FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

1 Context

1.1 Purpose

The Society is committed to receiving, managing and learning from feedback, compliments and complaints in a manner that is accessible, fair, timely, transparent and respectful.

This policy establishes the requirements for managing feedback and complaints from external stakeholders and supports continuous improvement, accountability and quality service delivery.

The Society acknowledges all forms of feedback as an opportunity to maintain goodwill.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to feedback and complaints received from external stakeholders relating to:

- Society programs and services
- Society members, employees and volunteers
- Contractors acting on behalf of the Society
- Governance bodies acting in connection with Society services
- Administrative decisions affecting external stakeholders
- Complaint handling processes

Complaints about Society programs and services may include appeals against a decision to deny Society programs and services.

Stakeholders include:

- Companions
- Participants
- Donors
- Customers
- Community members
- Service providers
- Government agencies
- Suppliers
- Business partners
- Authorised representatives and advocates

Complaints may be received in any Society location. This policy outlines how complaints received in different locations should be managed.

This policy does not apply to:

- Grievances raised by members, volunteers or employees
- Industrial relations matters, including Enterprise Agreement disputes
- Fraud investigations
- Whistleblower disclosures
- Child protection investigations managed under safeguarding procedures
- Matters currently before a court, tribunal or law enforcement agency
- Contractual disputes where alternative dispute mechanisms apply
- Matters outside the Society's control

These matters must be managed under the relevant policy, procedure or legislative framework.

1.1 Definitions

Appeal
A concern or problem raised by an external stakeholder regarding a decision to deny or limit access to programs or services.

Complaint
A concern or problem raised by an external stakeholder regarding an aspect of the Society's work.

Complainant
The person raising a complaint.

Compliment
An expression of esteem, respect of gratitude provided by an external stakeholder regarding an aspect of the Society's work.

Grievance
An internal workplace concern raised by an employee, volunteer or member regarding perceived unfair treatment or working relationships.

Procedural Fairness
The obligation to:

- Consider concerns objectively
- Inform a respondent of allegations
- Provide an opportunity to respond
- Make decisions based on evidence
- Avoid actual or perceived bias

Respondent
The person whose conduct, action or behaviour is the subject of a complaint.

Victimisation
Any adverse treatment directed toward a person because they raised, participated in or assisted with a complaint process.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Board	• Authorisation and ownership of this policy • Oversee policy compliance • Demonstrate a culture of compliance with policy through operational practices and operations • Identify, lead, promote and participate in policy compliance activities in line with strategic goals and values

Territory Council	• Demonstrate a culture of compliance with policy through Council practices and operations • Identify, lead, promote and participate in policy compliance activities in line with strategic goals and values
Territory Council President	• Appoints Complaints Officers within Conferences
CEO	• Overall effectiveness of complaint management systems • Monitoring organisational performance • Appoints Complaints Manager
Directors	• Ensuring compliance within their Directorates • Supporting investigations • Implementing improvement actions • Orientate new staff members, students and volunteers to policy compliance systems • Appoint Complaints Officer/s for their Directorate.
Complaints Manager (Director People & Culture)	• The Director People & Culture is delegated the role of Complaints Manager • Oversight of complaints management and Policy compliance • Serious complaint investigations • Ensure complaints that have been escalated because they are serious, or cannot be resolved locally, are resolved in accordance with this Policy and related procedure • Maintains the Complaints Register and provides reports on complaints statistics and trends • Monitors complaints for trends and opportunities for systematic improvement
Complaints Officer	• Receives local complaints for their area • Ensure complaints that can be resolved locally are resolved locally within 5 days, and in accordance with this Policy and related procedures • Ensure complaints that are serious, or cannot be resolved locally, are escalated to the Complaints Manager
All personnel, members, employees, volunteers, and contractors	• Promote and demonstrate commitment to policy compliance • Ensure external stakeholders are aware of feedback and complaints processes • Support complaint management processes • Escalate serious complaints immediately • Cooperate with investigations

3 Policy Principles

The Society recognises that:

- Feedback, compliments and complaints are valuable sources of information. All areas of the Society should proactively seek feedback, compliments and complaints by making feedback and complaints processes knowns to external stakeholders
- People have the right to provide feedback or make a complaint without fear of disadvantage or retaliation
- Complaints provide opportunities to improve services, systems, governance and stakeholder relationships

- Complaint management must be fair to both complainants and respondents.
- Complaint handling must comply with applicable legislation, regulatory obligations and privacy requirements

3.1 Accessibility

The Society will:

- Provide multiple avenues for feedback and complaints
- Accept complaints verbally, electronically or in writing
- Accept anonymous complaints where sufficient information is provided
- Provide interpreter and accessibility supports where required
- Ensure information is available in accessible formats

3.2 Fairness and Procedural Fairness

The Society will:

- Treat all parties with dignity and respect
- Assess matters objectively
- Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest
- Provide respondents with an opportunity to respond where appropriate
- Make decisions based on available evidence

