



SHAR-SERV-PRO-01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Complaints and Appeals Procedure of Northside Community Service Ltd (Northside) ensures that relevant parties understand their rights and responsibilities when making complaints or appeals at Northside.
- 1.2. This procedure ensures that employees and other stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities when dealing with complaints or appeals at Northside.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This procedure aims to ensure that all complaints and appeals are investigated in a thorough, transparent, fair, sensitive, and objective manner.

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- 2.2. This procedure outlines the process and principles that Northside holds when dealing with complaints and appeals.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This procedure applies to all Northside stakeholders including volunteers, employees, contractors, sub-contractors and consultants employed by Northside, apprentices or trainees, students gaining work experience, and volunteers, whilst they are on Northside property or engaged in Northside business.
- 3.2. This procedure applies to all clients, family members, carers and authorised contacts nominated by the client or legally appointed Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA). This procedure also extends to their visitors and/or guests.

4. Policy Statements

Early Childhood Governance Policy 5.1.1: Any complaint raised by a family, carer, authorised contact, visitor or external stakeholder will be handled promptly and professionally.

Client Services Governance Policy 5.10.1: Any complaint raised by a client, carer, authorised contact, visitor or external stakeholder will be handled promptly and professionally.

4.1. Complaints and Appeals

- 4.1.1. A complaint focuses on the way that Northside delivers its services, while appeals are concerned with decisions that Northside makes in the delivery of those services. Both can be informal or formal.
- 4.1.2. To ensure the right to a fair process Northside will ensure:
- 4.1.2.1. Complaints about staff will not be reviewed by the staff member who is the subject of the complaint, but will be reviewed by a more senior staff member; and
 - 4.1.2.2. Appeals are reviewed and responded to by staff that are senior to, and separate from, the staff involved in the decision being appealed.
- 4.1.3. To promote each individual's rights and best practices in complaint handling, complaints can be escalated to an external body. For more information see section 4.6 of this policy.

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4.1.4. Unreasonable or vexatious complaints will be managed as per the guidelines outlined in this **Procedure** and may be referred to a third Legal Party for management.

4.2. How to lodge a complaint or appeal

4.2.1. Complaints or appeals can be:

4.2.1.1. Submitted by clients, representatives, support services, and other stakeholders.

Anonymous complaints will be accepted and investigated, although only complaints with contact details can be responded to;

4.2.1.2. Submitted in writing;

4.2.1.3. Received by all Northside staff.

4.2.2. On receipt of a complaint, staff will discuss the issue with the complainant in a respectful manner and make an effort to address the complainant’s concerns at the time, depending on the nature of the complaint.

4.2.3. All complaints and appeals will be logged internally via Northside’s’ incident notification form.

4.2.4. Not all decisions are appealable. When an appeal is lodged, the appellant will receive a written notice from Northside regarding the appealability.

4.2.5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at this point, or if they prefer to make a formal complaint in the first instance, the staff member will escalate the complaint to a Northside senior staff member. The nature of the complaint will then be assessed, and a manager will be assigned to:

4.2.5.1. Acknowledge the complaint or appeal in writing by a Northside representative.

4.2.5.2. Investigate the issue thoroughly and impartially;

4.2.5.3. Meet as required with the complainant and any witnesses or third parties; and

4.2.5.4. Communicate with the complainant to advise of the outcome.

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4.3. Responding to a complaint or appeal

- 4.3.1. The complaint or appeal will be escalated to a Northside Manager/ Supervisor and the Director of Compliance & Quality for review and advice.
- 4.3.2. The complainant will be offered an opportunity to meet with a Northside representative in person to discuss the details of their complaint or appeal. The complainant will be encouraged to have a support person present throughout the duration of the meeting.
- 4.3.3. A two-person worker model will be implemented when meeting in person to discuss any complaint or appeal. This is to ensure the safety of all persons involved.
- 4.3.4. A response and/or outcome regarding the complaint or appeal will be communicated to the complainant by a Northside representative.
- 4.3.5. The response and/or outcome of the complaint or appeal will be documented and stored securely.
- 4.3.6. If the complainant/appellant is still dissatisfied at the end of the formal Northside complaint/appeals process, Northside will advise them on the options available to have the appeal reviewed externally. For more information, see section 4.5

