



FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Policy Statement

VANISH values all feedback, whether a compliment, suggestion or complaint, from our service users, members, volunteers, staff and others external to the organisation.

VANISH respects the rights of individuals to make a complaint if we do not meet needs or expectations. VANISH is committed to ensuring that feedback is received, responded to, recorded and analysed in an accessible, responsive, confidential, fair, efficient and systematic way for the purposes of:

- strengthening our organisational processes and governance;
- improving the services offered by our organisation; and
- maintaining and/or improving our relations with the public - on a continuous basis.

This Policy is contained within the organisational operations manual, and is provided publicly on the VANISH website. It will at all times be displayed in the main office, in order to promote transparency and accessibility.

2. Rationale

Feedback from our service users, members, volunteers, staff and others external to the organisation provides VANISH with continuous opportunities to learn and improve its governance and services. The services that VANISH offer are based on mutual respect and a desire to attain best practice in all that we do, and feedback provides an opportunity to further these aims.

3. Principles

The knowledge, experiences and/or expertise of our service users, members, volunteers, staff, and others external to the organisation is valued. Service users, members, volunteers, staff and others external to the organisation have a right to make a complaint if they have a grievance with VANISH. Feedback should always be provided, received and responded to in a respectful manner.

The handling of any complaint should be undertaken by appropriately skilled and professional staff or committee members in the context of clear processes for acknowledgment, assessment, planning, investigation, response, review, and consideration of systemic issues, which incorporate the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness and efficiency.

4. Procedures

Any feedback received will be carefully considered by the Manager or Chair of VANISH. All compliments, suggestions or complaints will be directed to the:

- **VANISH Manager** manager@vanish.org.au or
- **VANISH Chairperson** **Email on request.**

On request, members of the VANISH Executive are also available to receive feedback and complaints if this is preferred to contacting the Manager or Chairperson. If required external arbitration will be considered.

Feedback will be reported to the Committee of Management in a timely and regular manner, and incorporated into the VANISH improvement initiatives. Feedback will also be monitored and reviewed against standards set by quality assurance frameworks, annual program reviews and relevant Government departments.

Individual complaints will be managed as follows:

- A complaint must be received in writing; and must be clear, capable of being understood and able to be investigated. The following information should be included: date and time of incident; date of complaint; name of person(s) who is the subject of the complaint; and the details of the complaint.
- The complaint/complainant, will be directed to the VANISH Manager or Chairperson, or other Executive Member, as appropriate.
- Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged promptly - within 8 working days. (Most VANISH staff members only work part-time and Committee of Management members are volunteers.) Such acknowledgement will be via telephone when possible or in writing as necessary. In all cases, the acknowledgement will include provision of the relevant name and contact details for the VANISH person responsible for handling the complaint.
- The investigation will be planned and documented in a timely manner. This will include definition of what is to be investigated; identifying the steps involved in the investigation process; estimation of the timeframe for resolution of the complaint and identification of the remedy sought by the complainant. Consideration will be given to whether or not the Department of Health and Human Services should be informed.
- The investigation plan will be communicated to the complainant in writing. (This communication may be simultaneous with the communication to acknowledge the complaint.)
- The investigation will endeavour to clarify the issues and consider options for resolution of the complaint. Accurate records will be maintained by the person handling the complaint as the investigation progresses, including written records of any evidence provided orally. The complainant will be given an opportunity to comment on any contrary information or claims from another source before a decision may be made to dismiss the complaint.
- A report will be provided to the complainant if there is a delay in satisfactorily resolving the complaint, including a clear explanation for the reason(s) for the delay. This report will be given in writing, but may also be provided more expeditiously via telephone.
- The outcome of the investigation (once decided) will be communicated to the complainant promptly in writing within 8 working days. The language used to explain the outcome will be as clear as possible, and the information provided will be as comprehensive as possible. Reasons will be provided if the evidence presented by the complainant is not accepted.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they will be offered an internal review of the decision by someone who was not involved in handling their complaint, with a time limit of one month specified for taking up this option. Further, the complainant will be provided with information about external review options.
- Complainants may also contact the Victorian Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au and/or the Department of Health and Human Services, Complaints, Integrity and Privacy Unit at complaints.reception@dhs.vic.gov.au (phone 1300 884 706) and or Privacy Victoria at www.privacy.vic.gov.au.

- Any systemic issue(s) that arise as a result of the complaint will be considered by the Manager, Chair, Executive and Committee of Management, and subsequently acted upon as appropriate.

Relevant Policies and Documents

- *Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling (Better Practice Guide 1, April 2009), Commonwealth Ombudsman*

VANISH	Feedback and Complaints Policy
Date Approved	January 2014
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