

QCOSS Complaints Handling Policy

Background

QCOSS recognises that from time to time members, stakeholders and staff may wish to complain to QCOSS over a range of issues including a perceived lack of response to member needs. QCOSS recognises that collecting and analysing information around complaints is one way for the organisation to improve its services. This in turn will enhance the level of satisfaction which members, stakeholder and staff have in the performance of QCOSS as an organisation.

The Complaints handling policy aims to provide a simple and transparent process for members and stakeholders and will include the steps which the organisation will take to collect, analyse and report on this information.

This policy will be posted on the website, disseminated in QCOSS publication media as appropriate, and made available as a publicly available brochure at QCOSS reception.

It is based upon principles enunciated in the Australian Standard AS 4269-1995 – Complaints handling, and templates provided in the Resources section of the Qld Department of Communities, Community Door(<http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo/>)

1. Principles

- 1.1. **Definitions:** A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction or concern made to QCOSS by, or on behalf of, an individual, group or member of the public, related to the QCOSS's services, policies or processes. A complaint may be about the organisation, a staff person or the Director.
- 1.2. QCOSS at all levels, including Management and Board, has a commitment to efficient and fair resolution of complaints. All staff will be properly instructed in complaints handling policy and procedures. All staff may receive a complaint.
- 1.3. Complaints will be handled according to the following principles of fairness:
 - 1.3.1. The right of the complainant to be heard
 - 1.3.2. To have full access to QCOSS policies and procedures and relevant material
 - 1.3.3. To be informed of the reasons for decisions, and avenues for further review.

- 1.3.4. Complaints may be delivered and will be received either verbally or in writing, informally or formally.
- 1.3.5. A complainant has a right to be consulted during the resolution process and to participate in deliberations as appropriate
- 1.4. QCOSS recognises, protects and promote the rights of staff to lodge a complaint;
- 1.5. QCOSS will be able to collect sufficient information about the complaint to enable it to properly investigate and respond to the complaint.

Date of Board approval:...../...../.....

Date of review:..../..../....

2. Procedures

1. Definition of types of complaint

- 1.1. The nature of the complaint will determine how it is addressed:
- 1.2. A **simple complaint** is about some matter that is immediately correctable and will usually be the result of error rather than from a systemic problem. The procedure for making and handling a complex complaint is described below.
- 1.3. A **complex complaint** may require consultation and review of systems and consultation with the Board. The procedure for making and handling a complex complaint is described below. A complex complaint will include:
 - 1.3.1. A **complaint about a staff person** is about the behaviour of a staff person in the course of their duties as a representative of QCOSS. The procedure for making and handling a complaint about a staff person is described below.
 - 1.3.2. A **complaint about the Director** is about the behaviour of the Director in the course of her/his duties as a representative of QCOSS. The procedure for making and handling a complaint about the Director is described below.
 - 1.3.3. A **complaint about QCOSS as an organisation** may include a failure to address what the complainant sees as a pressing issue The procedure for making and handling a complaint about the QCOSS as an organisation is described below.

2. Procedures for submitting complaints:

2.1. Direct complaints

- 2.1.1. Many simple complaints can be resolved informally and efficiently, and these type of complaints should be addressed through personal contact verbally with a staff member in the first instance.
- 2.1.2. Should this be considered inappropriate by the complainant then complaints may also be made directly to the Director or a member of the Board. The complaint or request will then be recorded in the complaints register.

2.2. Formal written and email complaints

- 2.2.1. A formal written complaint differs from the above because the complainant will expect to receive written acknowledgement and a written response to their complaint. A written complaint may be lodged with the Director via mail, email, or fax.
- 2.2.2. It should provide:

- 2.3. specific details about the nature of the complaint

- 2.4. contact details of the complainant being: address, phone number and where available, email address
- 2.5. Identify any aspects of the complaint that need to be treated as confidential.
 - 2.5.1. If confidentiality is requested with regard to the matter as a whole, mailed complaints must be marked clearly on the envelope with the word 'CONFIDENTIAL'. Emailed complaints should include the words 'CONFIDENTIAL COMPLAINT' in the subject box and should be directed to the current email address of the Director
- 2.6. A **complaint about a staff person** should be directed in the first instance to the responsible Manager and the matter will be handled according to the procedure below.
- 2.7. A **complaint about the Director** will in the first instance be referred to the President and the matter will be handled according to the procedure below.
- 2.8. A **complaint about QCOSS as an organisation** (e.g. a failure to address what the complainant sees as a pressing issue) will be referred in the first instance to the Director for appropriate consideration by the Executive/Board. The Executive/ Board will take appropriate action and communicate with the complainant until the issue is resolved, or until such time as all appropriate action has been taken. The procedure for making and handling a complaint about the QCOSS as an organisation is described below.

