



P7-02: Dealing with Complaints Policy

Queanbeyan & District Preschool Association (QDPA) believes feedback from families, educators, staff, and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving education service working towards the highest standard of care and education.

It is foreseeable that feedback will include divergent views, which may result in complaints. This Policy details QDPA's procedures for receiving and managing informal and formal complaints. Families, parents, visitors, students, and members of the community can lodge a grievance or complaint with management in 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 LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
S.174 (2)(b)	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
12	Meaning of serious incident
84	Awareness of child protection law
149	Volunteers and students



168(2)(o)	Education and care service must have policies and procedures... for dealing with complaints
170	Policies and procedures must be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
173(2)(b)	Requires an approved provider to make the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints may be addressed clearly visible at the service
173	Prescribed information to be displayed- education and care service
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
183	Storage of records and other documents

RELATED POLICIES

Child Protection Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Code of Conduct Policy Dispute and Grievance Policy Governance Policy	Interactions with Children, Family and Staff Policy Fees Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Record Keeping and Retention Policy Student and Volunteer Workers Policy
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PURPOSE

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* requires approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for dealing with complaints (Reg. 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (Reg. 170).

We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. We will ensure that all persons making a complaint are guided by the following policy values:

- procedural fairness and natural justice
- code of ethics and conduct
- culture free from discrimination and harassment
- transparent policies and procedures
- opportunities for further investigation
- adhering to our Service philosophy



PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS AND NATURAL JUSTICE

QDPA believes in procedural fairness and natural justice that govern the strategies and practices, which include:

- The right to be heard fairly.
- The right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker.
- The right to have the decision based on relevant evidence.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of QDPA.

IMPLEMENTATION

Grievances and complaints can transpire in any workplace. Handling them appropriately is imperative for sustaining a safe, healthy, harmonious, and productive work environment. Our *Dealing with Complaints Policy* ensures that all persons are presented with procedures that:

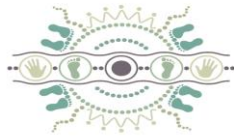
- value the opportunity to be heard.
- promote conflict resolution.
- encourage the development of harmonious partnerships.
- ensure that conflicts and grievances are mediated fairly and
- are transparent and equitable.

QDPA is committed to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and adopts a child safe approach to complaints involving a child or young person. As a child safe organisation, we will respond promptly and systematically to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions while fostering an environment where children feel confident that their safety and wellbeing are paramount.

DEFINITIONS

Complaint: Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation related to its products, services, staff, or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. [AS/NZS 10002:2014 Complaint Management Standard]

Complaints and Grievances Management Register: Records information about complaints and grievances received at the Preschool(s), along with the outcomes. These documents must be securely stored, accessible



only to management and the Regulatory Authority. They can provide valuable information to the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor of the Preschool 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. A *workplace grievance* is a complaint raised towards an employer by an employee due to a violation of legalities (workplace policies, employment contract, national standards).

Mediator: A person who attempts to assist and support people involved in a conflict to come to an agreement.

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

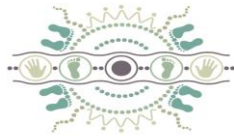
Notifiable complaint: A complaint that alleges a breach of the *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, National Quality Standard or alleges that the health, safety, or wellbeing of a child at the Service may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made – (S. 174[2] [b], Reg. 176[2][b]).

If the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact the [Regulatory Authority](#) 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 the nominated supervisor/approved provider
- 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 [NQAITS](#) (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 Service in contravention of the Regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the Service premises (Reg. 12).

A serious incident should be documented in an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record* on OWINA 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 Service (Reg. 176(2)(a)). These records are required to be retained for the periods specified in Regulation 183.

The Approved Provider will notify the regulatory authority of any incident where there is a reasonable belief that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the service, or any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the service.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Management and educators will adhere to our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* when dealing with grievances. However, if a grievance involves a staff member or child protection issues, a relevant government agency will need to be informed. (see: Reportable Conduct Scheme in our *Child Protection Policy*) and [Responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse or harm NSW](#)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is important for the complainant to feel confident in:

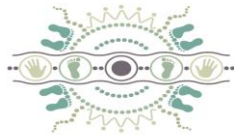
- being heard fairly
- an unbiased decision-making process

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

Our Service may also engage the resources of an Independent Conflict Resolution Service to assist with the mediation of a dispute. We will ensure that throughout the conflict resolution process the Services Code of Conduct is adhered to.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON WILL:

