Policy).
6. Offer independent mediation in cases where complaints cannot be satisfactorily resolved.
7. Use complaints to improve services, policies and procedures through our complaints management procedures and continuous improvement cycle.
8. Facilitate making a complaint to the Commissioner and provide appropriate support and assistance in contacting the Commissioner in relation to a complaint where required.

Connect & Explore Team shall:

- ensure promotion of the awareness of comments and complaints handling
- foster a 'no blame' environment in which complaints are seen as a valuable and necessary part of continuous improvement
- provide appropriate training to empower staff to confidently resolve complaints
- analyse complaints for improvement and complete a risk assessment as appropriate
- provide ongoing monitoring and auditing of the comments and complaints process to ensure it is effectively maintained and continuously improved

Connect & Explore team shall:

- attempt to resolve complaints directly by acknowledging the client's concern, listening non-defensively and being prepared to apologise for the impact of the difficulty.
- ask the complainant for their opinion on how the complaint may be resolved and ways that may prevent similar situations happening again.
- where appropriate agree on a solution and take responsibility to action promptly
- keep an accurate record of all communications that form part of the complaints process and file confidentially
- where a solution cannot be agreed, take responsibility for moving the complaint to the next stage of the process
- keep the client informed of the progress and follow through to resolution of the complaint
- notify management of any 'high risk' complaints by immediately referring those complaints to a management representative
- report immediately complaints which have significant impact on Connect & Explore to the CEO.

- Copies of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018 and accompanying Explanatory Statement are available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2018L00634>

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Reviewed:

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