



Complaints and Feedback Policy

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Approved By:	Approved Date:
Area: Whole Society including Special Works	Review Date:



1. Purpose

St Vincent de Paul Society (Tasmania) Inc ("the Society") upholds the rights of all external stakeholders to express feedback and complaints; and is committed to maintaining a system which fairly and efficiently addresses these, adopting the principles of equity, natural justice while also acknowledging confidentiality and privacy principles where relevant.

This Policy, together with the associated Complaints Handling Procedure, specifies the process for resolution of feedback and complaints from external parties to the Society.

An Easy Read version of this Policy has also been developed and is available on our website.

2. Policy Statement

This policy applies to service and program delivery that may involve any Society Personnel (members, volunteers, and employees).

This policy is applicable to the management of all feedback and complaints about the Society's programs and services, Society Personnel and Society governing bodies (eg State Council and Regional Councils) by:

- anyone receiving services or assistance from the Society (including Companions), their advocate, or an authorised representative;
- a member of the public;
- customers of the Society's retail outlets;
- other service provider agencies;
- a government officer or agency;
- an organisation, supplier, or business partner supplying goods or services to the Society;
- anyone who donates money, goods or services to the Society.

These complaints may concern but are not limited to:

- member, volunteer, and/or employee conduct;
- provision of information;
- the way in which the Society conducts its activities;
- quality of service, communications, or treatment by the Society;
- access to promptness of a service.

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

This policy does not apply to feedback, grievances, or complaints by Society Personnel, which are managed according to the Grievance Policy.

This policy does not apply to allegations of fraud and/or misconduct. Such issues are managed according to the Fraud Management Policy and the Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Policy.

This policy does not apply to eligible whistleblowers making qualified disclosures. Such issues are managed according to the Whistleblower Policy.



Complaints that cannot be investigated under this policy include:

- matters relevant to the National Council or Society operations in other States or Territories;
- internal grievances or other issues raised by members, volunteers, or employees about each other;
- requests for services or support which are not currently provided by the Society;
- contractual disputes between the Society and third parties;
- policy decisions made by the Society;
- any industrial relations matters between the Society and unions/staff associations;
- a criminal allegation or matters under criminal investigation or currently before a court or tribunal;
- reportable conduct investigations, including allegations involving risk of significant harm reported to the Office of the Independent Regulator (if clearance is provided by the Department of Justice, a matter may be investigated internally only under the Society's Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Policy).
- any complaint that has been raised, investigated, and determined previously through the Society's complaints and review process;
- matters outside the control of the Society.

3. Policy principles

The Society encourages all forms of feedback (including complaints) about the way it works, its interactions with the community, the programs and services it provides, and its complaint handling processes.

The Society is committed to providing a transparent feedback and complaints management system that is accessible, responsive, efficient, fair, and integrated into the organisation's culture. Such a system provides accountability and supports the continuous improvement of services, processes, and systems. The Society notes the positive impact that complaints and feedback can make.

If feedback or complaints are received at the local level (in person, phone, email, writing), as far as possible, and where appropriate, Society Personnel must endeavour to achieve an acceptable resolution without recourse to the formal Complaints Handling Procedure. Feedback and Complaints can be reported using the Feedback and Complaints Form (Attachment A) available on our website.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved at the local level, within five business days, the complaint will be escalated to the Society's People and Culture Manager for assessment as to whether it should be processed through the formal Complaints Handling Procedure. In serious matters, the complaint must be escalated immediately. These involve:

- any complaint involving a child or young person or a child protection issue;
- a criminal, or serious misconduct matter;
- a notifiable incident or National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reportable incident;
- a complaint from a government agency;
- where the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), State Council President or a Regional President.

The Society is committed to a transparent and robust review process. Complainants can access one internal review if the reasons for the review meet the Society's review guidelines.



3.1. Respectful and fair treatment

The Society will:

- take all feedback and complaints seriously;
- treat all complaints in a fair, objective, unbiased and non-judgmental manner;
- determine all complaints on their merits and facts, acknowledging any conflict of interest;
- act fairly and transparently and treat both those who make and those who are the subject of complaints with dignity and respect;
- adhere to all legal obligations in respect of and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all parties;
- ensure that no one is adversely affected because they have made a complaint or a complaint has been made on their behalf.

3.2. Accessibility

The Society will:

- actively promote opportunities to provide feedback;
- ensure that information about providing feedback or making a complaint is easy to find and access at service sites and on the Society's website including:
 - how to make a complaint;
 - how to make an anonymous complaint;
 - how to appeal against the outcome of a complaint;
 - how to escalate a complaint to external authorities.
- provide appropriate support and assistance to anyone wanting to provide feedback or make a complaint;
- take steps to ensure that people experiencing particular vulnerabilities (for example experiencing literacy challenges, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, children and young people, and older people) are supported to provide feedback or make a complaint;
- respect the rights of people living with a disability and take reasonable steps to ensure that all individuals understand and can effectively exercise their right to complain. Where appropriate, information should be provided in easy read or another format that meets the needs of a person living with a disability
- communicate through a complainant's representative, where this is requested, and ensure the relevant authority is provided using our Act and Disclose Form (Attachment B).

