

POL 1009 Complaint Management Policy

Organisational

Our Commitment

Guide Dogs Queensland (GDQ) supports natural justice principles and individuals' rights as specified in the context of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018.

This policy provides a means for external stakeholders to lodge complaints and to have them addressed and appropriately resolved where possible. Complaints are seen to play an important role in contributing to GDQ's improved operations.

Application

This policy applies to all staff receiving or managing complaints.

What We Will Do

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 GDQ and/or a matter related to GDQ's operations.

GDQ welcomes feedback, 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board / Governance	Oversight to serious, high risk or escalated complaints.
CEO	Report significant complaint issues and risks to the Board. Champion effective complaint handling at GDQ and ensure appropriate management of escalated or complex complaints.
General Managers	Ensure appropriate management of escalated or complex complaints. Ensure staff are trained and follow procedure. Oversight of complaints in their department.

Complaint Handling Lead (CHL) / Team	Receive, assess, acknowledge, investigate and resolve complaints. Escalate high risk, serious or systemic complaints. Manage the complaint until closure.
Staff and volunteers	Treat all complaints respectfully and professionally. Attempt early resolution where appropriate. Promptly report all complaints into the Action Register. Maintain confidentiality and accurate records.
Quality Administrator	Administers and maintains the Complaints Register, provides support and guidance, tracks complaint status, actions, deadlines and outcomes. Generates reports for management and governance purposes.
Complainant	Provides relevant information about their concerns and engages with the complaint process to support timely resolution.
Respondent	Cooperates with the complaint process, provides relevant information during the investigation, and is given an opportunity to respond to the issues raised.

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) GDQ places the needs, rights, preferences, and wellbeing of the individuals involved at the centre of the investigation process, ensuring they are treated with respect, listened to, and supported to participate in a way that meets their needs, thus enabling both parties to work cooperatively within the process.
- c) All complaints will be handled with 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, interpreters or support people can 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). The process will be 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) Complaint information will be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act, GDQ privacy policies and confidential obligations. Information will only be disclosed where authorised or legally required.
- 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.

Receiving a Complaint

Initial complaint discussion may occur through any of the following methods:

- a) face to face communication;
- b) telephone via the main switchboard number 3500 9000;
- c) SMS message
- d) Voicemail, video or voice recording
- e) Handwritten communication
- f) Braille;
- g) GDQ's website [Contact us - Guide Dogs Queensland](#)
- h) GDQ's feedback email address: feedback@guidedogsqld.com.au).

All lodged complaints must be provided in writing.

Staff are responsible for lodging all feedback received in the Action Register (on Teams) for managing and tracking outcomes.

Contact with Complainant

The person managing the complaint must endeavour to contact the complainant to:

- a) acknowledge its receipt
- b) provide their name, title and contact details

- c) obtain further information, if required, to help assess the way the complaint will be addressed
- d) provide an estimated timeframe until resolution
- e) check if the complainant requires further assistance or support while the matter is under investigation
- f) 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.

Expected Timeframes for Complaints

We aim to respond to complaints as quickly as possible. Our timeframes are:

Action	Timeframe
Acknowledge complaints.	Within 1-2 business days.
Respond to client / donor complaints.	Within 30 business days.
Respond to human rights / animal welfare complaints.	Within 30 business days.
Acknowledge internal review request following our response of the initial complaint.	Within 1-2 business days.
Respond to the internal review request.	Within 20 business days.

Acknowledge = confirm receipt of the complaint.

Respond = provide our findings, decision, reasons, and any actions taken after assessment / investigation.

Confidentiality

All complaints and investigations will be handled with appropriate confidentiality and discretion. Information relating to a complaint will only be shared with those who need access to fulfil their role in the complaint handling process, while ensuring procedural fairness and compliance with privacy obligations. All parties involved, including complainants, respondents, witnesses, and employees, are expected to maintain confidentiality and not disclose information about the complaint or investigation unless authorised or required by law.

External Agency or Mediator

If a complainant feels the matter is not resolved to their level of satisfaction, they may choose to pursue their 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.

- Blind Citizens Australia;
- Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Team;
- National Complaint Resolution and Referral Service;
- Australian Human Rights Commission;
- Queensland Human Rights Commission
- Queensland Police for suspected criminal conduct
- Advocacy agencies such as Aged and Disability Advocacy (ADA) Australia, Speaking Up for You Inc.;
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission: The NDIS Commission can take complaints about:
 - Services or supports that were not provided in a safe and respectful way
 - Services and supports that were not delivered to an appropriate standard.

A complaint can be made to the NDIS Commission by:

- Phoning: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677 (Interpreters can be arranged).
- National Relay Service and ask for 1800 035 544.
- Completing a complaint contact form on their website.

Monitoring of the complaint management system

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to:

- Ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints, and
- Identify opportunities to improve systems of work at GDQ

Complaint data is reviewed for organisational continuous improvement opportunities:

- recurring issues,
- service gaps,
- training needs,
- policy improvements and
- risk trends.

The Continuous Improvement Register within the Action Register will be used for managing this.

Staff training

GDQ staff will receive regular training relevant to their role in receiving, acknowledging and responding to feedback and complaints.

Associated Documents/Legislation/Standard

Documents

- PRO 1009 Complaint Handling Procedure

Legislation

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution Rules 2018)
- Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009

Document Control

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