

Feedback and Complaints

Scope

This policy applies to all Araluen employees, volunteers, contractors, participants, carers, and families.

Policy Statement

This policy sets out the ways that Araluen receives, tracks, analyses, and acts on feedback received including complaints, suggestions, and compliments. Araluen recognizes that feedback is a mechanism for continuous improvement and will use this information to inform future practice. Where Araluen has not been able to deliver high standards of service quality and this has resulted in a complaint, it will be treated fairly, openly, and as quickly as possible. Close attention will be paid to ensuring the privacy of all individuals concerned.

Application

1. Feedback

Receiving Feedback

Araluen encourages and welcomes feedback of all types. Any person can submit feedback to Araluen anonymously through our Feedback, Complaints and Compliments Form by clicking [HERE](#).

If Araluen receives feedback by any other means, the employee who receives the feedback must submit it through the online form, to ensure it is tracked in the Feedback and Complaints register.

If requested, staff must forward Araluen's paper copy Complaints Form to the person wishing to make a complaint. Once this has been returned, staff must forward it to the Quality Team to be submitted into the Feedback and Complaints register.

Proactively Gathering Feedback

Araluen will take proactive steps to gather information from participants and stakeholders about the quality of the services we provide. Araluen will use these steps to inform participants and stakeholders about the organisations feedback mechanisms.

Methods for acquiring feedback and informing participants and stakeholders about Araluen's feedback mechanisms include:

- Regular engagement surveys, focus groups and service review meetings with participants and stakeholders. These will explore:
 - Potential barriers to service access.
 - Satisfaction with their services and whether they have met desired expectations.
 - If people's right to self-determination has been realised and how adequately.
 - If people's goals have been realised, how adequately and any barriers to achieving them.
 - Whether or not staff display respect for participants during their everyday interactions.
- Consultation about specific issues or topics as they arise.
- The anonymous feedback mechanism on the organisation's website, which is in place to encourage people to provide feedback who do not wish for their identity to be known.
- Feedback forms which staff are encouraged to pass on to any person who requests them or who communicate that they would like to provide feedback about any issue.

Analysing Feedback

All feedback received will be analysed by the Quality Team. They will identify any positive outcomes that could be replicated or any opportunities for improvement.

Issues that require further action will be allocated clear tasks and timeframes. The Quality Team will work alongside relevant Managers to ensure necessary actions are taken. The Quality Team will review actions taken to resolve issues or replicate positive practises no more than 3 months after they have been initiated.

2. Complaints

Informal Complaints Process

Informal complaints are raised and resolved quickly, usually directly with those involved. For example, a participant may complain to staff that they are unhappy with an aspect of their service. Staff might take immediate action to rectify the issue. This may result in the participant who raised the complaint feeling more satisfied with Araluen's service.

Formal Complaints Process

Where complaints cannot be resolved informally, the following formal process should be followed:

- Complaints are accepted in person, in writing, by email, via Araluen's website or in any other format that suits people's needs. The person who received the complaint, should ensure that it is added to Araluen's Feedback and Complaints register via Araluen's Feedback and Complaints from (see link above). All relevant information should be attached.
- Staff inform the person about Araluen's complaints process, including the fact that their complaint will be forwarded onto the Quality Team, who will respond as promptly as possible.
- The General Manager, Quality & Service Development is Araluen's appointed Complaints Officer. They should be notified about any complaint that has not been able to be resolved informally.
- All participants and stakeholders who wish to raise a complaint are welcome to have a support person or advocate to assist them or represent them. Where a person would like assistance to put their complaint in writing, Araluen will organise or help the person to organise these services.
- Araluen will support people's participation in the complaint process by offering and using any supports they prefer, communicating in the way they prefer, and by keeping them informed on the progress of their complaint. Araluen will work with people to identify their desired goals through open communication.
- Araluen will endeavor to investigate and resolve all complaints within 10 working days.
- Sometimes the nature and complexity of a complaint will result in the process taking longer than 10 working days.
- Where the complaint process is likely to take longer than 10 working days, the person who made the complaint will be kept informed about the progress of their complaint.
- All discussions, decisions and actions are to be documented and a copy provided to the person who made the complaint. The date, persons involved, details of the complaint, date of resolution and outcome must be documented internally, but all personal information pertaining to the people involved in investigations must be removed from documentation provided to the person who made the complaint, in respect of people's privacy.
- Complaint information will be stored within restricted confidential, password protected files and held for no less than 7 years. Only the Quality Team, Chief Executive, and those involved in resolving the complaint will have access.

Complainants will be informed about who has access to information about their complaint.

- Should someone be unhappy with the outcome of a complaint, the complaint must be escalated internally within Araluen to a more senior member of staff, such as the General Manager, People and Culture or the Chief Executive.
- An additional 14 working days will be set to resolve the complaint with the senior staff member.

Support to make a Complaint

Araluen will support individuals to get the assistance they need to make a complaint, should they require it (e.g., advocates or a support person or making Araluen's complaints process available in a format or language that meets a person's individual needs). Araluen will ensure that people know that if they wish to make a complaint, that they are fully supported to do so and that it will be responded to promptly, and in a confidential and respectful manner. There will be no retribution towards a person who wishes to make a complaint.

The General Manager, People and Culture & the Learning and Development Manager in collaboration with service Managers will ensure that staff are educated about how to recognise and respond to complaints during onboarding processes, and at regular intervals each year.

All Araluen employees must:

- Treat participants and their supports in a courteous manner.
- Show positive communication towards anyone raising a complaint.
- Act promptly on feedback and complaints that can be resolved immediately at the local level.
- Proactively collaborate with participants and stakeholders to resolve feedback and complaints.
- Refer the feedback and complaint to their manager if it cannot be resolved quickly and adequately in an informal way.

Complaint Resolution

Araluen will make every effort to resolve an issue quickly and in a professional manner using transparency, freedom from bias and the right to be heard. All complaints will be taken seriously, and no action will be taken against anyone making a valid and truthful complaint.

Similarly, all advocates and support persons will be free from any repercussions from management or others, because of their role. Any discussions pertaining to the issue will occur in private and remain confidential. Complainants need to be aware that an issue may need to be referred to Araluen's Executive Leadership Team or relevant others for assistance with the resolution of the matter.

Where a complaint is made that includes allegations of abuse or neglect, an internal incident report and NDIS Commission report must be submitted. An investigation must then be conducted in line with Araluen's Incident Management process. The Victorian police may also need to be notified. Where necessary, staff may need to be stood down during the investigation process, to protect the rights of the person making the complaint.

Further escalation

If the people who raised the complaint are not happy with the process or result, they have the right to take their complaint to an external agency. All participants and stakeholders have the right to make a complaint to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, in line with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission can be reached on 1800 035 544. The Commission offer interpreters and a national relay service on request. Participants and stakeholders may also contact any of the following national complaint handling organisations:

- **Complaints Resolution and Referral Service** www.crrs.org.au
- **Abuse and Neglect Hotline** www.disabilityhotline.org
- **Australian Human Rights Commission** www.hreoc.gov.au

Related Documents

- [NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission Complaints Management & Resolution Guidance.](#)
- [NDIS Practice Standards](#)
- [Araluen's Feedback, Complaints and Compliments form](#)
- Araluen's Feedback and Complaints register
- Araluen's paper copy Complaints Form
- Araluen's Incident Management policy
- Araluen's Privacy & Consent policy

Policy Review and Authorisation

This policy will be reviewed every year. The Quality Team in collaboration with service managers will be responsible for reviewing and where necessary updating this policy.

