

Youth Solutions – Consumer Feedback and Complaints

1 Policy statement

The intent of this policy is to illustrate Youth Solutions' commitment to accepting the feedback of service users and stakeholders, including any complaints made about Youth Solutions or a representative of Youth Solutions.

Any person or organisation using Youth Solutions' services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access, equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

This policy aims to ensure Youth Solutions provides a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- is simply and easy to use
- is effectively communicated and promoted to all service users and stakeholders
- ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follow principles of natural justice
- complies with legislation

2 Purpose, scope and outcomes

This policy applies to all service users and stakeholders wishing to make a complaint against Youth Solutions, or a representative of Youth Solutions including:

- Board
- staff
- other workers
- volunteers
- student placements
- Youth Advisory Group members

This policy does not apply to internal issues between representatives of Youth Solutions. Please see [Policy – Internal Grievances](#) and [Policy – Disciplinary Action](#) for further information.

This policy also does not apply to complaints made outside work hours or work duties, including personal complaints made about an individual or group of Youth Solutions representatives.

This policy works towards achieving the following outcomes for service users and stakeholders:

- service users and stakeholders are given information about the complaints process
- service users and stakeholders openly communicate complaints
- service users and stakeholders are treated with respect
- services and activities are continuously improved as a result of complaints
- services and activities are responsive to their varied and changing needs

3 Definitions

Term	Definition
Executive	A team made up of the President, Vice President, Treasurer and Public Officer of the Board. In the instance where the President also holds the position of Treasurer, an ordinary Board Member will be appointed to the Executive as well.
Management	Any staff member in a management position. Currently, the Chief Executive Officer is the only staff member in such a position.
Outcomes	Long-term effects or changes relating to overall program and/or project goals resulting from processes.
Processes	Actions and strategies employed.
Service user	Any young person between 12 – 25 years of age who receive any kind of service from Youth Solutions.
Stakeholder	Any person outside of the primary target group, including parents/carers, police, other non-government organisations, youth services, education providers and the general community.
Student placement	An unpaid person who is required to undertake workplace experience as part of an approved course of academic or practical study. A student placement is not considered to be a volunteer.
Volunteer	Any person who works for Youth Solutions on an unpaid basis, not including student placements.
Youth Advisory Group (YAG)	A group of young people who volunteer for Youth Solutions under the Peer Enrichment and Empowerment Project (PEEP). The group assists Youth Solutions in planning, implementing and evaluating health promotion activities.
Other workers	Any person who performs work in any capacity for Youth Solutions, including: apprentices, contractors or sub-contractors, outworkers and trainees.
Work hours	Any time spent representing Youth Solutions in an official capacity, in the office or at an external location.

4 Principles

Youth Solutions will:

- consider all complaints received
- treat all complainants with respect
- maintain privacy and confidentiality
- ensure advocacy is made available to complainants who require support
- resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant, where possible
- deal with all complaints in a timely manner
- keep all parties informed of progress
- ensure that Board members and staff are given information about the complaints process as part of their induction
- ensure all service users, stakeholders and community members are aware of complaints processes
- ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from using service during and after the complaint process
- ensure that feedback data is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements

5 Policy detail, action and procedures

5.1 Information for service users and stakeholders

Youth Solutions' complains and appeals process will be documented for service users and stakeholders in Consumer Feedback and Complaints which is made available:

- in the Youth Solutions office
- on the Youth Solutions website
- in hard copy to the lead contact for services and activities at external organisations
- in soft copy via email (upon request)
- in hard copy via post (upon request)

Consumer Feedback and Complaints contains information on the following:

- how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal
- contact details for lodging a complaint or appeal
- the process for resolving complaints and appeals
- the rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person and/or interpreter
- how to make a complaint to an external body and relevant contact details

The information is written in plain English and is made available to individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse background, with a disability or with low language, literacy and numeracy levels through those who advocate on their behalf, including but not limited to:

- parents and carers
- the lead contact at the organisation attended by the service user or stakeholder
- legal representatives

Complaints may be made by individual service users and stakeholders during and at completion of services and activities.

5.2 Making a complaint

An individual wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to:

- the staff member they were dealing with at the time
- the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- the Board
- the Executive

Written complaints can be sent via post or email. All staff members are responsible for receiving complaints and referring them to the appropriate person.

Complaints about staff members, other workers, student placements and volunteers should be referred to the CEO.

If the complaint is justified, it may result in Youth Solutions discontinuing contact with the person whom the complaint is about. Any disciplinary action against a staff member, other workers, student placements and volunteers arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with Policy – Disciplinary Action. In the instance where a complaint has been issued against a student placement

and the resulting action is a variation or cancellation of placement, the CEO will follow the process outlined in Policy – Student Placement Program.

Complaints against management, an individual Board member or the Board as a whole should be referred to the President. It is the responsibility of the President, with input from the Executive where necessary, to deal with all complaints received against management and the Board.

