



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

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### 1. PURPOSE

The Older Women's Network Qld Inc (OWNQ) is committed to listening to people using our service. We take on feedback, both positive and negative, as a source of ideas for improving our services and other activities.

We are committed to facilitating client/stakeholder<sup>1</sup> rights to make a complaint about our service, to appeal a decision we have made that directly concerns them, and to ensure that their complaint or appeal is fairly assessed and responded to promptly.

### 2. SCOPE / OUTCOME

The Policy is designed to provide guidance on the manner in which OWNQ receives and manages complaints. The objective of the Policy is to assist OWNQ, its Management Committee and employees in resolving complaints in an efficient, effective and professional manner.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

**3.1 Complaint** - Any situation in which a client/stakeholder or someone acting on behalf of clients/stakeholders, advises OWNQ that they are dissatisfied with the way in which the service has been delivered or an aspect of the standards, practices or policies of the organisation.

#### 3.2 Types of Complaints

There are many factors that influence a client/stakeholder's decision to make a complaint. There is also a range of types of complaints that can be made. Examples of factors and types of complaints include:

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<sup>1</sup> A client is anyone (male, female or member) who asks OWNQ for assistance or information. A stakeholder is a person, organisation, group, government department or business that has an interest in older women in Queensland.

### **3.2.1 Service delivery complaints**

- Dissatisfaction with service provision;
- Accuracy and timeliness of information;
- Communication breakdown;
- Cultural issues;
- Stress and fatigue;
- Incidents of conflict;
- Inappropriate behaviour of employees, convenors, members and volunteers;
- Poor maintenance of facilities and equipment;
- Client/stakeholder abuse, harassment, discrimination and neglect;
- Breach in client/stakeholder confidentiality.

### **3.2.2 Governance complaints:**

- Conflict/s of interest;
- Financial mismanagement;
- Fraud;
- Procedures followed not in accordance with the organisation's constitution or organisational policies;
- Complaints of potentially criminal nature. If the complaint has criminal implications, such as fraud or abuse, then the Police should be notified immediately.

## **4. PROCESSES**

### **4.1 Methods of complaint**

All complaints will be dealt with seriously and impartially and responded to promptly. Complaints can be made face-to-face, by phone or in writing – by letter or email. We believe that most complaints can be dealt with satisfactorily through informal discussion with the key people concerned. If a complaint cannot be resolved within a branch, the matter should then be referred to the Coordinator, and if the Coordinator is unable to resolve the complaint, it should be submitted in writing to the Secretary OWNQ for consideration by the Management Committee.

Formal complaints should be made in writing so that the details of the complaint are clear and complete. Some people may wish to remain anonymous in making their complaint. This will be respected and the complaint investigated.

### **4.2 Assistance with Making a Complaint**

If the complainant needs assistance in formulating or lodging a complaint, they should contact the OWNQ Coordinator.

### **4.3 Acknowledgement of Complaints**

We are committed to acknowledging all complaints within two weeks of their receipt. Once a complaint has been received, we will undertake an initial review of the complaint. We will endeavour to resolve complaints swiftly and methodically and at all times keep the complainant informed of the progress.

### **4.4 Responding to Complaints**

OWNQ will aim to handle and resolve every complaint as soon as practicable, usually within two weeks.

## 5. PROCEDURE

### 5.1 Verbal complaints

OWNQ representatives should:

- Listen carefully and respond to the complainant in a polite and respectful manner.
- Clarify their understanding of the complaint and ask the complainant how they would like the complaint resolved. Wherever possible, try to resolve the complaint at the time.
- If the circumstances do not allow the complaint to be resolved immediately, direct the complaint to the Coordinator.
- If the complainant wishes to speak to someone other than an employee or the Coordinator, or the verbal complaint cannot be resolved through the employee or Coordinator, they should be advised to put the complaint in writing and address it to the Secretary, OWNQ, so that the Management Committee can consider it.
- The complaint will be recorded in the *Complaints and Compliments Register*.

### 5.2 Written complaints

All complaints of a serious nature, e.g. corruption, fraud, harassment, etc. should be submitted in writing and referred to the Coordinator for investigation. If the complaint involves the Coordinator, or the complainant feels that the Coordinator is not the appropriate person to handle the complaint, it should be referred to the Management Committee, and submitted through the Secretary of the Management Committee.

The response to a complaint may include the following:

- Confirmation that the complaint has been received and the matter is being investigated;
- An understanding of the complaint;
- Suggested actions for resolving the complaint;
- Explanation of the complaint process, including the estimated timeframe for resolution, and the right to appeal;
- Contact name and number.

### 5.3 Referring Complaints Externally

If a complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, or the complaint involves the organisation, then the complaint can be addressed to:

The Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors  
Telephone: 1800 491 467 (free call)  
Email: [feedback@communities.qld.gov.au](mailto:feedback@communities.qld.gov.au)  
Postal: GPO Box 806, Brisbane Qld 4001

Information about the Department's issues and complaints processes can be found at:

<https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/about-us/customer-service-compliments-complaints>

If the complaint is about a breach of privacy, the complainant can contact:

Office of the Information Commissioner Qld  
PO Box 10143  
Adelaide Street Brisbane  
Queensland 4000  
<https://www.oic.qld.gov.au/>

If a complaint is made that raises an issue not directly relevant to the organisation, eg elder abuse (either financial or physical) which should be reported externally, the employee will advise the complainant that the matter should be raised with the appropriate external body, eg. the Police if it is a criminal matter or domestic violence, or the Office of the Public Guardian if it is financial abuse etc.

## **6. FEEDBACK**

We encourage feedback from our clients/stakeholders. Feedback can be provided to us by individual clients/stakeholders on their initiative or in response to requests by our organisation. We make it as easy as possible for people to provide feedback and ensure anonymity to people who do, unless they agree otherwise.

We keep records of our feedback in our Complaints and Compliments Register, which is referred to as part of our Continual Improvement Plan.

We want our clients/stakeholders to feel able to voice their dissatisfaction with any aspect of our service, and to be confident that we will manage their complaints well and respond quickly and appropriately.

OWNQ will never discontinue, or reduce services, or in any other way take any recriminatory action in relation to a client or stakeholder making a complaint.