



Complaints & Appeals Policy (condensed)

Policy

North Ringwood Community House acknowledges that sometimes problems can arise which cause people to feel aggrieved and we aim to have a fair and equitable policy in place to handle participant complaints and appeals. A complaint may be about training delivery or assessment, the quality of teaching, student amenities, discrimination, sexual harassment or any other issues which may arise.

Guiding Principles

- Anyone associated with our organisation has the right to bring a complaint and to appeal our decisions. We support informal, consultative processes to resolve issues wherever possible, but we also have processes to deal with formal complaints and appeals. We will treat all people involved in any complaints process fairly and reasonably in line with the principles of natural justice.
- We will involve the person bringing the complaint ('the complainant') or appealing a decision ('the appellant') in decisions about how to resolve issues, will give them reasonable notice of any processes, and ensure our decisions are unbiased.
- We will treat all complaints and appeals in confidence, use independent people to hear formal complaints and will involve only those people who need to know, and then only with the complainant's permission.
We will promptly act on any substantiated complaint, with the action in line with the seriousness of the complaint.

Important notes:

Where a complaint relates to unlawful harassment or discrimination including sexual harassment or gender or race-based harassment, the Manager must be notified and, with permission of the complainant, deal with it immediately and sensitively with the option of contacting an external support agency such as the Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission—phone 1300 292 153.

In addition, if the complaint is about the Manager, the complaint must be dealt with by another person, to be located with the support of an external agency such as the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria phone 03 9603 8370 or 1800 658 528.

Informal complaints

Less serious issues may be raised with the person causing the problem. They may be unaware that there is an issue and by speaking to them it gives them a chance to redress the situation.

Participants may wish to raise a complaint as soon as possible with the Manager.

The process is as follows:

- i. With the complainant's permission, the informal process would usually involve meeting with the other person/people involved to discuss the problem and identify any options for resolution.
- ii. The informal complaint, and any agreements or outcomes should be recorded and placed on relevant student files.
- iii. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal process, or finds it difficult to approach others informally, they may submit the issue in writing (this becomes a 'formal complaint').

Formal complaints

When a participant wishes to bring a formal complaint, the procedure will be discussed with them, and their options and choices clearly communicated. At this time, they can choose to have their complaint heard through the internal process or the external process and can choose to have someone be with them.

Formal resolution of a complaint involves the following steps:

- i. Complaints must be made in writing to the Manager and should be a brief statement of the complaint and any relevant details including the complainant's contact details. The complainant must sign and date the statement.
- ii. The Manager will offer the complainant the opportunity to formally present their case with another person of their choice to assist if required.

- iii. The Manager will record full details of the complaint, including: defining the problem; taking details of others involved and any informal processes already undertaken; recording any relevant events and dates and taking; any suggestions from the complainant about how the issue could be resolved.
- iv. The Manager will discuss processes for investigation and resolution with the person who brought the complaint.
- v. Others involved will be provided with the right of reply to the complaint and mediation might be involved if appropriate. Once a decision has been made by the Manager, it will be discussed with the person bringing the issue forward, and put in writing to them and others as applicable. All resolutions will include clear timelines for any action.
- vi. Others involved will be provided with a right of reply to the Manager who will follow up within an agreed timeframe to ensure the resolution is working.

NRCHI will endeavor to complete the process within 14 days of receiving the complaint. If this is not possible, the Manager will provide a written notice to the complainant nominating a date for the completion of the process.

Serious complaints (eg assault, stalking, theft) the respondent, at the discretion of the Manager, may be suspended during the investigation. NRCHI has an obligation to report serious incidents to the Police.

Appeals overview Anyone can appeal any of our decisions by providing information in writing to the Manager, preferably as soon as possible after the decision.

Mandatory Reporting

Where the NRCHI receives evidence of matters that must be reported under mandatory reporting obligations, such as child protection laws, the trainer/staff member receiving the complaint will immediately report such matters in accordance with the NRCHI's legislative obligations. They should consult with the Manager on allegations of this type.

Harassment (sexual, racial, bullying) Sexual harassment or offensive conduct includes any non-reciprocated behaviours of a sexual nature and could include, but is not limited to: sexual flirtations, lewd comments, dirty jokes, or inappropriate language, physical contact, including touching, kissing etc

Other harassment, such as racial harassment or bullying, could relate to other characteristics that a person holds and could be unlawful under anti-discrimination legislation. This could include, for example, harassment based on race, nationality, family status, ethnicity or disability.

Any participant who believes that they have been subject to unwelcome sexual harassment or other bullying or harassment, should attempt to act upon this as soon as possible if they can do so. This could include telling the person making the comments or actions that their behaviour is not acceptable and should cease; they could also seek assistance of others if needed.

Where the harasser has been confronted and the unwelcome harassment continues, or where the student/participant cannot confront the harasser, they should contact the Manager to discuss the issue, and this could include lodging a written complaint. The complaint shall include the names of individuals concerned, details of the unwanted behaviour and the names of any witnesses present.

Contact information: The following groups and organisations could be consulted for more information:

WorkSafe <http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/WorkSafe>

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority vrqa.complaints@edumail.vic.gov.au

Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria Phone: 9603 8370

Toll Free: 1800 658 528 Fax: 9603 8355 email: dscv@justice.vic.gov.au

Consumer Affairs Victoria Phone: 1300 558 181 email: consumer@justice.vic.gov.au

Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Victoria Toll free: 1800 292 153