

# Complaint Handling Policy

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## Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.

**Standard 6.1:** Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.

**Standard 6.2:** Collaborative partnerships enhance children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

## Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

**Standard 7.1:** Governance supports the operation of a quality service.

**Standard 7.2:** Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

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## POLICY STATEMENT

Arabanoo commits to managing complaints promptly and professionally to ensure we identify, track and mitigate issues and risks as they are raised. Arabanoo will support a person’s right to make a complaint and will address all complaints and seek prompt and satisfactory resolutions. Arabanoo welcomes feedback, recognising the opportunity for input change and improvement to the service. This policy details our OSHC Services procedures for receiving and managing informal and formal complaints.

## PURPOSE:

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* approved providers are to ensure they have policies and procedures in place for dealing with complaints (regulation 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (regulation 170).

At Arabanoo we aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness.

## DEFINITIONS

| Term      | Meaning   | Source   |
|-----------|---|--|
| Complaint | Expression of dissatisfaction make to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is | Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint management in organisations – AS/NZS 10002:2014 |

## Complaint Handling Policy

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|                    |  |  |
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|                    | explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.   |  |
| Complains Handling | Effective resolution of a problem before it becomes worse and providing a remedy.  | Commonwealth Ombudsman<br>- Better practice complaint handling guide                     |
| Investigation      | A formal and systematic inquiry to establish facts about a complaint by collecting, documenting, examining and evaluating evidence. An investigation is not an end in itself. Throughout an investigation, the investigator should keep an open mind about the possible outcomes of the investigation, such as education, compliance action, or a decision not to pursue the matter. | Guide to the NQF (Regulatory Authority Powers<br>- Monitoring, compliance & enforcement) |

### **APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to complaints raised by the children, visitors, students, families, carers or members of our community. Staff grievances are dealt with in the Staffing Policy.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH APPROPRIATE WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

Complaints about inappropriate workplace behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

# Complaint Handling Policy

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**CONSIDERATIONS:**

| Education and Care Services National Regulations | National Quality Standard                 | Other Service policies/documentation   | Other  |
|--|---|--|--|
| 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 176                     | 6.1, 6.2, 7.1.1, 7.1.2, 7.1.3, 7.2, 7.2.3 | Staffing policy<br>Staff handbook<br>Parent Handbook<br>Confidentiality policy | Community Services Complaints, Appeals and Monitoring Act, 1994. |
| <b>Education and Care Services National Law</b>  |   |  |  |
| Section 172<br><br>Section 174                   |   |  |  |

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:**

**Approval date:** Sept 2024

**Date for Review:** Sept 2026

**Policy History**

**Version 1.0**

December 2005, May 2006, March 2007, May 2007, February 2009, August 2010, May 2011, March 2012.

**Version 2.0**

Overhaul of policies following regulatory changes in 2012. Drafted from the Network template and using the Current Arabanoo Policy Handbook by Sarah Evans. Reviewed by Jonathan Harrison, May 2013.

## Complaint Handling Policy

| Version | Date reviewed      | Who by                             | Area changed                                  | Changes made   | Authorisation                      |
|---------|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 3.0     | 12 August 2015     | Melanie Murray and Heather Bennett | None  | None   | Kerry Sinclair<br>12 February 2016 |
| 4.0     | 17 August 2016 and | Cameron Grant & Craig Dent         | Access to Information                         | Complaints available on information board  | Belinda Edmunds<br>23 June 2017    |
|         | 5 June 2017        | Rowan Friend & Belinda Edmunds     | Definition<br><br>Split policy from procedure | Slight wording changes removed what a complaint may relate to.                   |                                    |
| 5.0     | 1 May 2019         | Rowan Friend and Kate Sellick      | Standards                                     | Updated to the new NQS<br><br>Added in Confidentiality policy as a consideration | Kate Sellick – 8 May 2019          |
| 6.0     | May 2024           | KW OSHC Consulting                 | Definitions                                   | Included more definitions to support clarity                                     | Rowan Friend – 3 Sept 2024         |
|         |                    |                                    | Regulations and Laws                          | Included relevant regulations and laws   |                                    |
|         |                    |                                    | Purpose                                       | Added a purpose to the policy and  |                                    |

