



ORG-WIDE-PRO-01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

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

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

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

2.3. The Complaints and Appeals Procedure include the following key components:

2.3.1. [Comprehensive Complaint Handling Process;](#)

2.3.1.1. [Being Open and timely in responding;](#)

2.3.1.2. [Managing the Complaint;](#)

2.3.1.3. [Assess the Complaint;](#)

2.3.1.4. [Respond to the Complaint;](#)

2.3.1.5. [Follow up;](#)

2.3.1.6. [Evaluation and Considerations;](#)

2.3.2. [Notifiable Events;](#)

2.3.3. [External Supports;](#) and

2.3.4. [Record Keeping.](#)

3. Scope

3.1. This procedure applies to all employees of NCS, non-employees delivering services, stakeholders and participants, whilst they are engaging with NCS services, either within NCS facilities or off-site.

4. Procedure Owner and Review Requirements

4.1. Procedure Owner

4.1.1. The procedure owner for the Complaints and Appeals Procedure is the Executive Manager Shared Services.

4.2. Review Requirements

4.2.1. This procedure is to be reviewed biennially.

5. Procedure Statements

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

5.1. Comprehensive Complaint Handling Process

Complaints and Appeals Policy 4.2.1.1.: NCS adopts the Australian Open Disclosure Framework principles in managing complaints.

Complaints and Appeals Policy 4.4.2.: 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.

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

Aged and Community Care Governance Policy 5.4.1: Any complaint raised by a client will be handled promptly and professionally.

5.1.1. Being Open and timely in responding

5.1.1.1. Upon receiving a complaint or appeal, the designated staff member must acknowledge and respond to the complainant within a reasonable timeframe. The response should include, but is not limited to:

- 5.1.1.1.1. Clearly outlining the steps involved in the review and resolution process;
- 5.1.1.1.2. Ensuring transparency by communicating who is handling the matter and what actions are being taken;
- 5.1.1.1.3. Informing the complainant of their opportunities to provide further information or escalate the issue if necessary; and
- 5.1.1.1.4. Documenting all communications and decisions to maintain accountability and consistency.

5.1.2. Managing the Complaint

5.1.2.1. NCS will ensure that the complaints are handled promptly, transparently, and in accordance with NCS internal procedure. This includes, but is not limited to:

- 5.1.2.1.1. Immediately informing their direct Supervisor or Manager upon receiving the complaint and escalating the matter to the appropriate personnel or department based on the nature and severity of the issue;
- 5.1.2.1.2. Providing formal acknowledgment of the complaint to the complainant within 24 hours of receipt. This includes confirming that the complaint has been received and outlining the next steps in the process;
- 5.1.2.1.3. Completing and submitting an internal Incident Form using the **Safe at Northside LogIt Form** as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint; and

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 5.1.2.1.4. Contacting the complainant to arrange a suitable time for a discussion, either in person or via telephone, at the earliest opportunity to clarify the concerns raised, gather additional context if needed, and explain the resolution process.

5.1.3. Assess the Complaint

- 5.1.3.1. NCS will collect all relevant information from the parties involved and assess how the complaint will be managed and resolved.
- 5.1.3.2. The employee responsible for meeting with or discussing the complaint with the client must conduct the interaction professionally, empathetically, and transparently. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
- 5.1.3.2.1. Providing the complainant with a respectful and uninterrupted opportunity to share their concerns, experiences, and perspective;
 - 5.1.3.2.2. Summarising the key points of the complaint in the employee's own words to confirm understanding and foster mutual clarity;
 - 5.1.3.2.3. Acknowledging the complainant's experience by expressing regret using phrases such as "I understand this situation has been frustrating for you and I appreciate you bringing this to our attention" or "We regret that your experience did not meet your expectations and we are committed to reviewing the matter," while avoiding blame or admission of fault;
 - 5.1.3.2.4. Asking the complainant how they would ideally like the issue resolved, to guide next steps and manage expectations;
 - 5.1.3.2.5. Clearly explaining the follow-up process, including actions to be taken, responsible personnel, and providing contact details for the employee managing the complaint;
 - 5.1.3.2.6. Reassuring the complainant that all information shared will be treated confidentially and handled in accordance with NCS **Privacy and Confidentiality Policy** and data protection policies;
 - 5.1.3.2.7. Offering a realistic timeframe for resolution, including key milestones or expected updates, and ensure that the agreed timeframes are maintained; and
 - 5.1.3.2.8. Maintaining a positive, courteous, and professional attitude, and thanking the complainant for raising their concerns and contributing to service improvement.
- 5.1.3.3. After discussing the complaint with the client, an NCS employee will assess the complaint and determine an appropriate course of action to resolve the complaint.
- 5.1.3.4. When assessing a complaint, the responsible employee must follow a structured and fair process, which includes, but is not limited to:

