Complaints and Feedback Policy

1.0 Introduction:

Assist Community Services views feedback and complaints as a way to help us improve our services and create greater service user satisfaction and outcomes. Our Complaints and Feedback management process ensures that problems you have with Assist Community Service's supports, practices decisions and policies are valued and listened to respectfully, taken seriously and dealt with promptly and in ways that are culturally appropriate. Your concerns will be treated confidentially, as a priority, keeping you fully informed and are committed to working with you towards a satisfactory resolution.

2.0 Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline how people are able to provide feedback and make complaints about any aspect of Assist Community Services and the process that we will take to address and/or respond to the complaint without prejudice.

3.0 Scope:

This policy all applies to stakeholders of the organisation including: Participants, families and carers, contractors, other service providers and members of the community.

Issues raised by staff would generally be dealt with under our Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure policy, however from time to time staff may raise issues or provide feedback that is best dealt with under this policy.

4.0 Policy:

Assist Community Services is committed to managing complaints in an accountable, transparent, timely and meaningful way and in the most direct way possible.
Assist Community Services supports and encourages the rights of our participants, their families/carers and stakeholders to lodge and pursue any complaint in relation to any aspect of Assist Community Services or its operations.

The organisation is committed to the following complaints management principles:

- assisting people to make a complaint in whatever way is meaningful for them and in a language or communication method that is appropriate to the participant;
- complaints can be lodged without fear of retribution;
- full protection of confidentiality and privacy of complainants;
- complaints are assessed fairly, objectively and professionally;
- we are committed to openness and accountability;
- complaints are resolved in a timely manner;
- we ensure the application of procedural fairness and natural justice for all involved;
- we encourage the development of harmonious partnerships;
- integrate complaints information into the organisation's quality improvement process.

Assist Community Services expects that most complaints/feedback will be able to be addressed and responded to by the people directly involved or at a support worker/middle management level, with only the most serious or unresolved complaints being dealt with the by the Operations Manager and/or General Manager . However, where complaints require investigation or a more formal review, we will ensure that sufficient resources are allocated as a means to ensure that complaints are proficiently managed and investigated and will only allocate suitably skilled and qualified employees to investigate and manage complaints of that nature. If required Assist Community Services will refer to, or seek guidance from external agencies, such as the NDIS Commission or beyond that the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Complaint Management Stages include:

- acknowledgment of receipt of complaint
- complaint assessment;
- investigation of complaint;
- complaint response;
- communicating the decision; and
- complaint closed.

We have produced a complaints brochure that outlines our policy and procedures in an easy to understand format.

5.0 Procedures

5.1 Any individual, stakeholder or agency wishing to lodge a complaint against services, management or employees of Assist Community Services will be provided with information regarding the organisation's Complaints Management policy and process. Any complaint will be heard respectfully, confidentially and with a willingness to assist complainant.

5.2 Each participant and/or their nominated family/carer can determine how their complaint will be made and when and where the complaint will be made. Complaints and feedback can be made in person, by phone on (07) 4401 5706, by text on 0474 119 638, by email to quality@assistcommunity.com.au, in writing, or using our Easy Read and child-friendly forms.
5.3 Information will be provided in a format that is easily understood, in an appropriate language, in an appropriate communication method and considered effort will be provided to ensure complainant is fully informed regarding the Complaint Management process. A third party on behalf of another person may lodge complaints, if their permission and consent has been given. This includes the use of advocates. Children and young people can make a complaint in their own way, including with our Easy Read resources ("How To Tell Us If You Are Unhappy Or Feel Unsafe" and "My Voice Matters") and the child-friendly "How Was Your Day With Us?" feedback form. Complaints from or about children are prioritised.
5.4 The participant and/or their family/carer can nominate a staff or management member of their choice at the service as their key contact regarding the complaint.

5.5 Assist Community Services will afford all complaints the highest standard of confidentiality. Complaint matters will only be discussed with those on a need to know basis and will not be a matter of discussion between any other individuals. All documentation will be retained in a secure place and in compliance with all internal privacy policies and State and Federal legislation.

