

# GOV-020 Compliments, complaints and feedback policy

<b>Applies to:</b>	<b>PWDA Board directors, members, employees, contractors, volunteers</b>
<b>Effective from:</b>	<b>4 October 2024</b>
<b>Review date:</b>	<b>3 October 2026</b>
<b>Version:</b>	<b>v1.1</b>
<b>Last updated:</b>	<b>11 February 2025</b>
<b>Policy Approver:</b>	<b>PWDA Board</b>
<b>Policy owner:</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>

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## Purpose

To set out PWDA's commitment to providing quality services, and the place of compliments, complaints and feedback in continually improving our services and how we work.

To explain how people can give compliments and feedback to PWDA.

To explain how people can make a complaint and how we manage complaints.

To outline the roles, rights and responsibilities of everyone involved in a complaints process.

To guide how PWDA responds to and manages complaints, compliments and feedback.

## Scope

This policy applies to:

Compliments, complaints and feedback received from PWDA service users, PWDA members, other stakeholders and the public about any aspect of our services, operations and governance. This includes complaints from members about the Board.

It **does not** apply to:

- staff grievances (including contractors and volunteers). Refer to PWDA Staff Grievance Policy.
- disputes between PWDA members.

## Policy statement

PWDA exists to uphold the rights of people with disabilities through individual and systemic advocacy.

We are committed to providing the best possible services and supports.

PWDA supports the right of people to tell us if they are not happy with any aspect of our work.

We welcome and value compliments, complaints and feedback. We use them to help us understand what we are doing well, what we could do better and what we must do to improve how we work.

Feedback also helps us to understand, communicate with and give better support to the people who use our services. This helps PWDA with planning for services and programs and improving the quality of service we offer our members, clients and the wider public.

Feedback, including compliments, helps PWDA staff to develop skills and increases their work satisfaction.

PWDA treats people who give any kind of feedback with respect. We also expect people giving us feedback to respect PWDA staff.

We encourage people to give feedback and tell them about the different ways they can provide feedback and how we will actively support them to do this.

PWDA makes sure people using our services know they have the right to complain without fear of negative consequences, such as losing a service.

PWDA aims to fix problems before they become bigger problems.

PWDA staff receive training on how to manage compliments, complaints and feedback.

We handle all complaints and feedback in a fair, non-judgemental way, by following the PWDA complaints procedure and aiming for the best possible outcome.

PWDA is committed to handling and resolving complaints in ways that recognise and are appropriate to the access needs and barriers of both complainants and respondents. If these are directly relevant to the complaint, then PWDA will find a solution which is inclusive.

We respond to all feedback promptly and work together with the person and keep them informed of what we are doing.

If PWDA receives any feedback or complaints that include or suggest serious or criminal misconduct or high-risk situations, we act immediately following the relevant

PWDA procedures, including external reporting requirements. This includes claims or suspicion of violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

PWDA treats all feedback and complaints confidentially.

If we cannot resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of a complainant, we will let them know about other options including external organisations that deal with complaints.

We record all compliments, complaints and feedback. We use these details to track trends, help with staff development, fix issues, and make changes and improvements to our services and how PWDA operates. This information becomes part of the **PWDA Continuous Improvement Plan**.

The CEO reports to the Board on compliments, complaints and feedback, any trends, significant actions taken, and any related big and/or strategic issues the Board needs to know about or discuss.

PWDA is accredited under the ACFID Code of Conduct, which is a self-regulated industry code of good practice. It aims to improve the outcomes of international development and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency and accountability for signatory organisations. Complaints regarding an alleged breach of this Code, can be made to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee after raising the matter with PWDA. Refer to the [ACFID website](#).

PWDA reviews the compliments, complaints and feedback procedures regularly to make sure they are working well. This includes whether people are satisfied with the process and outcomes.

## Guiding principles

**PWDA Vision, purpose and values:** as outlined [on our website](#).

**Inclusive practice:** we are committed to inclusive handling of complaints and finding inclusive solutions that recognise the access needs and barriers of both complainants and respondents.

**Accessibility:** the Complaints, Compliments and Feedback policy is available in the formats people need. There is Plain English and Easy Read information on how to

give feedback on our website and in the Welcome Pack we give to new service users.

**Quality management:** PWDA is guided by the National Disability Services Standards including service management and the right of service users to make complaints.

**Good practice in managing complaints:** ISO 10002:2018 [Quality Management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations](#) and [Commonwealth Ombudsman: Better practice complaint handling guide](#).

**Continuous improvement:** we use compliments, complaints and feedback to continuously review and improve the way we work.

**Risk management:** complaints are assessed for risk to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the person making the complaint and the community, and that PWDA is complying with all legislative requirements.

## Definitions

**Feedback:** is any information we receive about PWDA, staff (including contractors and volunteers), our services and the way we operate.

Feedback includes opinions, comments, suggestions, and expressions of concern. People can give feedback in a range of different ways including in person, by email or through comments on social media.

They can also decide whether it is a compliment, complaint or suggestion for improvement, tell us what they would like us to do, and say if they would like a formal response.

PWDA will reply to anyone who provides us with feedback. We will let them know we have received it and thank them for their opinion.

**Compliment:** Is a message about something that PWDA has done well including satisfaction with a specific service or employee, or more generally about the work we do.

**Complaint:** when someone says they are not satisfied with the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by PWDA. It could be about behaviours and attitudes of staff, Board, or volunteers, including a breach of the PWDA Codes of Conduct and Ethics. Or criticism of a PWDA campaign, public event, or activity, or disagreement with content on the PWDA website, in our social media, or written publications. It can also be about the handling of a previous complaint. PWDA will respond to all complaints.

Complaints can be informal or formal:

Informal – this is a complaint that can be successfully resolved informally between the person and the staff involved at the point of service.