The CEO and the President are to follow the process below when a complaint has been lodged:

- notify the individual/s whom the complaint is referring to
- investigate the complaint and provide the Board member with an opportunity to respond
- take any other action necessary to resolve the issue
- resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant
- inform the Board

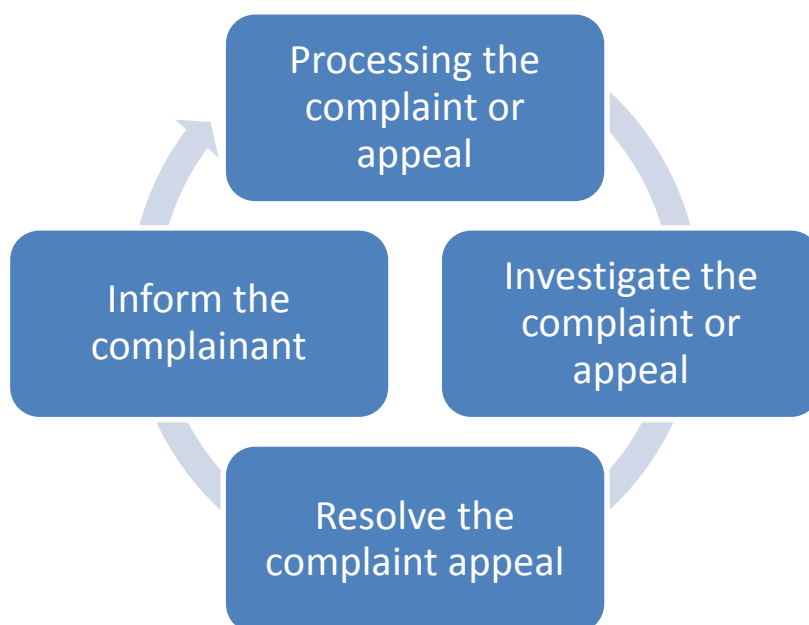
Where the President is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to someone on the Executive, and the above process should be followed.

5.3 Lodging an appeal

Service users, stakeholders or the wider community (or anyone advocating on their behalf) may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the CEO or President. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the CEO.

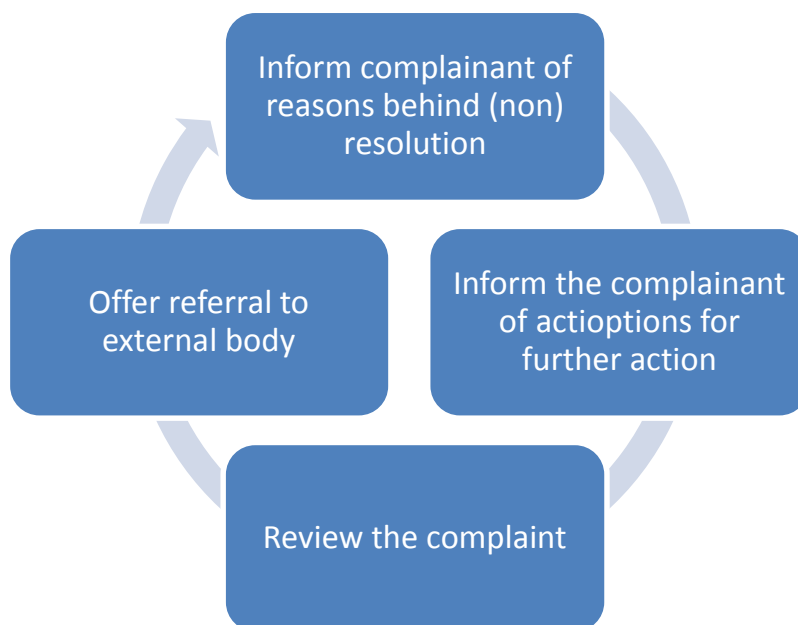
5.4 Procedure for complaints and appeals

The CEO or President will be responsible for:



1. Register the complaint or appeal in Register – Complaints
2. Inform the complainant that their complaint has been received and provide them with information about the process and the expected time frame
3. Investigate the complaint and decide on a course of action
4. Inform the complainant that the complaint is being investigated.
5. Resolve the complaint and inform the complainant of the resolution

If the matter remains unresolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and resolution, the President will raise the matter at the next Executive meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Executive may deal with the matter at the meeting or refer the matter on as per the Constitution.



5.5 Record keeping

Copies of all correspondence will be kept in both hard copy in the CEO's office and soft copy on the CEO drive (X:/). The register and accompanying files will be kept confidential and access is restricted to the CEO and Board.

A statistical summary of complaints and appeals will also be kept in Register – Complaints on the Data drive (S:/) and maintained by the CEO. The register is accessible by Youth Solutions management and staff.

5.6 Association members

Should a complaint be made by an Association member or against a member of the Association (in their capacity as members), the resolution of complaints follows the procedures outlined in the Constitution.

The following sections have been included an excerpt to this policy on page 8.

- Section 17 – Resolution of internal disputes
- Section 18 – Disciplining of members
- Section 19 – Right of appeal of disciplined members

6 Delegations and responsibilities

The Board has a legal obligation to ensure Youth Solutions adheres to the terms outlined in this policy. The Board may choose to delegate day-to-day responsibilities to the CEO or designate.