If complainants are still dissatisfied with the outcome of an internal review, they will be advised of any external mechanisms for example the Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman, the Privacy Commissioner. See Appendix 1 for details of external bodies.

3.3. Good communication

The Society will:

- acknowledge receipt of a complaint or feedback within five business days in writing;
- let the complainant or their representative know who will be managing their complaint;



- keep the complainant or their representative informed about the status and progress of their complaint, including any delays;
- clearly communicate outcomes and decisions.

3.4. Accountability

The Society will:

- record, assess, and review feedback and complaints;
- ensure each complaint is handled by trained and skilled staff.

3.5. Timeliness

The Society will:

- respond promptly and aim to resolve complaints quickly;
- where possible, resolve complaints at the local level at the time the complaint is raised, so that a timely and responsive resolution is achieved;
- provide an appropriate and timely remedy if appropriate.

3.6. Transparency

The Society will:

- provide a clear explanation of what actions have been undertaken and why, as a result of the feedback or complaint;
- provide those making a complaint with access to the appeals procedure and/or external processes, should they be dissatisfied with the way the complaint process was handled by the Society;
- record, review, and report on complaints handling data as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Each Executive Manager, the Chief Operations Officer (COO) and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the management of complaint handling and resolution in their areas. They are also responsible for promoting, monitoring, and upholding a positive compliance culture and supporting their employees to implement the policy.

The People and Culture Manager is responsible for:

- leading the development of and maintaining the currency of this policy;
- receiving and triaging complaints;
- assessing whether a complaint should be managed through the formal Complaints Handling procedure and who should lead management of the complaint;
- conducting a risk assessment of the complaint where appropriate;
- investigating or assigning an investigator to conduct an investigation;
- working with relevant personnel to resolve complaints under this policy;
- liaising with the CEO who will consult with the appropriate representative (eg Manager, Conference, Regional or State Council President) regarding the response to the complaint



- recording complaints on the Complaints and Feedback Register and maintaining the register;
- preparing and/or receiving investigation reports for provision to the appropriate decision-maker;
- managing the investigations to facilitate the conclusion of the complaints handling process within 25 working days, wherever possible;
- submitting a quarterly report to the Governance and Risk Management Committee, and other Society committees as required, on complaints received, their resolution, actions recommended and implemented to address systemic issues and other trends;
- providing feedback and complaints data to the relevant persons (eg State and Regional Presidents, Executive Managers, COO and CEO) for continuous improvement

Employees, members and volunteers will promote and demonstrate commitment to policy compliance and assist with implementation of reporting and processes as required.

5. Associated Documents

- Complaints Handling Procedure
- Complaints and Feedback Easy Read Policy
- EEO Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy
- Fraud Management Policy
- Incident Management Policy

6. Authorisation

Prepared/Reviewed by

Signature:

(name)

Date:

Approved by

Signature:

(CEO)

Date:

Authorised by

Signature:

(State President)

Date:



7. Review

Reviewed Version	Review Date	Revision Description	Preparer and Reviewers
			Preparer: Reviewer(s):



Appendix 1: External Complaints

Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission

- 1800 951 822
- www.agedcarequality.gov.au
- info@agedcarequality.gov.au

Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Tasmania

- (03) 6165 7515
- 1300 305 062
- www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au
- office@antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

- 13 22 62
- www.acnc.gov.au
- online complaint form: [ACNC - Raise a concern about a charity](#)

Australian Human Rights Commission

- 1300 656 419
- <https://www.humanrights.gov.au>
- Online complaint form: [Contact | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

Tasmanian Department of Justice (DoJ) (Complaints about DoJ funded services)

- 1300 135 513
- <https://www.justice.tas.gov.au>
- Online complaint form: [Complaints and feedback | Department of Justice](#)

Australian Government Department of Social Services

- 1800 634 035
- www.dss.gov.au
- Online complaint form: [DSS Feedback and Complaints | Department of Social Services, Australian Government](#)
- complaints@dss.gov.au

National Disability Insurance Agency (Complaints about the NDIS)



- 1800 800 110
- <https://www.ndis.gov.au>
- Online complaint form: [Contact and feedback form | NDIS](#)
- enquiries@ndis.gov.au

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (Complaints about NDIS providers)

- 1800 035 544
- www.ndiscommission.gov.au
- Online complaint form: [Complaint Contact Form](#)

Tasmanian Ombudsman

- 1800 001 170
- <http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au>
- Online complaint form: [OOHCC Web Form](#)
- ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au



Attachment A

Complaints and Feedback Process

This form is to be completed by the person, or on behalf of the person, who is giving feedback or making a complaint.

We welcome your feedback and complaints. We like to know when we get something right, but we need to know when we could do better. It is your right to make a complaint. You will not be treated adversely for making a complaint.