A member, volunteer or employee who is a respondent subject to a complaint has the right to be supported by the Society, including:

- The right to be heard
- The provision of counselling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and other means such as the Spirituality Leadership Conference for members
- The support of their leaders (Conference President and Regional President for members, managers and Directors for employees and volunteers)

3.3 Confidentiality

The Society will:

- Protect personal information
- Limit access to complaint information to authorised personnel
- Manage records in accordance with privacy and records management requirements

3.4 No Detriment

No person will be disadvantaged because they:

- Make a complaint
- Assist in a complaint process
- Act as a representative or witness

3.5 Complaint Categories

Category 1 – Feedback and Compliments
Comments, suggestions or compliments that do not require formal investigation.

Category 2 – Minor Complaint
A complaint that:

- Can be resolved locally
- Presents low organisational risk
- Is capable of resolution within 5 working days

Examples:

- Service delays
- Communication concerns
- Retail transaction issues

Category 3 – Formal Complaint
A complaint requiring:

- Formal assessment
- Investigation
- Written outcome

Examples:

- An appeal against a decision made to limit or deny services
- Repeated service failures
- Conduct concerns
- Significant stakeholder dissatisfaction

Category 4 – Serious Complaint
A complaint involving actual or potential:

- Harm to a child or vulnerable person
- Criminal conduct allegations
- Serious misconduct
- Regulatory investigations
- Significant reputational risk
- Complaints involving executives, Territory Council, or Board.

Serious complaints must be escalated immediately.

3.6 Service Standards

The Society will:

- Acknowledge all complaints within 5 working days
- Complete an initial assessment within 5 working days
- Assign an investigator (where required) within 10 working days
- Provide the outcome to the complainant (where possible) within 25 working days
- Notify complainant of time extension requirements (where required) within the original timeframe

- Internal review request must be received within 25 working days of the outcome being provided

Where complex matters require additional time, complainants will be provided with regular progress updates.

3.7 Complaint Management Requirements

All complaints must:

- Be recorded in the Complaints Register
- Be risk-assessed
- Be categorised
- Be assigned to an appropriate officer
- Have actions documented
- Have outcomes recorded

The Society will maintain evidence of:

- Complaint receipt
- Assessment decisions
- Investigations conducted
- Communications
- Review outcomes
- Improvement actions

3.8 Conflict of Interest

Any person managing or investigating a complaint must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

Where a conflict exists:

- The conflict must be documented
- An alternative investigator must be appointed
- The complainant may be informed where appropriate

3.9 Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be assessed and investigated where sufficient information is available. The inability to identify the complainant will not prevent action being taken where risks are identified.

3.10 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

The Society may modify engagement methods where behaviour becomes:

- Threatening
- Harassing
- Abusive
- Vexatious
- Excessively repetitive

Any restrictions must:

- Be reasonable
- Be documented
- Be approved by the Complaints Manager

This section does not remove a complainant's right to have legitimate concerns considered.

3.11 Internal Review

A complainant may request one internal review where they believe:

- Relevant information was not considered
- The process was not followed
- Procedural fairness was not provided
- New information has become available

The reviewer must be independent of the original decision-maker where practicable.

3.12 Records Management

The Society will:

- Maintain a central register of complaints
- Protect complaint records from unauthorised access
- Retain records in accordance with records management requirements
- Support audit and regulatory reporting obligations

3.13 Reporting and Monitoring

Annual reporting should include:

- Number of complaints received
- Complaint categories
- Resolution performance
- Escalations
- Review outcomes
- Systemic issues identified
- Improvement actions implemented

Serious complaints and emerging risks must be escalated immediately through appropriate governance channels.

Reporting will de-identify complaints.

4 Related Legislation and Documents

- SW Pol 015 Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy
- GOV POL 016 Privacy Policy
- POL 02 NC Whistleblower Policy
- HR POL 021 Grievance Policy
- ICT POL 002 Records Management Policy
- GOV POL 037 Risk Management Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Managing the Complaints Handling for Conferences
- Complaints Management Procedure
- Complaints Form
- Authority to Act Form

5 Approval and Review

Approved by:	Board		
Please contact the owner for enquiries and proposed changes			
Responsible Officer:	Director, People & Culture		
Phone:		**Email:**	HumanResources@vinnies-cg.org.au

Review
This policy will be reviewed in 3 years.

Record of Issues		
Version No	**Issue / Re-issue Date**	**Nature of Amendment**
3.0	21/06/2023	New Template- Roles/Responsibilities and Terms
3.1	23/10/2025	Contact email addresses updated
4.0	August 2026	Review of language and content, removed procedure to a separate document.
Users must check Records Management System to verify that this is the current version before use. The versions maintained in the Records Management System are the official controlled documents and any downloaded or printed hardcopy is uncontrolled. No changes are to be made to this document without the agreement of the Owner and must be approved by the responsible manager before implementation.		