3. Procedures for handling complaints:

- 3.1. In relation to all complaints the person receiving the complaint will advise the complainant of this policy and procedures and the timelines around response
- 3.2. **Simple complaint**
 - 3.2.1. If the complaint is about a matter which is immediately correctable without reference to others then the staff person will take the necessary action. It will be corrected and the complainant or person seeking clarification informed.
 - 3.2.2. Corrective action will take place within 24 hours or if this is not possible as soon as possible after this period.
 - 3.2.3. The staff person will then record the action in the Complaints register.
- 3.3. **Complex complaint**
 - 3.3.1. If a complaint is complex it should be referred by the person taking the complaint to the appropriate manager who will record the details in the complaints register.
 - 3.3.2. The Manager will contact the complainant within 24 hours to tell them of the receipt of the complaint and the immediate action being taken to address it.
 - 3.3.3. The Manager will collect necessary information, undertake analysis of the complaint and submit it and refer it to the Director with recommendations for resolution. Relevant documents to assist with the analysis may include policies and procedures, guidelines and legislation.
 - 3.3.4. The Director will decide if the matter requires escalation to the Board for resolution or otherwise authorize action which addresses the complaint.
 - 3.3.5. While the complaint is being investigated the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint by email or verbally weekly.
- 3.4. **A complaint about a staff person**
 - 3.4.1. A complaint about a staff person may be made to the Manager of that staff person or to the Director. The Manager will collect necessary information, undertake analysis of the complaint and submit it to the Director with recommendations for resolution. If the complaint is related to performance it will be taken into account in the Performance

Development and Review process. These complaints will not be recorded in the complaints register.

- 3.4.2. The complainant will be informed of the results of the resolution of that complaint. Response to the complainant may be either verbal or in written form, and will depend on the seriousness of the complaint, the ease with which it is rectified and the desires of the complainant.

3.5. A complaint about the Director

- 3.5.1. A complaint about the Director will be referred to the President who will decide on an appropriate course of action. Such complaints may be discussed and recorded by the Executive. These complaints will not be recorded in the complaints register.
- 3.5.2. The complainant will be informed of the results of the resolution of that complaint. Response to the complainant may be either verbal or in written form, and will depend on the seriousness of the complaint, the ease with which it is rectified and the desires of the complainant.

4. Formal written complaints:

- 4.1. All formal written complaints will be acknowledged by mail, telephone or email within one week of receipt.
- 4.2. All formal written complaints will be referred to the Director who will then delegate a Manager to conduct an investigation, or will decide if the matter requires escalation to the Board for resolution.
- 4.3. The Manager will collect necessary information, undertake analysis of the complaint and submit it and refer it to the Director with recommendations for resolution. Relevant documents to assist with the analysis may include policies and procedures, guidelines and legislation.
- 4.4. A written response to the complaint will be provided within one month from the date of receipt, or if this is not possible then monthly written updates will be provided to the complainant.

5. Complaints made by telephone or in person

- 5.1. If the complaint or request for clarification comes by telephone or in person the staff member will keep a record and discuss it with their manager in order to identify if there are systemic or other problems which need to be considered by management and the Board.
- 5.2. The Manager or Director will contact the person making the complaint as soon as possible but certainly within 24 hours, will take details and let them know how it will be addressed.

3. Avenues of appeal

- 3.1. If the issue is still not satisfactorily resolved, the complainant should raise the issue with a member of the Executive of QCOSS who will in the first instance refer the matter to the Executive and if necessary to the Board.
- 3.2. The complainant or person seeking clarification will be kept informed, in writing if appropriate, of progress towards a resolution of the complaint or request until such time as all appropriate action has been taken.

4. Collection, monitoring and reporting of Information

- 4.1. Information regarding complaints will be collected in a Complaints register. This information will be provided to the Executive and Board on a monthly basis, unless it is considered that information needs to be provided to the Board urgently.

- 4.2. In addition to providing a register of complaints to the Board and Executive, QCOSS management will analyse complaints for trends and provide recommendations for action and improvement to be taken. This report will be provided bimonthly for Board meetings.
- 4.3. Reports and Board responses will be aggregated yearly to provide input to the Strategic and Operational Planning process