Position	Delegation or task
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the policy • Ensure compliance with relevant legislation • Comply with the policy • Delegate policy implementation and procedural development to management
Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the policy • Ensure compliance with relevant legislation • Delegate policy implementation to management, where relevant • Resolve any complaints received about management and/or the Board
Management	<p>CEO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with policy • Endorse associated procedures • Oversee the development and review of the policy and procedures • Manage implementation of the policy and associated procedures • Resolve any complaints received about staff, other workers, volunteers and student placements
Staff	<p>ALL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with the policy and associated procedures • Support continuous quality improvement initiatives relating to the policy and associated procedures • Provide advice and expertise (relative to role) in reviewing the policy and associated procedures

7 Policy implementation

This policy is developed in consultation with all employees and approved by the Board. All employees are responsible for understanding and adhering to this policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually from the date of its endorsement, unless a review is required earlier by the CEO.

8 Risk management

Policies and procedures is a standing agenda item for Youth Solutions staff meetings to discuss any relevant issues.

By implementing this policy, Youth Solutions effectively manages the risk of:

- complaints being kept quiet and unable to be rectified
- service users, stakeholders and the wider community being unhappy with the service
- unintentionally marginalising service users or groups of service users as a result of not listening to and/or correctly following up on complaints

9 Breaches

There are various penalties for breaching policies. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action, as per Policy – Disciplinary Action.

10 References to external sources

Nil.

11 Other relevant internal policies and documents

- Constitution
- Policy – Disciplinary Action
- Policy – Internal Grievances
- Policy – Service User and Stakeholder Feedback
- Policy – Student Placement Program
- Register – Complaints
- Register – Consumer Feedback
- Consumer Feedback and Complaints

12 Quality and accreditation standards

12.1 Australian Standards Excellence Standards (ASES)

Provided by Quality Innovation Performance (QIP)

Standard C.8.2 – Consumer Feedback and Complaints

Client and community feedback

- Youth Solutions collects and uses feedback from its service users and community members when planning, implementing and evaluating services and activities

Client feedback and complaints

- Youth Solutions follows a documented complaints management procedure that encourages and supports service users and stakeholders to raise concerns and protects them against retribution

Document control

Please note printed this document is uncontrolled when printed.

<i>Policy</i>	Complaints Handling	<i>Effective date</i>	June 2005
<i>Responsibility</i>	CEO or designate	<i>Approved by</i>	Board
		<i>Review date</i>	Refer to Register

Record of policy review

<i>Reviewed</i>	<i>Reason for Review</i>	<i>Reviewed by</i>	<i>Additional Comments</i>
August 2006	Preparation for self-assessment	Debbie Roberts	
December 2011	Preparation for external review	Dan Lea	
December 2013	Due for review	Geraldine Dean	
March 2015	Preparation for external review	Lauren Ogenovski	

13 Excerpt

17 Resolution of internal disputes

- 17.1 A dispute between a member and another member (in their capacity as members) of the association, or a dispute between a member or members and the Association, are to be referred to a community justice centre for mediation under the *Community Justice Centres Act 1983*.
- 17.2 If a dispute is not resolved by mediation within 3 months of the referral to a community justice centre, the dispute is to be referred to arbitration.
- 17.3 The *Commercial Arbitration Act 1984* applies to any such dispute referred to arbitration.

18 Disciplining of members

- 18.1 A complaint may be made to the Board by any person if a member of the association:
- a) has refused or neglected to comply with a provision or provisions of this constitution, or
 - b) has willfully acted in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the Association
- 18.2 The Board may refuse to deal with a complaint if it considers the complaint to be trivial or vexatious in nature
- 18.3 If the Board decides to deal with the complaint, the Board:
- a) must cause notice of the complaint to be served on the member concerned, and
 - b) must give the member at least 14 days from the time the notice is served within which to make submission to the Board in connection with the complaint, and
 - c) must take into consideration any submissions made by the member in connection with the complaint
- 18.4 The Board may, by resolution, expel the member from the Association or suspend the member from membership of Association if, after considering the complaint and any submissions made in connection with the complaint, it is satisfied that the facts alleged in the complaint have been proved and the expulsion or suspension is warranted in the circumstances.
- 18.5 If the Board expels or suspends a member, the Public Officer must, within 7 days after the action is taken, cause written notice to be given to the member of the action taken, of the reasons given by the Board for having taken that action and of the members right of appeal under clause 19.

19 Right of appeal of disciplined members

- 19.1 A member may appeal to the Association in a general meeting against a resolution of the Board under clause 18, within 7 days after notice of the resolution is served on the member, by lodging with the Public Officer a notice to that effect.
- 19.2 The notice may, but need not, be accompanied by a statement of the grounds on which the members intends to rely for the purposed of the appeal.
- 19.3 On receipt of a notice from a member under subclause 19.1, the Public Officer must notify the Board, which is to convene a general meeting of the Association to be held within 28 days after the date on which the Public Officer received the notice.