



Complaints Policy

Queanbeyan and District Preschool Association (QDPA) is committed to ensuring the delivery of high quality education and care that meets the needs of preschool age children in the local Queanbeyan Community. Our aim is to work in partnership with parents and others to resolve any concerns or grievances that may present about a child's education or care at any QDPA preschool service.

Feedback from families, educators, staff, volunteers and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving preschool service working towards the highest standard of care. The purpose of this QDPA Grievance Policy is to provide clear and transparent information to parents, the community and staff on how concerns and complaints will be managed and resolutions found. It is also important that parents have access to support and advice when attempting to resolve a concern or grievance.

It is foreseeable that feedback will include divergent views, which may result in grievances. This Policy details our Preschool's procedures for receiving and managing informal and formal complaints. Parents, Educators, Visitors, volunteers and the community can lodge a grievance, with the understanding that it will be managed conscientiously and confidentially.

National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

Quality Area 7: Governance and Leaderships		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
7.2.1	Continuous Improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.



Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law NSW

168	Education and care service must have policies and procedure
173	Prescribed information to be displayed
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

Definitions

Complaint: An issue of a negligible nature that can be resolved within 24 hours, and does not require a comprehensive investigation. Complaints include a manifestation of discontentment, such as poor service, and any verbal or written complaint directly related to the Centre (including general and notifiable complaints). Complaints do not include staff, industrial or employment matters, occupational health and safety matters (except associated with the safety of children).

Complaints and Grievances Register: Records information about complaints and grievances received at the centre, along with the outcomes. This register must be kept in a secure file, accessible only to educators and Department of Early Childhood Education and Care. The register can provide valuable information to the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor of the service to ensure children and family's needs are being met.

Grievance: A grievance is a formal statement of complaint that cannot be addressed immediately and involves matters of a more serious nature. For example: If a Preschool is in breach of a regulation causing injury or possible harm to a child.

Mediator: A person who attempts to make people involved in a conflict come to an agreement - i.e. QDPA Managing Director or Management Committee Chair.

Mediation: An attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement or compromise between disputants through the objective intervention of a neutral party.

Notifiable complaint: A complaint that alleges a breach of the Regulation and Law, National Quality Standards or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor to the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)).

If the Director is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact The Department of Early Childhood Education and Care for confirmation. Written reports must include:

- details of the event or incident
- the name of the person who initially made the complaint
- if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)
- contact details of a nominated member of the Management or Grievances committee
- any other relevant information

Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the appropriate forms, which can be found on the ACECQA website: www.acecqa.gov.au and logged using NQA ITS (National Quality Agenda IT System).

Serious incident: An incident resulting in the death of a child, or an injury, trauma or illness for which the attention of a registered medical practitioner, emergency services or hospital is sought or should have been sought. This also includes an incident in which a child appears to be missing, cannot be accounted for, is removed from the centre in contravention of the Regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the centre premises (Regulation 12).



Queanbeyan & District Preschool Association

A serious incident should be documented in an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record (sample form available on the ACECQA website) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident. The Regulatory Authority must be notified within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the Preschool (Regulation 176(2)(a)). Records are required to be retained for the periods specified in Regulation

Privacy and Confidentiality

- Management, teachers and Educators will adhere to our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy when dealing with concerns or grievances. However, if a concern or grievance involves a staff member or child protection issues, a government agency may need to be informed.

Conflict of Interest

It is important for the complainant to feel confident in

- Being heard fairly
- An unbiased decision making process

Should a conflict of interest arise during a grievance or complaints that involves the Approved Provider, the Nominated Supervisor or other Management will be nominated as an alternative mediator.

The Rights of the Complainant

Parents, staff, visitors, volunteers or others can expect that their concern or complaint will be responded to in a courteous, respectful and timely manner and that QDPA staff will work in partnership with them to resolve their concern or complaint. In return we ask that parents are respectful, co-operative and courteous to staff and that they are realistic and reasonable about what course of action is required to resolve their concern or complaint.

Timeframes for responses are listed in this policy under the explanation of the appropriate steps that parents follow.

At any point in the process parents, visitors, volunteers or others have the right to refer the matter to an external agency, such as the Early Childhood Education & Care Directorate or the NSW Ombudsman.

Guiding Principles

This policy is based on the following principles;

- The safety and educational wellbeing of children and young people is our first priority.
- Children, parents, staff, visitors and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Parents have the right to raise concerns and complaints about their preschool experience and be supported to do so.
- Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved at the preschool level.
- Complaints will be considered in a confidential, timely and impartial manner and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice.
- The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
- Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated, reported as appropriate.

Three Levels of Complaint

1. **Informal** - Simple or straight forward complaints or concerns can generally be resolved by talking to a member of staff or the Director of the Preschool.
2. **Formal** - More complex or serious issues may need to be referred to the QDPA Managing Director and escalated if required to the QDPA Management Committee. A written record should be kept of all formal complaints.
3. **External/Reporting Review** - Where complaints are of a more serious nature or cannot be resolved internally, they will need to be reported to ECEC Directorate & NSW Ombudsman.



Handling Complaints/Concerns

If a complaint or concern is received by a member of staff, other than the Director or teacher, it should be referred to the Director immediately.

When a complaint is received, staff members will follow these steps:

- Listen to the person making the complaint.
- Respond in a calm and helpful manner.
- Together, decide on a course of action - e.g. Discuss the issue with educational leader/Director to resolve, Discuss the matter with the QDPA Managing Director & QDPA Management Committee and/or follow up with a formal (written) complaint &/or if dissatisfied with outcomes lodge the complaint with external bodies.
- All formal or non-trivial complaints are to be referred to the QDPA Managing Director and the Management Committee.
- All complaints are to be investigated and resolved within 7 working days where ever possible.

Storage

- All written records relating to complaints will be stored with the Association stored records.
- Records will be kept as per the 'Retention of Records' Policy.
- The Management Committee will keep a record of all complaints received.

Rights & Responsibilities

When raising a concern or complaint with staff, parents can expect to;

- Be treated with respect, courtesy and consideration
- Have the complaint or concern dealt with in a confidential and timely manner
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process
- Have the complaint or concern considered impartially
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcomes of their complaint or concern

We request that when making a complaint parents will;

- Treat other parties with respect, courtesy and maintain confidentiality
- Raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed
- Act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Have realistic and reasonable expectations about what course of action is required to resolve the concern or complaint.

Further Reading:

- 1) ACECQA guidelines & NSW Ombudsman.
- 2) Queanbeyan & District Preschool Association, Retention of Records Policy
- 3) Education and Care Services National Regulation
- 4) National Quality Standard & Revised edition
- 5) ACECQA
- 6) Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission



QUEANBEYAN & DISTRICT PRESCHOOL ASSOCIATION

PO Box 101, Queanbeyan NSW 2620

COMPLAINT RECORD

Date: _____

Person making the complaint: _____

Address: _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Staff member handling complaint: _____

Details of issue raised: _____

Solution offered: _____

I am satisfied with the way my complaint was handled;

Signed: _____

Date: _____