5.6 All staff will handle complaints with:

- courtesy and encouragement;
- sensitivity to the needs of complainant;
- understanding and in a supportive manner
- efficiency and effectiveness;
- timeliness- complaints received will be formally acknowledged within two (2) days of receipt and the complaint resolved within thirty (30) days where possible;
- empathy – understanding other's feelings and perspective of issues involved;
- open and non-judgemental communication;
- information regarding details regarding external support agencies that may assist them with complaints resolution if required. Some of these bodies are listed in this policy.

5.7 The following details relating to the complaint will be documented in Assist Community Services Complaints Register.

- nature of complaint;

- Time of incident, place and those present; (where provided)
- witness responses;
- findings and outcomes.

5.8 Complaints will be resolved within a practicable timeframe – ideally the organisation will diligently work to resolve the complaint within thirty (30) working days of receipt. Persons who have lodged complaint will be regularly updated and advised of progress within agreed intervals (e.g. weekly). If it is perceived that a delay may be experienced, this delay will be clearly articulated in writing to complainant.

5.9 Investigation of complaints will not be conducted by a person about whom a complaint has been made.

5.10 Assist Community Services will undertake to fully inform any employee that is the subject of a complaint of the nature of the complaint and of the process being implemented to resolve complaint. If required, the employee concerned will be provided with a seven (7) day timeframe in which to submit a written response and/or seek further advice.

5.11 If a complaint is received that alleges criminal activity or provides information about possible criminal activity, it must be referred to the General Manager immediately. The General Manager will contact the police or other relevant authorities.

5.12 Individual or parties with a complaint may make contact with the following bodies should the complaints remain unresolved or at any time in the complaints process.

These may include:

The NDIS Commission
Ph: 1800 035 544
Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au
Website: https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au

Qld Ombudsman
Free call (outside Brisbane metro area): 1800 068908
Or (07) 3005 7000
Website: www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au
Australian Human Rights Commission (Cth)
Phone: (02) 9284 9600
Complaints Infoline: 1300 656 419
Privacy Hotline: 1300 363 992
TTY: 1800 620 241
Website: www.humanrights.gov.au

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline
A hotline for reporting or complaining about the abuse or neglect of a person with a disability at home, in the community, or in any other location. The hotline will refer a complainant to a relevant state or local agency where necessary.
Free call: 1800 880 052
TTY: 1800 301 130
National relay service: 1800 555 677
Fax: 02 9318 1372
Website: www.disabilityhotline.org

National Disability Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS)
For people with a disability who wish to make a complaint about their rights being infringed in a disability employment service or by a disability advocacy service.
Free call: 1800 880 052
TTY: 1800 301 130 (free call)
National relay service: 1800 555 677
Fax: 02 9318 1372
Website: www.crrs.org.au

People with Disability Incorporated
For people with a disability who wish to make a complaint about their rights being infringed.
Phone: (02) 9370 3100
Free call: 1800 422 015
TTY: (02) 9318 2138
TTY: 1800 422 016 free call
Fax: (02) 9318 1372
Website: www.pwd.org.au
Email: pwd@pwd.org.au

Amparo Advocacy Inc

Tel: (07) 3354 4900

Fax: (07) 3355 0477

Mail: PO Box 2065, Brookside Centre, Q 4053

email: info@amparo.org.au

www: http://www.amparo.org.au/

Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC)
For concerns about how an organisation keeps children safe, including reportable conduct by staff.
Website: www.qfcc.qld.gov.au

Kids Helpline
Free, confidential support for children and young people, 24 hours a day.
Free call: 1800 55 1800
Queensland Child Safety Services
To report concerns that a child is being harmed. After hours: 1800 177 135. In an emergency call 000.

6.0 Complaints Management

The Assist Community Services complaints reporting process is part of the organisations commitment to implementing our Continuous Improvement and Quality Management Systems. As part of its ongoing commitment to effective reporting processes Assist Community Services will maintain all complaint information in accordance with our Privacy and Confidentiality policy.

Adopting this complaint reporting process assists Assist Community Services in reviewing service performance, and progress against implementing the quality requirements and meeting the Standards and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018. All complaint details are treated with privacy and confidentiality.