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 5.1.3.4.1. Evaluating the complaint in relation to other active or historical complaints to ensure consistency and fairness in decision-making;
- 5.1.3.4.2. Seeking additional information or clarification from the complainant if any aspects of the complaint are unclear, incomplete, or require further context;
- 5.1.3.4.3. Assessing the potential impact of the complaint on the individual client, other clients, and the broader service. This includes identifying any immediate risks to safety, wellbeing, or service integrity, and prioritising resolution accordingly;
- 5.1.3.4.4. Developing a brief written plan outlining how the complaint will be managed. This should include key actions, responsible personnel, timelines, and any data or documentation to be collected;
- 5.1.3.4.5. Conducting a thorough investigation where necessary, including interviews, document reviews, or consultation with relevant employees or stakeholders/participants;
- 5.1.3.4.6. Collecting all relevant information that may assist in resolving the complaint, such as client records, service logs, policies, and any supporting evidence; and
- 5.1.3.4.7. Maintaining detailed written notes of all discussions, decisions, and actions taken throughout the complaint process, and ensuring these records are added to the client's profile to ensure continuity and accountability.

5.1.4. Respond to the Complaint

- 5.1.4.1. NCS will provide a response to the client within ten (10) days of meeting with or discussing the complaint. The response will outline the proposed actions to address the complaint.
- 5.1.4.2. When providing a response, the responsible employee must ensure that communication is clear, respectful, and appropriate to the complexity of the issue. The response should include, but is not limited to:
 - 5.1.4.2.1. Communicating the outcome of the complaint review in a direct and understandable manner, clearly explaining the reasoning behind the decision and referencing relevant policies, evidence, or considerations that informed the conclusion;
 - 5.1.4.2.2. Providing a formal written response for complaints involving multiple factors, sensitive matters, or significant implications; and
 - 5.1.4.2.3. Recognising that some complaints may require multiple discussions or follow-up meetings to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

5.1.5. Follow up

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

5.1.5.1. NCS will follow up on complaints in a timely manner and provide the complainant with information about actions taken within fifteen (15) working days. Follow up should include, but is not limited to:

- 5.1.5.1.1. Clearly informing the complainant of the actions implemented in response to their complaint;
- 5.1.5.1.2. Engaging the complainant in a discussion to confirm whether they are satisfied with the outcome and whether their concerns have been adequately addressed;
- 5.1.5.1.3. Inviting the complainant to provide feedback on both the complaint handling process and the resolution;
- 5.1.5.1.4. Offering the option to provide feedback through the **NCS website**;
- 5.1.5.1.5. Outlining alternative options available to the complainant, if required;
- 5.1.5.1.6. Ensuring reviews are carried out by employees who were not part of the original complaint handling; and
- 5.1.5.1.7. Evaluating complaints and discussing them at relevant committees, e.g. Governance Committee, with strict consideration for confidentiality.

5.1.6. Evaluation and Considerations

5.1.6.1. When reviewing and considering outcomes for the client, the following factors must be taken into account, including but not limited to:

- 5.1.6.1.1. Assessing whether the resolution met the complainant's expectations and addressed the core concerns;
- 5.1.6.1.2. Reviewing the timeline of the complaint handling process to identify any delays and considering whether response times were appropriate and where improvements could be made; and
- 5.1.6.1.3. Following resolution of a complaint, the responsible employee must prepare a concise internal report summarising the nature of the complaint, actions taken, outcomes achieved, and any identified opportunities for improvement;
- 5.1.6.1.4. This report is to be submitted to the relevant Executive Manager to ensure that learnings from the complaint are captured and used to inform future practice. The report must highlight procedural gaps, training needs, or policy revisions that could enhance service delivery and prevent recurrence; and
- 5.1.6.1.5. All reports should be reviewed as part of the organisation's continuous improvement framework and contribute to the refinement of NCS processes and procedures.