You can provide feedback to any of our personnel after you have completed this form, and they will ensure it is actioned appropriately.

If you would like help completing this form, please ask a Vinnies staff member, family, or friend to assist. Advocates, support persons, families, carers, and community members are encouraged to be part of the complaints handling process, when requested by those initiating complaints or providing feedback.

Where to submit this form:

You can submit this form by:

- Handing it in to any Vinnies staff member
- Posting it to: People and Culture Manager, State Office 191 Invermay Road, Invermay Tas 7248
- Via email: complaints@vinniestas.org.au

If you would like to speak to someone about your complaint you can phone the People and Culture Manager on (03) 6333 0822.

The Society can also accept anonymous complaints through any of the methods identified above. Where a complaint is made anonymously, the Society will action the complaint respecting the complainant's request for anonymity.

What happens once I provide Feedback/Complaint?

If you have given us your contact details, we will acknowledge receipt in writing within five business days of receiving your feedback/complaint. If you have not received an acknowledgement after five days, please contact us directly as we may not have received your original feedback or complaint.

We will enter your feed/complaint details onto our Complaints and Feedback Register.

Our intention is to resolve all complaints within 25 business days. If this is not possible, we will inform you of the anticipated timeframe.

Need further help?

If you are a non-English speaking person, call Translating and Interpreter Service (TIS) on 1800 131 450.

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service:

- Type and Listen users phone 1800 555 677



- Speak and Listen users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 6333 0822

Authority to act or disclose

If you require a person to make a complaint on your behalf and they don't already have a legal authority to do so, you will need to confirm that the person lodging the complaint on your behalf has the authority to do so. This authority may be provided verbally, by completing the 'Authority to Act or Disclose' form (Attachment B) or in a communication style which meets your needs.

Is there a Review or Appeal process?

Yes, if your complaint is assessed as a matter which needs to be investigated and you are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation, please contact the Complaints Officer within 25 working days of receiving the outcome of your initial complaint on.

Need more information?

St Vincent de Paul Society (Tas) has a Complaints and Feedback Policy and an Easy Read version, both are available on our website.



Complaints and Feedback Form

Feedback <input type="checkbox"/>		Complaint <input type="checkbox"/>		Date:	
<p>PERSONAL INFORMATION: By providing personal information to the Society, you consent to the use, storage, and disclosure of that information as described in the Society's <i>Privacy Policy</i> (available on Vinnies' website) for the purposes of registering your feedback and/or investigating and responding to your complaint.</p> <p>We do accept anonymous complaints, however, by providing your name we will be able to investigate more thoroughly and we will be able to provide you with feedback.</p>					
Name:					
Advocate's Name (if applicable):					
Phone/Mobile:					
Email/Address:					
Address					
Preferred method of contact	Phone <input type="checkbox"/>	Email <input type="checkbox"/>	Mail <input type="checkbox"/>		
Preferred language:		Interpreter required: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			

<p>FEEDBACK/COMPLAINT DETAILS: Please provide a summary of your feedback/complaint below.</p> <p>Date/s and time of occurrence:</p> <p>Location/s of occurrence:</p> <p>Type of service this feedback relates to:</p> <p>Name of individuals involved (if known):</p> <p>Name of any witnesses (if known):</p> <p>Description - Tell us what happened, who was involved, where it happened, and your main feedback or concern(s). Attach another page if you need more space and include copies of any documents/evidence that supports your feedback or complaint:</p>
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FEEDBACK/COMPLAINT DETAILS: Please provide a summary of your feedback/complaint below.

How would you like us to resolve this matter:

Can we contact you if we need to? We may need to contact you to gather more details:
Yes No

Complainant Signature	Advocate's Signature (if applicable)	Date
...../...../.....

You can submit this form by:

- Handing it in to any Vinnies staff member
- Posting it to: People and Culture Manager, State Office 191 Invermay Road, Invermay Tas 7248
- Via email: complaints@vinniestas.org.au

If you would like to speak to someone about your complaint phone the People and Culture Manager on (03) 6333 0822.



Attachment B

Authority to Act and Disclose

AUTHORITY TO ACT

I, _____ (*name of complainant*) authorise

_____ (*name of authorised person/s*) to act on
my behalf in relation to the complaint I have made or feedback I have provided to
the Society.

I understand that the Society will deal directly with
_____ (*name of authorised person/s*)

in relation to this complaint or feedback.

AND/OR

AUTHORITY TO DISCLOSE

I authorise _____ (*name of authorised person/s*) to:

Provide information and documents to the Society in connection with the Society's assessment, investigation, and conciliation of my complaint or feedback.

Receive information and documents from the Society about my complaint or feedback including responses provided by the respondent/s and correspondence from the Society.

Discuss my complaint or feedback with the Society.

I understand that I can withdraw my authority to act or disclose at any time by contacting the Society.

I understand that the Society will use and store my personal information under the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*.

Signed: _____

Name: _____
(*print name of complainant*)

Date: _____