



18.2	COMPLAINTS POLICY
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Responsibilities and delegations					
This policy applies to	Board members/CEO/staff/volunteers				
Specific responsibilities	All staff/CEO and board members				
Policy approval	Board members				
Record of policy development					
Version	Date approved	Approved by	Revision Date	Frequency	Person Responsible
18.2/1	06/04/2022	Board Members	April 2024	Bi Annual	CEO/Compliance
Policy context – this policy relates to:					
Standards	NASCLC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17.2 Assessing Client Satisfaction & Managing Complaints. 				

For the purposes of this policy

*“PCLS” refers to Pilbara Community Legal Service Inc
 “CEO” refers to Chief Executive Officer*

18.2.1 Policy Statement

PCLS is committed to ensuring that any person or organization using PCLS services or affected by its operations, has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organization and to have the concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

PCLS provides a complaints and appeals management procedure that:-

- Is simple and easy to use
- Is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders
- Ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- Is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- Complies with legislative requirements

18.2.2 Procedure

18.2.2 (1) PCLS will:-

- a. Consider all complaints received
- b. Treat complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant
- c. Maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and resolution
- d. Ensure advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support
- e. Resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- f. Deal with the complaint in a timely manner
- g. Keep parties to the complaint informed of progress of the complaint
- h. Ensure that the Board/Management Committee members, staff, volunteers and other stakeholders are given information about the complaint procedure as part of their induction and are aware of the procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.
- i. Ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures

- j. Ensure that a complainant is not penalized in any way or prevented from us of services during the progress of an issue
- k. Ensure that feedback data is considered in organisational review and in planning service improvements.

18.2.2 (2) Making a complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to:-

- The employee, student or volunteer they are dealing with at the time
- The CEO

If the complaint is about:-

- An employee, student or volunteer, the complaint will normally be deal with by the CEO
- Any complaint regarding the CEO will be dealt with the Board of Management

The employee, volunteer or student is responsible for directing all service complaints to the CEO.

In case of complaints and appeals from people from different linguistic backgrounds, PCLS will assist the client in accessing appropriate support allowing them to participate in the process.

18.2.2 (3) Lodging an appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organization, or by an employee, student, or volunteer, related to their dealings with PCLS. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the CEO.

18.2.2 (4) Investigating a complaint

The CEO who is managing the complaint is responsible for:-

Processing the complaint or appeal;

- Registering the compliant or appeal in the appeals/complaints register
- Informing the complainant that their compliant has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame

Investigating the complaint or appeal;

- Examining the complaint with two (2) working days of the complaint being received
- Investigating the complaint an deciding how to respond
- Informing the complainant in writing within seven (7) days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution

18.2.2 (5) Resolving the complaint

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved with fourteen (14) days of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the Complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the expected time frame for resolution.

- Making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within seven (7) days of the complaint being received
- Informing the complainant of the outcome;
 - Upheld (and if so, what will be done to resolve it)
 - Resolved (and how this was achieved) or
 - If no further action can be taken, and the reasons for this
- Informing the complainant of any options for further action if required

18.2.2 (6) *Reviewing the complaint*

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal, they can seek a further review of the matter by requesting the CEO to refer the matter to the Board of Management for investigation and a written response.

18.2.2 (7) *Referral to external mediator*

A formal external complaints procedure may follow 18.2.2 (5) if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome.

The CEO may recommend to the Board of Management the appointment of an independent mediator. The mediator must be;

- Independent
- Have mediation skills; and
- Be agreed upon through PCLS contacts

18.2.2 (8) *Record Keeping*

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in a complaints/appeals file at the Karratha office location. The file will be maintained by the CEO and/or Administration who will record the following for each complaint or appeal;

- Details of the complainant the nature of the complaint
- Date lodged
- Action taken
- Date of resolution and reason for the decision
- Indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- Complainant response and any further action

Copies of all correspondence will be kept with the register on file.

The complaints register al files will be confidential, and access is restricted to the Board of Management, the CEO and the Administration Officer.

The CEO is responsible for preparing a report regarding the complaint or appeal and present to the Board of Management at the subsequent meeting.

Results of this report will be reviewed by the CEO and the Board of Management and used to:

- Inform service planning by including a review of complains and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- Inform decision making by including a report on complaints and appeals as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas.

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