7.0 Complaints Relating to Abuse and Neglect

Assist Community Services takes reports of abuse and neglect very seriously. It is mandatory for any report of abuse or neglect reported to Assist Community Services by staff, participants, families, carers other stakeholders or members of the public to be reported by Assist Community Services to the Police, The NDIS Commission and to any relevant external agency. Any reports of abuse or neglect reported are to be immediately forwarded to the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager will then report the matter directly to General Manager. Direct reporting to the Police or the NDIS Commission will be the responsibility of Senior Management (i.e. Operations Manager, Quality Manager, General Manager).
Where a complaint involves a child or young person, it is also managed under the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and reported to the Child Safe Nominee straight away. Suspected abuse or harm of a child is reported to Queensland Child Safety Services and the Police, and allegations of reportable conduct by staff are notified by the General Manager to the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Concerns about staff can also be raised under the Whistleblower Policy and Procedure.

8.0 Advocacy and support for people using the service

People who access supports and services provided by Assist Community Services have different types of support networks. Some people have families who are closely involved in their lives or others may be reliant on legally appointed guardians to make particular decisions for them. On other occasions people are represented by advocacy services and for some participants these advocates are their only support network. Should a participant or the family/carer require support with engaging and advocate Assist Community Services will assist them with the process.

An advocate must represent the best interests of a person, and in the absence of a family member or any other person having a close relationship with the person, may be the contact person for issues or complaints made by or relating to the person.

9.0 Responsibilities

9.1 The Assist Community Services General Manager is responsible for approving and monitoring the implementation of this policy.

9.2 The Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- all stakeholders are aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to the making a complaint and managing a complaint.
- all employees, volunteers, students, team leaders and managers have been provided with training in relation to this policy as required.
- ongoing support and guidance is provided to all employees in relation to implementing this policy.

9.3 The General Manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- all complaints and feedback are dealt with and recorded in accordance with this policy.
- Complaints and feedback data is analysed annually and used to inform our continuous improvement and quality management systems.

9.4 The Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- they attempt to resolve and address any complaints or issues raised with them in line with their authority.
- referring any serious complaints to the General Manager immediately.
- supporting all services users and staff to understand and implement this policy.

9.5 All employees are responsible for ensuring that:

- viewing complaints and feedback as opportunities to improve the organisation.
- they attempt to resolve and address any complaints or issues raised with them in line with the policy.
- are aware of and understand this policy and procedures and seek clarification if they do not understand.
- they follow the policy and procedures outlined in this policy.

9.6 Participants, families, carers and other important stakeholders are responsible for:

- Using this complaints process to raise issues with the organisation.

10.0 Equity and access considerations

Employees, volunteers and students are to ensure that services are provided with sensitivity to, and awareness of, people with culturally diverse or indigenous backgrounds, and cultural practices. This is to be carried out without deviating from Assist Community Services Complaints Management Policy and Procedure or legislative responsibilities. Information provided to a person, their family/carer, person responsible or other support person about legal rights, options and support services, must be provided in a format that suits their individual communication needs.

11.0 Communication

Communication about this policy should be implemented in a way that suits each person with regard to their cultural background e.g. use of an interpreter or easy to read documents and in a method that best suits the participant. This policy will be:

- communicated to participants and their family/carers and the key internal and external stakeholders of Assist Community Services;
- communicated to Assist Community Services staff through induction and professional development opportunities;
- accessible through Assist Community Services.

12.0 Breaches of Policy

Staff are expected to follow this policy. Failure to follow Assist Community Services policies and procedures will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary action. Serious breaches of policy resulting in gross misconduct could result in instant dismissal.

13.0 Other policies and procedures to be cross-referenced with this policy

- Rights and Responsibilities
- Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Freedom from Abuse and Neglect
- Participant Advocacy Policy
- Service Delivery Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Whistleblower Policy and Procedure
- Code of Conduct
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

14.0 Cross reference to relevant legislation

- The NDIS Act 2013
- The NDIS Practice Standards
- NDIS Complaints Management and Resolution Rules 2018
- Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld) and the Queensland Child Safe Standards

15.0 Policy review

This policy will be reviewed in consultation with stakeholders every 3 years. Ongoing Implementation of this policy will be reviewed through staff meetings, Participant and Family forums/groups, support and supervision session and annual management planning processes.

Record of policy development			
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Owner	Service Delivery	**Last Reviewed**	27/10/2026
Approved by	Aalden Pennington	**Date Approved**	29/10/2026