

1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Guide Dogs Queensland (GDQ) provides a means for external stakeholders to lodge complaints and to have these addressed and appropriately resolved if at all possible. Complaints are seen to play an important role in contributing to the Organisation's improved operations.

This policy has been framed around natural justice principles and individuals' rights as they are specified within the context of the Queensland State Disability Services Act 2006; Standard 5 of the Human Service Quality Framework State Disability Services Standards (2015); the Australian Disability Services Act (1986). As part of GDQ quality service improvement practice, a separate mechanism exists for external stakeholders who have a grievance with Organisation distinct from a complaint.

2. DEFINITION

Any claim made where a person's rights have been adversely affected or the standards of a service have not been fulfilled or for any reason the complainant is unsatisfied with his/her interaction with the Organisation and/or a matter related to the Organisation's operations.

3. STATEMENT

GDQ is committed to ensuring that its stakeholders, without prejudice, are able to discuss their concerns and lodge complaints if they consider that their rights have been adversely affected or the standards of a service have not been fulfilled or for any reason they are unsatisfied with their interaction with the Organisation and/or a matter related to the Organisation's operations.

GDQ welcomes feedback and advice whether it is complimentary or a complaint because it provides a means by which the organisation can continually improve its service and quality levels. It will respond to complaints in a fair, prompt and positive manner for the achievement of a resolution wherever possible.

3.1 Principles

To protect the rights of both the complainant and respondent, the following important principles and intentions will be observed.

- a) Complaints must clearly identify the issue and provide the available related information
- b) The person-centred approach to complaint management supports individuals and meets their needs, thus enabling both parties to work cooperatively within the process
- c) All complaints will be handled with absolute fairness and in accordance with the principles and intentions of natural justice:
 - the decision making process is free from bias
 - all parties have the right to be heard
 - the respondent has a right to know the details of the complaint
 - all parties are informed of the basis on which a decision is made.
- d) If required, complainants will be provided with assistance to lodge their complaint.
- e) The complaints process will be fully accessible to people with a disability and/or people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If required, translators or interpreters will participate in the complaints process.
- f) The rights of all parties to have others present or act on their behalf is acknowledged, supported and encouraged.
- g) The process will ensure complaints are handled fairly, reflecting the rights of both the complainant and the respondent(s) and undertaken:
 - in an open and consistent manner, with no retribution for people expressing their views
 - promptly and courteously
 - in a manner that ensures the rights of all people are acknowledged, honoured and protected.

- h) The details of the complaint (both discussions and records) shall be kept confidential from anyone who is not required to be involved in its resolution. Permission will be obtained from the relevant party/ies before any sensitive information is released to help resolve a dispute.
- i) Complaints will be considered within the context of a continuous improvement framework.
- j) GDQ employees receiving complaints must be treated with respect. Abusive, aggressive or disrespectful behaviour towards staff during interactions will not be tolerated.

3.2 Complaint Lodgement

Lodgement methods include –

- a) face to face communication;
- b) telephone via the main switchboard number 3500 9000;
- c) print;
- d) Braille;
- e) audio;
- f) electronic formats (including the website's online feedback form or the organisation's generic email address: admin@guidedogsqld.com.au).

3.3 Contact with Complainant

The person managing the complaint must contact the complainant within two business days to:

- a) acknowledge its receipt; and
- b) provide his/her name, title and contact details; and
- c) obtain further information, if required, in order to help assess the manner in which the complaint will be addressed; and
- d) provide an estimated timeframe until resolution; and
- e) if the matter is not resolved within the estimated timeframe, provide a status report with revised timeframe, and repeat each ten business days if necessary until the matter is closed.

3.4 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Complaints should be handled in a respectful, cooperative and positive manner, where both parties abide by the principles and process to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

In instances where this doesn't occur, Guide Dogs Qld will not engage with complainants whose conduct does not align with the principles and intentions outlined in 3.1.

Depending upon the circumstance, the Organisation's range of responses may include:

- a) Limiting a complainant's access to the Organisation and its staff,
- b) Declining to accept a complaint,
- c) Closing a complaint and taking no further action,
- d) Suspending a complainant's relationship with the organisation,
- e) Reporting the complainant to a relevant external agency or organisation.

3.5 External Agency or Mediator

If a complainant feels the matter is not resolved to their level of satisfaction he/she may choose to pursue his/her complaint via external avenues.

Depending on the circumstances, this might involve (but is not restricted to) any of the following organisations contact details of which may be given to the complainant.

- Complaints Unit, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability;
- Blind Citizens Australia;
- National Complaint Resolution and Referral Service;
- Equal Opportunity Commission
- Australian Human Rights Commission;
- The Public Advocate;
- Advocacy Agencies such as Queensland Advocacy Service, Speaking Up for you Inc.
- National Disability Insurance Scheme

INFORMATION, ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE

For further information or advice, please contact the Client Services team on (07) 3500 9000.

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<p>Approved By: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Title: General Manager Client Engagement Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Queensland</p>			