# Complaint Handling Policy

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|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
|  |  |  |  | linked to<br>national<br>regulations |  |
|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>PROCEDURE</i> .....   | 6  |
| PREPARING FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS .....                                  | 6  |
| <i>Access to Information</i> .....   | 6  |
| <i>Reporting Requirements</i> .....  | 6  |
| INTERNAL INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES:.....                                      | 6  |
| <i>Investigation</i> .....   | 6  |
| <i>Responsiveness</i> .....  | 7  |
| <i>Investigation by Nominated Supervisor</i> .....                           | 7  |
| <i>Escalation to Parent Management Committee</i> .....                       | 7  |
| <i>Recording and tracking</i> .....  | 8  |
| RESOLUTION .....   | 8  |
| COMPLAINT ASSESSMENT .....   | 9  |
| ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....   | 9  |
| <i>Approved Provider in Consultation with the Nominated Supervisor</i> ..... | 9  |
| <i>Nominated Supervisor:</i> .....   | 9  |
| <i>Educators:</i> .....  | 10 |
| <i>Families:</i> .....   | 10 |

# Complaint Handling Procedure

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## PROCEDURE

### Preparing for dealing with complaints

#### Access to Information

- Arabanoo will give stakeholders easy access to information about how to make a complaint and how the complaint will be addressed.
- The name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints can be made will be clearly displayed on the service information board, family handbook and this policy and procedure. (Section 172, regulation 173)
- Arabanoo will also have on display the details of the NSW Regulatory Authority should a stakeholder feel to need to address their complaint directly to the Regulatory Authority. (Section 172, regulation 173)

#### Reporting Requirements

- Arabanoo will notify the regulatory authority in writing within 24 hours of any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the Service or that the Education and Care Services National Law had been breached (section 174).

#### Internal Investigation Procedures:

#### Investigation

- Arabanoo will ensure that reasonable efforts are made to investigate each complaint to determine:
  - the facts of the complaint.
  - how Arabanoo ought to offer to resolve the complaint.
  - whether the complaint points to an act of misconduct, breach of laws or regulations, policy or other matters that may require immediate action; or
  - whether the complaint points to a potentially systemic issue.

# Complaint Handling Procedure

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## Responsiveness

- Arabanoo will acknowledge complaints as soon as practicable, and if possible, within five (5) days after receipt.
- Arabanoo will handle complaints promptly in accordance with their urgency and will aim to offer the complainant with a final proposal for resolution no later than forty-five (45) days after receipt of the complaint.
- Arabanoo will keep complainants informed of the progress of their complaint or grievance until and including the step where the complaint is closed or referred for external resolution.

## Investigation by Nominated Supervisor

- Staff will refer any complaints raised with them to the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person on duty.
- Anyone wishing to make a complaint about the service, or any person involved with Arabanoo will be directed to talk to the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person. A meeting will be arranged to discuss their concern and seek a resolution.
- Complainants will be given an opportunity to discuss their complaint confidentially in a quiet place away from children, parents/carers or staff (when not involved); the office is the preferred location.

## Escalation to Parent Management Committee

- If the complaint is not handled by the service to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint, they should discuss the issue with the President or liaison person of the Parent Management Committee (PMC) either in writing or verbally.
- The PMC will discuss the issue with the Nominated Supervisor and develop a strategy for resolving the problem.