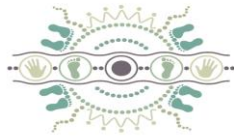
- ensure educators, staff, students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy and associated procedure



- ensure the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints can be made is clearly visible at each Preschool.
- ensure information about our *Dealing with Complaints Policy* is easily accessible to all families, visitors, and volunteers.
- treat all grievances and complaints seriously and as a priority.
- ensure grievances and complaints remain confidential.
- ensure grievances and complaints reflect procedural fairness and natural justice.
- ensure people feel safe or comfortable when making a complaint, including children
- ensure educators, staff, volunteers and students are well informed about the different ways children may express concerns, distress and disclose harm as well as the process for responding to disclosures from children- including a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child. (ACECQA 2023)
- ensure our complaint handling processes are child-focused providing support and guidance for children to know who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe
- conduct a review of policies and procedures, where required, following a complaint or grievance as part of our continuous improvement practices
- provide an induction program for new staff and educators that includes an overview of policies and procedures, including this *Dealing with Complaints Policy* and procedure
- ensure the approved provider is notified of all complaints and grievances
- acknowledge the complaint or grievance in writing within 2 working days of receipt
- discuss the issue with the complainant within 24 hours of receiving the verbal or written complaint
- investigate and document the grievance or complaint fairly and impartially
- provide details of an outcome following an investigation if required.

The investigation will consist of:

- reviewing the circumstances and facts of the complaint (or breach) and inviting all affected parties to provide information where appropriate and pertinent.
- discussing the nature of the complaint (or breach) and giving the accused educator, staff member, volunteer, or visitor an opportunity to respond
- permitting the accused person to have a support person present during the consultation (for example: Union Representative HR Representative, lawyer, colleague, friend or family member). A support person may provide support by taking notes during the meeting, clarifying questions and allegations made, help formulate responses, engage in discussions and are more than a passive observer, aid in

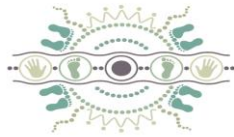


understanding processes, request breaks and be an emotional support. A support person cannot represent the employer, speak on their behalf or advocate for the organisation.

- providing the employee with a clear written statement outlining the outcome of the investigation
- advise the complainant and all affected parties of the outcome within 7 working days of receiving the verbal or written complaint.
 - management will provide a written response outlining the outcome and provide a copy to all parties involved.
 - if a written agreement about the resolution of the complaint is prepared, all parties will ensure the outcomes accurately reflect the resolution.
 - all written responses will need to cater for complainant to be able to understand such as spoken language and assistance regarding reading
- should management decide not to proceed with the investigation after initial enquiries, a written notification outlining the reasoning will be provided to the complainant.
- keep appropriate records of the investigation and outcome and store these records in accordance with our *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* and *Record Keeping and Retention Policy*
- monitor ongoing behaviour and provide support as required.
- ensure the parties are protected from victimisation and bullying.
- request feedback on the grievance or complaint process using feedback form.
- track complaints to identify recurring issues within the Preschool(s)
- notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours if a complaint alleges the safety, health or wellbeing of a child is being compromised. Notification must include any incident where there is a reasonable belief that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the Preschool, or any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the service.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- report all complaints received to the nominated supervisor, and/or approved provider within required timeframes
- listen to the family's view of what has happened.
- clarify and confirm the grievance or complaint, documenting all the facts prior to the investigation.
- encourage and support the family to seek a balanced understanding of the issue.
- discuss possible resolutions available to the family. These would include external support options.
- encourage and assist the family to determine a preferred way of solving the issue.



- record the meeting, confirming the details with the family at the end of the meeting.
- maintain confidentiality at all times.
- refer complainant's (as necessary) to Association policies that may assist in resolving the grievance or complaint.
- be informed about the different ways children can express concerns or distress and disclose harm as well as the process for responding to disclosures from children- including a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child
- be aware of child protection law and their individual responsibilities as mandatory reporters/notifiers
- ensure children know who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe and know the process that will happen to support them.

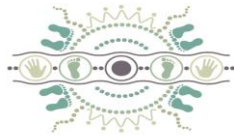
If the grievance cannot be resolved, it is to be referred to the Nominated Supervisor and/or Executive Officer who will

investigate further:

- if appropriate, collect relevant written evidence. This evidence will be treated in strict confidence and will be held in a secure place.
- involve the Executive Officer and/or Nominated Supervisor in the conflict resolution as required.
- should it be necessary to interview relevant people concerning the grievance, their involvement should be kept to the minimum necessary to establish the facts.
- third parties providing evidence must also be made aware that the matter is to be kept confidential.