4.4. Notifiable Events

- 4.4.1. Under the Regulatory requirements, Northside is required to report certain types of complaints to relevant regulatory authorities. Northside will determine whether the complaint or appeal is a notifiable event and report accordingly. For more information please see:
 - 4.4.1.1. **Early Childhood Notifiable Events Procedure**
 - 4.4.1.2. **Client Services Notifiable Events Procedure**
 - 4.4.1.3. **Aged Care Notifiable Events Procedure**

4.5. External Supports

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- 4.5.1. For some Northside services or types of complaints, you may be able to make a complaint to an external body, if you are not happy with the response or outcome you have received from Northside. Other options for complaints include:
- 4.5.1.1. **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner:** If you think that Northside has mishandled personal information, you can lodge a written complaint with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints/lodge-a-privacy-complaint-with-us/
- 4.5.1.2. **ACT Human Rights Commission:** The Commission includes the Public Advocate & Children and Young People Commissioner and the Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner. You can contact the Commission by phone 6205 2222, email (human.rights@act.gov.au) or through their website www.hrc.act.gov.au.
- 4.5.1.3. **Community Services Directorate:** The Directorate funds a number of organisations to provide services on its behalf. Concerns or complaints should generally be referred to the service provider but can be escalated via mail, phone, email or face-to-face. For more information contact via phone 133472 or visit their website [Compliments, Feedback & Complaints - Community Services \(act.gov.au\)](http://Compliments, Feedback & Complaints - Community Services (act.gov.au))
- 4.5.1.4. **ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal (ACAT):** An independent body that hears and determines a range of cases and disputes. For more information visit their website [Home - ACAT \(act.gov.au\)](http://Home - ACAT (act.gov.au))
- 4.5.1.5. **Children’s Education and Care Assurance (CECA):** The ACT Regulatory Authority, Children’s Education and Care Assurance (CECA), can receive complaints about education and care services operating in the ACT. You can contact CECA by phone 6207 1114 or email (complaintsCECA@act.gov.au).
- 4.5.1.6. **Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC):** If you have a concern or complaint that you have not been able to resolve by talking with us, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission) can support you with information and options. You can contact the Commission on 1800 951 822 or via their website: <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint/complaints-process>
- 4.5.1.7. **National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH):** If you have a complaint or are dissatisfied with the standard or type of service provided by a registered

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community housing provider a complaint may be lodged online with the Registrar via [NRSCH Form - Using the online form](#)

- 4.5.1.8. **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National):** People who have difficulty speaking or understanding English can contact Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) via 131 450

4.6. Service Improvement

4.6.1. Northside will actively use the knowledge gained through its complaints and appeals process to improve services.

4.6.2. Northside is committed to continuous quality improvement, to ensure that high quality services and support are provided to those engaged with Northside. Northside will ensure effective management of complaints and appeals by:

4.6.2.1. Ensuring that the dignity of individuals is recognised and respected throughout complaint and appeal processes.

4.6.2.2. Respecting and upholding the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who wish to complain, or lodge appeals wherever possible.

4.7. Record Keeping

4.7.1. All Complaints and Appeals will be lodged internally via the incident reporting system.

4.7.2. Complaints and appeals registers will be maintained by a Northside representative to ensure accurate management and record keeping.

4.7.3. Northside staff will ensure that accurate records are kept including:

4.7.3.1. The appeal or complaint lodged;

4.7.3.2. Information about the complaint or appeal, including notes taken during interviews;
and

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4.7.3.3. The response to the complaint or appeal.

