

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS OPERATIONAL POLICY

POLICY TITLE:	FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY		
VERSION:	005	DATE EFFECTIVE:	01/06/2006
AUTHORISED BY:	Chief Executive Officer	LAST REVISED DATE:	05/09/2024

SUMMARY

Our Feedback and Complaints Policy ensures that everyone can share their thoughts and concerns openly and safely to help us improve our services and support.

PURPOSE

At ARC Disability Services Inc. (ARC), we are dedicated to creating an environment where feedback and complaints drive our continuous improvement. Our approach aims to:

- **Respect and act upon the input from our community**, ensuring an accessible and transparent process for all. We see every piece of feedback and every complaint as an opportunity to enhance our relationships and services.
- **Empower employees, Participants, and volunteers** to voice their experiences and concerns, encouraging a culture where openness leads to action and improvement.
- **Address issues promptly and effectively**, building trust in our processes and contributing to a higher standard of service.
- **Use insights from feedback and complaints** to inform and improve our service delivery, support structures, and operational efficiency.

SCOPE

Our Feedback and Complaints Policy is ARC's commitment to promoting a culture of transparency and accountability within our organisation, from the Board and Leadership to our frontline staff. This policy provides the foundation for all other quality management and resolution frameworks. It guides our staff and participants who may wish to provide feedback or make a complaint. We value all types of input, recognising that both positive feedback and constructive criticism are essential for continuous improvement.

A designated Feedback and Complaints Manager will oversee all complaints and feedback. All staff are bound by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Code of Conduct.

DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Feedback	Any opinion or comment about ARC's services or staff, whether it's good, bad, or neutral.
Complaint	When someone is unhappy with our services, actions, or staff and wants us to fix or respond to the issue.
Resolution	Handling a complaint involves resolving the issue or making amends. This process might include offering an apology, making changes to our services, or taking other actions to ensure the issue is resolved satisfactorily for everyone involved.
Procedural Fairness	The process of handling complaints in a clear and fair way, making sure everyone involved gets a chance to tell their side of the story, with decisions made fairly based on the information given.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1B
Release Date: 06 September 2024	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 1 of 5

TERM	DEFINITION
Natural Justice	Making fair decisions by listening to everyone involved and giving them a chance to respond.
Confidentiality	Keeping information private and only sharing details of complaints with those who are directly involved in resolving them, unless legally required to share the information.

POLICY

It is ARC's policy that everyone associated with the organisation—including persons with disabilities, their support networks, employees, volunteers, board members, and community members—has the clear right to give feedback or make a complaint without fear of retaliation.

ARC values all feedback—complaints, concerns, compliments, or suggestions—as essential for identifying and acting on opportunities for continuous improvement. We will act quickly and confidentially, aiming to find satisfactory solutions for everyone involved. Progress updates or final outcomes will be shared as soon as possible, with response times tailored to each case.

Many issues come from misunderstandings or miscommunications that can be resolved early. We encourage you to report all concerns, issues, or feedback promptly so we can address them and improve our services.

Feedback and complaints can be submitted through various channels: completing the Feedback and Complaints Form, directly contacting staff or the Feedback and Complaints Manager, sending an email, using our [online contact form](#), or reaching out to external complaint agencies.

Information in Easy Read format is available, and the Feedback and Complaints Manager will ensure that all meetings to resolve complaints are accessible and with the resources necessary to support the inclusion of all individuals attending.

The contact details for providing feedback or raising a complaint are listed below:

Feedback and Complaints Manager	Natasha Rivett
Email address	feedback@arcinc.org.au
Phone Number	07 4046 3600
Postal Address	PO Box 942N, North Cairns 4870

COMMITMENT TO PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS AND NATURAL JUSTICE

ARC adheres to the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice, in compliance with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018 and NDIS (Procedural Fairness) Guidelines 2018. This includes:

- Informing individuals if their rights or interests may be adversely affected.
- Providing notice of each prejudicial matter that may be considered against them.
- Offering a reasonable opportunity to be heard on those matters before adverse action is taken.
- Allowing individuals to present information and submissions in support of a favourable outcome.
- Ensuring decisions are based on facts and issues raised during the process, documented in the decision record.
- Maintaining an unbiased decision-making process.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1B
Release Date: 06 September 2024	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 2 of 5

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

ARC ensures feedback and complaints are managed effectively through the following strategies:

- Implementing an open and transparent feedback and complaint handling system.
- Upholding the principles of natural justice and compliance with relevant mandatory reporting under Australian law.
- Supporting stakeholders' rights to provide feedback or submit complaints either directly or through a representative.
- Ensuring procedural fairness to reach fair and correct decisions.
- Informing complainants of the NDIS commission complaints process through various communication means.
- Maintaining complete confidentiality and privacy.
- Complying with the NDIS Code of Conduct.
- Training staff in our feedback and complaint process and stakeholders' rights.
- Considering all feedback and complaints seriously and respectfully.