Should the grievance or complaint be lodged against another person(s), these persons, will be interviewed separately and impartially. Individuals must be given the opportunity to respond fully to the allegations and may have another person present, as a support person, if they wish. If after investigation, it is concluded that the grievance is substantiated:

- both parties will be told of the decision and the reason for it
- immediate and appropriate steps will be taken to prevent the grievance from recurring.
- if after investigation, it is concluded that the grievance is not substantiated both parties will be notified of the decision and the reason.
- the complainant will be informed that if they are not satisfied with any decision relating to the grievance procedure that they should consult with an external body for further advice such as the Regulatory Authority



- if the grievance or complaint is of a serious nature, or there is a reasonable belief the complaint is any allegation of sexual or physical abuse the Approved Provider is responsible to inform the regulatory authority within 24 hours.

FAMILIES WILL:

- be informed of our duty of care to ensure that all persons are provided with a high level of equity and fairness in relation to the management of complaints. The complaints procedure for families ensures a fair opportunity for all stakeholders to be heard and promotes effective conflict resolution within QDPA.
- attempt to discuss their complaints with the relevant educator associated with a particular child and/or family as the first step to resolving the issue, unless it is a reportable offence and notification to the regulatory authority is to be made with 24 hours of complaint
- communicate any concerns they may have in writing addressed to the Executive Officer or Nominated Supervisor.
- raise any unresolved concerns with the Executive Officer or Nominated Supervisor
- maintain confidentiality at all times.
- be provided with details of external agencies to contact should they feel our Service has not resolved their concerns (e.g., regulatory authority)

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/EVALUATION

Complaints provide our Service with opportunities for learning and improvement. We encourage regular and ongoing feedback from staff, children and families and the community. QDPA is committed to resolving complaints through prompt investigation, open communication, and transparent processes. Our *Dealing with Complaints Policy* will be updated and reviewed annually in consultation with families, staff, educators, and management.

To ensure complaints and grievances are handled appropriately, the Executive Officer will:

- evaluate each individual complaint and grievance to assess that a satisfactory resolution that has been achieved.
- review complaints and grievances to ensure a pattern of similar grievances is not occurring.
- review the effectiveness of QDPA's policy and procedures to ensure all complaints and grievances have been handled fairly and professionally.
- consider feedback from staff, educators, families, children and community regarding the policy and procedure.



SOURCE

Australia Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2024). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). [Using Complaints to support continuous improvement](#).

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). [Sexualised behaviour involving children](#).

Australian Government Department of Education. [Child Care Provider Handbook](#) (Amended 2023)

Australian Human Rights Commission: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au>

Child Speak. [Traffic Lights Framework. Age Appropriate Sexual Play and Behaviour in Children](#).

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023).

Fair Work Australia: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

Queensland Government- Guide for effective complaints management
<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/legislationAndGuidelines/Documents/effective-complaints-management-guide.pdf>

REVIEW

Version Control	Date	Author	Description of Change
1.0	2018	QDPA	Original document
2.0	2021	QDPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document reviewed with change in leadership team in 2021. Additional related regulations & NQS references added. Version control and description box added to clarify reviewed items/new inclusions. Format change to include policy statement, purpose, scope and implementation, addition of footers and page numbering and general layout changes. Policy name changed to meet ACECQA guidelines- Dealing with Complaints Policy (Families) Additional related legislation added. Definition of 'complaint' amended to align with ACECQA's definition guidelines. Notification requirement for physical or sexual abuse added. Sources checked for currency and updated where required. Further detailing regarding right of appeal added.
3.0	2023	QDPA	Scheduled Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendment from 'Managing Director' to 'Executive Officer' merged Dealing with Complaints Policy (General) with Dealing with Complaints Policy (Family) for ease of management of policies. links within sources updated to education.gov.au. Continuous Improvement section added. minor formatting edits within text hyperlinks checked and repaired as required
4.0	Feb 2025	QDPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> added information to ensure our complaint handling system is child focused and addresses complaints that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours



			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• additional section added '<i>Complaints involving allegations of a child exhibiting sexual behaviours</i>'• additional information added- support person• additional sources added• checked consistency of stakeholders throughout policy• sources checked and links repaired as required
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