5.2. Notifiable Events

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

5.2.1. If the complaint or appeal qualifies as a notifiable event, please refer to the following procedures for more information:

- 5.2.1.1. **Early Education Notifiable Events Procedure;**
- 5.2.1.2. **Aged and Community Care Notifiable Events Procedure;** and
- 5.2.1.3. **Community Programs Notifiable Events Procedure.**

5.3. External Supports

Complaints and Appeals Policy 4.6.1.: *For some NCS 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 NCS.*

5.3.1. If a client remains dissatisfied with the response or outcome provided by NCS regarding their complaint or appeal, please refer to **Complaints and Appeals Policy** for guidance on available external support options.

5.4. Record Keeping

- 5.4.1. All complaints and appeals must be formally submitted through NCS' **Safe at Northside LogIt Form**. Employees can access the reporting system via the designated QR code or secure webpage via **NCS website**.
- 5.4.2. All documentation associated with a complaint or appeal, such as written statements, correspondence, investigation notes, meeting records, and resolution outcomes, must be securely stored within the relevant client's official profile or file.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1. NCS is responsible for:

- 6.1.1. Ensuring that this policy follows the requirements of the Open Disclosure Framework;
- 6.1.2. Ensuring policies are subject to regular review.

6.2. Executive Manager is responsible for:

- 6.2.1. Ensuring a fair and supportive process is followed;
- 6.2.2. Taking all complaints and appeals seriously;

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 6.2.3. Where disclosed, all matters of misconduct are reported to the relevant regulatory bodies;
 - 6.2.4. Ensuring all NCS employees are notified of any changes to policies and procedures; and
 - 6.2.5. Ensuring policies and procedures are kept available and accessible to employees.
- 6.3. Managers/Supervisors are responsible for:
- 6.3.1. Addressing complaints and appeals promptly, escalating complex cases, and fostering a supportive team environment; and
 - 6.3.2. Supporting employees to understand and follow policies and procedures.
- 6.4. Employees are responsible for:
- 6.4.1. Following policies and procedures;
 - 6.4.2. Treating others with dignity and respect at all time;
 - 6.4.3. Ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of others;
 - 6.4.4. Raising issues promptly; and
 - 6.4.5. Co-operating in investigations.

7. Associated Northside Forms & Documents

7.1. Associated NCS Documents

- 7.1.1. NCS Website
- 7.1.2. Complaints and Appeals Policy
- 7.1.3. Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- 7.1.4. Safe at Northside LogIt Form
- 7.1.5. Early Education Governance Policy
- 7.1.6. Aged and Community Care Governance Policy
- 7.1.7. Early Education Notifiable Events Procedure
- 7.1.8. Community Programs Notifiable Events Procedure

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

7.1.9. Aged and Community Care Notifiable Events Procedure

7.2. Additional Associated Documents

7.2.1. Open Disclosure Framework

8. Definitions

- 8.1. NCS: Northside Community Service, including all programs operated by the organisation.
- 8.2. Employee: means a person who is hired to perform work for a company either on a full-time, part-time, or casual basis in exchange for payment.
- 8.3. Non-employee delivering services: Contractors, sub-contractors and consultants employed by NCS, apprentice or trainee, student gaining work experience, and volunteer, whilst they are on NCS property or engaged on NCS business.
- 8.4. Stakeholder: Broad groups with a vested interest (employees, volunteers, clients, families).
- 8.5. Participants: People actively involved in programs or services (clients, costumers, service users).
- 8.6. Client/s: is/are the person receiving NCS services in any program areas, including Early Education, Aged and Community Care, Housing, Community Programs, and other shared program areas.
- 8.7. Appeal: is a formal request for the review or reconsideration of a decision made by NCS. Appeals may be lodged by clients, participants, stakeholders, or their representatives when they believe a decision was incorrect, unfair, or not in accordance with NCS policies or procedures.
- 8.8. Complaint: is an expression of dissatisfaction made by client, applicant, stakeholder or their representative with the services provided by NCS. Reasons for complaints might include but not limited to:
 - 8.8.1. Inappropriate behaviour by NCS employee;
 - 8.8.2. NCS employee not following the Policy;
 - 8.8.3. Poor delivery of service from NCS employee such as not returning phone calls, not recording changes in circumstances, or not sending out appropriate forms;
 - 8.8.4. Fail to provide a service or an aspect of a service;

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service

ORG-WIDE-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 8.8.5. Provide an inconsistent or inaccurate service such as responding differently in different circumstances or providing incorrect advice on NCS Policy.
- 8.9. Complainant: is the person who makes the complaint.
- 8.10. 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.
- 8.11. Representative: is the person assisting an applicant or client 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.

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: ORG-WIDE-PRO-01	Distribution: Org Wide
Version No.: V4	Effective Date: 11/2025	Northside Community Service