4.7.4. If the complainant is receiving a Northside service, all documentation will be kept within their record.

4.8. Privacy and Confidentiality

4.8.1. The complaints and appeals process, including identifying information pertaining to the complaint or appeal, will be managed in accordance with the Northside **Privacy Policy**.

5. Associated Northside Forms & Documents

5.1. Associated Northside Documents

- 5.1.1. **Feedback Form**
- 5.1.2. **Client Code of Conduct**
- 5.1.3. **Privacy Policy**
- 5.1.4. **Grievance Policy**
- 5.1.5. **Early Childhood Notifiable Events Procedure**
- 5.1.6. **Client Services Notifiable Events Procedure**
- 5.1.7. **Aged Care Notifiable Events Procedure**

5.2. Additional Associated Documents

- 5.2.1. [Children’s Education and Care Assurance \(CECA\)](#)
- 5.2.2. [Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority \(ACECQA\);](#)
- 5.2.3. [ACI: Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission \(ACQSC\);](#)
- 5.2.4. [Housing: National Regulatory System Community Housing \(NRSCH\);](#)
- 5.2.5. [Youth and Engagement: ACT Community Services.](#)

6. Definitions

6.1. **Northside** - Northside Community Service, including all Services operated by both Community Services and Children’s Services business units.

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- 6.2. **Employee** - means the employees of Northside, and contractors, sub-contractors and consultants employed by Northside, apprentice or trainee, student gaining work experience, and volunteer, whilst they are on Northside property or engaged on Northside business.
- 6.3. **Client/s** – is/are the person receiving Northside services in any program areas, including children’s services, Aged Care and Inclusion, Housing, Youth and Engagement, and other shared program areas.
- 6.4. **Appeal** – is an expression of dissatisfaction requested by a tenant, applicant, or their representative for a review of a decision made by Northside.
- 6.5. **Appellant** – is the person appealing or whom the appeal is being made on behalf of.
- 6.6. **Complaint** – is an expression of dissatisfaction made by tenant, applicant, stakeholder or their representative with the services provided by Northside. Reasons for complaints might include but not limited to:
- 6.6.1. Inappropriate behaviour by Northside employee;
 - 6.6.2. Northside employee not following the Policy;
 - 6.6.3. Poor delivery of service from Northside employee such as not returning phone calls, not recording changes in circumstances, or not sending out appropriate forms;
 - 6.6.4. Fail to provide a service or an aspect of a service;
 - 6.6.5. Provide an inconsistent or inaccurate service such as responding differently in different circumstances or providing incorrect advice on Northside Policy.
- 6.7. **Complainant** – is the person who makes the complaint.
- 6.8. **External Appeals and Complaints** – are the appeals or complaints made against Northside decisions to an external agency with powers to review that decision, including referrals to external bodies when complainants are dissatisfied with Northside’s response.
- 6.9. **Formal Appeals and Complaints** – are appeals or complaints made against Northside decisions that require formal investigation and response by Northside.

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- 6.10. **Informal Appeals and Complaints** – are minor appeals or complaints that can be managed directly and promptly by suitably trained employee in an informal manner.
- 6.11. **Notifiable Events** – are the certain events or incidents that damage, or have the potential to damage, the reputation of the sector and cause harm to those involved.
- 6.12. **Representative** – is the person assisting an applicant or tenant or acting on behalf of an applicant or tenant, including but not limited to a tenant advocate, a family member, or a friend of the applicant or tenant.
- 6.13. **Vexatious Complaints** – are the complaints initiated without sufficient grounds or evidence with the intention of causing disruption, harm, or damage to a person or Northside.

7. Document Control and Version History

7.1. Document Control

Document Reference:	<i>Complaints and Appeals Procedure</i>
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Signature of Approval Authority:	
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Functional Unit:	Shared Services
Enquiries Contact:	Name: Anna Whitty Position: Chief Executive Officer Phone: 02 6171 8000 Email: anna.whitty@northside.asn.au

7.2. Version History

Revision Date	Version No.	Brief reason for change	Reference Sections

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