

Complaints Management (Clients)

Connect: Inner West Community Transport Group (Connect) is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using its services or affected by its operations has the right to provide feedback, make complaints about care and services, or to appeal a decision made by the organisation.

Connect ensures that its service users and others can provide feedback and make complaints without reprisal and promises to manage all complaints transparently. In this way, all concerns that are raised will be addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and continuous improvement.

The organisation will implement a complaints and appeals management system that:

- **Allows and supports any person to make a complaint or provide feedback;**
- **Facilitates complaints by cultivating a supportive environment in which they can be made**
- **Is simple, accessible and easy to use;**
- **Is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders;**
- **Is proportionate to the size of the organisation and the services it provides;**
- **Ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly;**
- **Is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice; and**
- **Complies with legislative requirements.**

Record of policy development

Version	Date approved	Date for review
1	3 October 2025	2 October 2028

Responsibilities and delegations

This policy applies to	Staff and Directors
Specific responsibilities	General Manager
Policy approval	Board

Policy context – this policy relates to:	
Standards	
Legislation	Aged Care Act 2024
Contractual obligations	
Organisation policies	
Forms, record keeping, other documents	

Definitions

Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation regarding its staff, services or products that warrants response or resolution.

Complainant: an employee, client, advocate, entity or member of the public who expresses their dissatisfaction about an organisation to either the organisation itself or an external body.

Escalation: the process of reporting complaints to the Aged Care Quality & Safeguards Commission if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

Principles

Connect will:

- Ensure that all clients, and their families, carers and advocates are encouraged and supported to raise any concerns they have about the service or organisation;
- Consider all complaints it receives regardless of whether or not the complainant is a client of the organisation;
- Treat all complainants with respect and recognise the importance of their concerns;
- Maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution. Information will only be disclosed if required by law, or if otherwise necessary;
- Ensure support and advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support;
- Resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- Clients, families and advocates have access to the organisation's complaints management policy;
- Deal with all complaints in a timely manner, and aim to provide a formal response to the complainant within five business days of the complaint being received;
- Keep relevant parties appropriately involved and informed of progress of the complaint;
- Ensure that Directors, and staff are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints;
- Ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures;
- Ensure that all complainants are aware of and understand how to escalate their complaint to the Aged Care Quality & Safeguards Commission;
- Ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the progress of an issue;

- Ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements; and
- Review and evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaints management system and continually improve its processes.

Procedures

Information for clients and stakeholders

Connect's complaints procedure will be documented for clients and stakeholders on the Connect website and client handbook.

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation.

The Complaints procedure will contain information on the following:

- How to make a complaint or lodge an appeal, including an anonymous complaint;
- Contact person for lodging a complaint or appeal;
- How the organisation will deal with the complaint or appeal, the steps involved and the timelines;
- The rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person or interpreter;
- How the person will be informed about the outcome of their complaint or appeal; and
- How to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

Training procedures

Staff will be trained on the complaints management procedures during their induction, and as part of ongoing refresher training.

Managers will undergo training for complaints management and resolution to support clients to throughout the complaint process and appropriately respond to complaints in an empathetic manner. This will include open communication strategies such as acknowledging the grievance without being defensive and making apologies while accepting responsibility for what occurred.

Making a complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to the:

- Staff member they were dealing with at the time;
- Manager/supervisor of that staff member;
- General Manager

Or

- Aged Care Quality & Safeguards Commission

Complaints may be made by:

- Written complaints may be sent to

Email admin@connectinnerwest.org.au or gm@connectinnerwest.org.au

Post: 31 Sydenham Rd Marrickville NSW 2204

The General Manager will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person;

- Feedback and complaints via telephone may be made on phone 9558 – 6800

If the complaint is about:

- A staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the General Manager;
- A complaint about the General Manager will normally be dealt with by the Connect Chair.

Connect encourages and supports all of its clients, their families and carers, and workers and others to make complaints and lodge appeals, in an environment where it is clear that complaints can be made without fear of any reprisal.

Lodging an appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organisation, or by a staff member, related to their complaint. An appeal should be made in writing Aged Care Quality & Safeguards Commission.

Procedure for complaints management

Any staff member may be a recipient of a complaint, and is responsible for:

1. Receiving the complaint:

- Listening to the complainant, acknowledging the concern raised, and explaining the next steps to the complainant; and
- Discussing with the complainant an agreed upon resolution (for smaller matters), or referring the complaint on to a more senior staff member for further investigation and action. The chosen action will depend on the type and severity of the complaint.

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

2. Processing the complaint:

- Registering the complaint or appeal in Connect's records; and
- Informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame.

3. Investigating the complaint or appeal:

- Examining the complaint within five business days of the complaint being received;
- Investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond; and
Informing the complainant by letter within five business days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution.

4. Responding to and resolving the complaint:

- Making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within [time frame] of the complaint being received;
 - informing the complainant of the outcome and the reasons for any decisions made;
 - upheld (and if so what will be done to resolve it);
 - resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
 - if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this;
- Informing the complainant of any options for further action if required; and
- If an apology is in order, ensuring that the appropriate person makes the apology and informs the complainant what the organisation intends to do to avoid further grievance.

Connect is committed to ensuring that all complaints and appeals are addressed in a timely matter. Complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within five business days of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

If things go wrong when reviewing a complaint or appeal, Connect will use an open disclosure process.

5. Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will be referred to Aged Care Quality & Safeguards Commission and provided information and support to make the complaint externally if necessary.

Complaints involving specific staff members

The General Manager has delegated responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members.

Internal complaints, where a staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, will be dealt with in accordance with the organisation's grievance policies

External complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member will be managed by the General Manager who will:

- Notify the staff member of the complaint and its nature;
- Investigate the complaint and provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised;
- Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party; and
- Take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in Connect's disciplinary procedures.

External complaints involving the General Manager will be managed by the Chair.

Complaints involving organisation members or Board members

Complaints made against a Director will be referred to the Chair. The Chair, or their delegate, will:

- Notify the person about whom a complaint is being made of the complaint and its nature
- Investigate the complaint and provide the member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised; and
- Attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party.

Where the Chair is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to another office bearer/s.

If the matter remains unresolved, the Chair or notified office bearer will raise the matter at the next Board meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may:

- Deal with the matter at its meeting; or
- Refer the matter to the relevant processes outlined in the organisation's constitution.

Cooperation in external investigations

If any person makes a complaint about Connect to an external body (including police, Ombudsman) the General Manager will be responsible for liaising with the body responsible for investigating the issue. Connect will fully cooperate in any investigation which may take place, this includes participating in early resolution, conciliation, and/or reporting to the body about resolution and corrective actions if required.

Record keeping

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in on file for the duration of the funding contract after the complaint has been made. The register will be maintained by General Manager and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint;
- Date lodged;
- Action taken;
- Date of resolution and reason for decision;
- Indication of complainant being notified of outcome; and
- Complainant response and any further action.

The complaints register and files will be confidential, and access is restricted to the General Manager.

The General Manager will be responsible for preparing a report on complaints to the Board as appropriate.

Results from this report will be reviewed by senior staff and /or the Board and used to:

- Inform service planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities;
- Inform decision making by including a report on complaints and appeals as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas; and

Continuous improvement of the complaints management system

Connect is committed to regularly reviewing and improving the effectiveness of its complaints management system. The complaints management system will be reviewed and evaluated every three years. This will include:

- Review of all complaint and feedback policies and procedures;
- Client and staff feedback about the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaints management system; and
- Implementation of a continuous improvement plan based on the review and feedback received.

End of document