# Complaint Handling Procedure

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## Recording and tracking

- Arabanoo will maintain a complaint register, accessible to the PMC, Nominated Supervisor and staff. The register should contain the following information (without limitation) for each complaint received:
  - a unique identifier;
  - complainant name and contact details;
  - date the complaint was received;
  - date of acknowledgement by Arabanoo;
  - identity of the person responsible for managing the complaint (default will be the Nominated Supervisor);
  - a description of the complaint;
  - measures taken for resolution and the result;
  - names of any regulatory body, counselling service or dispute resolution scheme involved in the complaint; and
  - date the complaint was closed and/or the date it was referred outside Arabanoo for further investigation or resolution
  - Nominated supervisor and complainant signature

## Resolution

- Following investigation of the complaint, Arabanoo should form a view about how the complaint can be best resolved and propose a resolution (i.e., decision or action).
- The Nominated Supervisor or representative of the PMC will inform the person making the complaint of what has been decided regarding the issue. This may be done verbally and recorded on the complaints register, or if the issue has been dealt with on a more formal basis, the response should be in writing.
- When Arabanoo and the complainant agree on a resolution, the complaint can be closed and recorded as such in the complaints register.
- If any complaint cannot be resolved by Arabanoo to the complainant's satisfaction, Arabanoo will give information to the complainant about other avenues of redress available, such as referring the complaint to an unbiased third party (e.g., the Principal of BHPS or P&C)



# Complaint Handling Procedure

---

President). In such situation, the complaint may be marked as 'referred out' in the complaints register.

## Complaint Assessment

- Arabanoo will periodically analyse available complaint information to identify systemic, recurring problems and trends and escalate these to the Parent Management Committee (PMC) to ensure they are appropriately addressed.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Approved Provider in Consultation with the Nominated Supervisor

- Ensure the obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Ensure the name and contact number of the person whom complaints can be made is clearly displayed at the Service, in the parent handbook and in this policy.
- Ensure the regulatory authority is notified in writing within 24 hours of complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the service or that the Education and Care Services National Law has been breached.
- Discuss the complaint with the complainant and make notes from the meeting or discussion.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators and staff follow the Dealing with Complaints Policy and Procedures.
- Ensure that copies of the policy and procedure is readily accessible to all educators and management.
- Regularly review the policy and procedures
- Ensure results of complaints inform future policy, procedural and practice reviews.

### Nominated Supervisor:

- Inform families and the community of the Complaints Handling policy and procedure.
- Work cooperatively with the approved provider, educators, staff and the complainant during the investigation or resolution of a complaint.

# Complaint Handling Procedure

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## Educators:

- Understand and implement the Complaint Handling policy and procedure.
- Report all complaints received to the Nominated Supervisor and/or Approved Provider promptly so timeframes can be adhered to.
- Support the nominated supervisor and approved provider in the investigation and/or resolution of complaints.

## Families:

- Be familiar with and follow the Complaint Handling policy and procedure.
- Raise any issues or complaints in line with the policy and procedure.
- Cooperate with the service representatives dealing with complaints.

## CONSIDERATIONS:

| Education and Care Services National Regulations | National Quality Standard                 | Other Service policies/documentation   | Other  |
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|         | 5 June 2017    | Rowan Friend & Belinda Edmunds     | Complaint Handling<br><br>Split policy from procedure<br><br>Recording and tracking | Added responsible person<br><br>Added in signatures |                                    |
| 5.0     | 1 May 2019     | Rowan Friend and Kate Sellick      | Standards   | Updated to the new NQS                              | Kate Sellick – 8 May 2019          |

## Complaint Handling Procedure

|     |           |                    |                            |  |                               |
|-----|-----------|--------------------|----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
|     |           |                    |                            | Added in Confidentiality policy as a consideration   |                               |
| 6.0 | July 2023 | KW OSHC Consulting | Formatting                 | Broke into two sections:<br>Preparing for complaints and internal complaints procedures  | Rowan Friend –<br>3 Sept 2024 |
|     |           |                    | Roles and Responsibilities | To ensure clarity outlined individual roles and responsibilities   | Rowan Friend –<br>3 Sept 2024 |
|     |           |                    | Compliance                 | Ensured reference to information to be displayed including person to report complaints & regulatory authority contacts & when the service needs to report to regulatory authority. | Rowan Friend –<br>3 Sept 2024 |