COMMUNICATION AND RESOLUTION

Our communication and resolution strategies ensure that feedback and complaints are addressed effectively and respectfully by:

- Advising participants and staff of their right to provide feedback or submit complaints, with information provided during intake and support planning.
- Offering accessible support for individuals who may need assistance.
- Protecting complainants and those providing feedback against retribution or discrimination.
- Promptly investigating and resolving complaints.
- Communicating and consulting with participants, families, and advocates during process, and providing feedback and resolutions.
- Interpreting and applying policies and processes accurately.
- Involving complainants and those providing feedback in the resolution process and keeping them informed of progress, actions taken, and reasons for decisions.
- Recognising and including decision-makers and advocates in the process.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We are committed to maintaining accountability and adopting a culture of continuous improvement. We achieve this by:

- Accepting accountability for actions and decisions taken due to feedback and complaints.
- Resolving problems at the point of service or through referral to alternatives.
- Using feedback and complaints to enhance planning, delivery, and review of services.
- Referring feedback and complaints into our continuous improvement cycle.

COMPLAINT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The feedback and complaints management system involves various roles and responsibilities, which are outlined below:

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
ARC's Board	Receives and reviews reports on feedback and complaints data and trends, manages escalated complaints, handles complaints related to the CEO with integrity and impartiality.

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1B
Release Date: 06 September 2024	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 3 of 5

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS OPERATIONAL POLICY

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Leadership Team	Implements feedback and complaints policy, promotes continuous improvement, addresses systemic issues or risks identified through feedback and complaints.
Feedback and Complaints Manager	Responsible for overseeing the feedback and complaint's function. This role involves guiding and supervising the entire feedback and complaints system, ensuring adherence to policies, and intervening when necessary. The manager remains informed and involved in the process, providing direction and support to ensure effective handling of feedback and complaints.
Staff and Volunteers	Report any feedback or complaints to the Feedback and Complaints Manager, cooperate with the complaint's resolution process.
Provider of Feedback	Makes a complaint or provides feedback about ARC's services or programs, has the right to be treated with respect and fairness, be informed of progress and outcome, seek external review if not satisfied.

All staff and volunteers must comply with the feedback and complaints policy, ensuring timely, respectful, and effective handling of all feedback and complaints. Failure to adhere to the policy may result in disciplinary action. Regular training and updates are provided to ensure ongoing compliance and awareness of procedures and responsibilities.

ADVOCACY AGENCIES

ORGANISATION	PHONE NUMBER
Rights in Action	(07) 4031 7377
QLD Aged & Disability Advocacy	1800 818 338
Disability Legal Advocacy Service	1800 650 197
Fair work Australia	131 394
National Disability Insurance Agency	1800 800 110
NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission	1800 035 544

Should any Participant, their family, staff member or volunteer feel that they are unable to address their concerns, issue or complaint directly with ARC than any of the above relevant agency(s) may be contacted in the initial instance.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Advocacy Policy
- Continuous Improvements Policy
- Feedback and Complaints Procedure
- Preferred Method of Communication Policy
- Preferred Method of Communication Procedure
- Privacy Statement Policy
- Quality Management Policy
- Whistle-Blower Policy

REFERENCES

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Services Act 2011 (Commonwealth)
- Fair Work Act 2009
- NDIS Act 2013 (Commonwealth)
- NDIS (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018
- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2021
- NDIS (Procedural Fairness) Guidelines 2018
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Commonwealth)

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1B
Release Date: 06 September 2024	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 4 of 5

AUTHORISATION

This Policy is approved and issued by:



BENJAMIN KEAST

Chief Executive Officer

POLICY	Document No.: GOV03-FORM-01	Version No.: 1B
Release Date: 06 September 2024	Uncontrolled if Printed	Page 5 of 5

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