Formal – this includes:

- when a complaint could not be successfully resolved informally or when a ‘formal process’ is the preferred option
- when an issue is submitted through a formal complaint and feedback process
- when the issue suggests there could be serious implications such as a critical incident, abuse, bullying, incidents involving children or other serious misconduct.

**Complainant:** is the person or party that has made a complaint.

**Respondent:** is the person or group that someone else has made a complaint against.

**Complaints Resolution Officer (CRO):** a member of PWDA staff who is appointed to manage the complaint.

## Roles and Responsibilities

**Everyone involved** in giving, responding to or managing feedback has a responsibility to be respectful of each other, and respectful of what the feedback is about.

**Complainants** are responsible for giving PWDA the information we need and being available and willing to help us resolve their complaint fairly and promptly.

If a complainant acts in an unreasonable way, PWDA may choose to follow the **Unreasonable behaviour by members, clients or complainants' procedure** in this document.

**Respondents** are responsible for cooperating with the process and being honest about the situation that led to the complaint, so we can resolve complaints fairly and promptly.

**All staff** should understand their responsibility regarding complaints, including taking feedback and complaints, forwarding details to the Manager Governance and Compliance, and helping as appropriate during a complaints process.

**Manager Governance and Compliance** is responsible for receiving details and recording compliments, complaints and feedback in the relevant register, confirming details and expectations with the complainant and any support they need, allocating complaints to a CRO, and following up and recording outcomes of complaints. They also prepare bi-monthly reports for the CEO and Board. When the Manager Governance and Compliance is unable to attend to the Feedback inbox, this is delegated to other members of the CSU Team.

**CRO** is appointed by the Manager Governance and Compliance or the Board. If the complaint is about a staff member, the appointed CRO is usually the staff member's direct manager. They are responsible for handling and finalising a complaint and providing updates and reporting on the outcomes to [feedback@pwd.org.au](mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au).

**Director People and Culture** is responsible for following up on any disciplinary or other corrective action with staff as needed.

**CEO** only becomes involved in complaints that are escalated to them, or if someone is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint. In these instances, the CEO is responsible for supporting the CRO and reviewing the outcomes.

The CEO is also responsible for providing the Board with regular reports on:

- volumes of compliments and feedback

- response times
- complaints and outcomes
- any identified trends
- significant actions taken to improve services and operations
- strategic recommendations.

**PWDA Board** is responsible, depending on the situation, for supporting the CRO and reviewing the outcomes as needed. They discuss Compliments, Complaints and Feedback reports from the CEO and reviewing strategic recommendations. The Board also handles complaints from members about the Board or the CEO.

### **Where to find this policy**

There is a [Making a Complaint page](#) on our website. It includes links to an online [Feedback Form](#). The website also has an Easy Read version and a link to the full policy.

In our Welcome Pack for new clients of PWDA's Individual Advocacy Service we include the Easy Read fact sheet. When Individual Advocates meet new clients for the first time, they also explain how to make a complaint.

A general brochure is available in key community languages on our website and includes information about translation and interpreter services. These services can help people from non-English speaking backgrounds to communicate with PWDA, including if they want to make a complaint.

## **Procedures**

### **How to give feedback or make a complaint to PWDA**

PWDA has a 'no wrong door' approach to people who want to make a complaint, give a compliment, or provide feedback. People can choose how they do this:

- complete: the [online feedback form](#)
- write to: PWDA, PO Box 666, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
- email: [feedback@pwd.org.au](mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au)



- phone: 1800 422 015

People can also make complaints in person at our head office, however, they should call 1800 422 015, to arrange a suitable day/time for an appointment:

PWDA Head Office location: Suite 10.01 Centennial Plaza, Level 10, 300 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010.

## **How to give feedback to ACFID**

If anyone feels that PWDA has breached the ACFID Code of Conduct they can lodge a complaint with ACFID, but the complaint must first be raised with PWDA as explained on the [ACFID website](#).

Complaints can then be made to the Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee:

- in writing: c/- ACFID, Private Bag 3, Deakin ACT 2600
- by email: [code@acfid.asn.au](mailto:code@acfid.asn.au)

## **Compliments and feedback**

When we receive a compliment or non-complaint feedback about the services PWDA provides, we will:

- reply, in writing within 3 business days
- email staff who the compliment or feedback is about
- share the details with [feedback@pwd.org.au](mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au)
- record this information in the Compliments, complaints and feedback register
- include the compliment or feedback in reports for the Board.

PWDA will use feedback, such as suggestions on how we can improve our services, when we review our programs, policies, and procedures.

## **Complaints**

We encourage people who are unhappy with a service to start by talking to the staff member directly involved. Often, this is the best and quickest way to sort out the problem.

If they feel uncomfortable doing this, or the issue is more serious, they can speak to that person's manager or another staff member or contact PWDA by using the contact details above.

When handling a complaint, we follow the PWDA **Privacy Policy** and keep all information confidential. We will only share details with people who need to be involved to help resolve the complaint.

Staff members who receive a complaint at PWDA will email the details of the complaint to [feedback@pwd.org.au](mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au) within 1 business day and include:

- name of the person making the complaint (complainant)
- date, time, and location the complaint was made
- what the complaint is about
- what the complainant thinks PWDA should do to fix the problem
- if the complainant needs any support to progress the complaint
- if the staff member believes a senior Manager/Director needs to deal with the complaint
- if the complainant asks for their identity to be kept confidential.

Details of the complaint will be logged by our Manager Governance and Compliance, who will then refer the complaint to the appropriate CRO within 1 business day

Step-by-step guidance on how to handle complaints and response times is provided at the end of this policy for PWDA Board directors and staff.

### **Compliments, complaints and feedback register**

The Manager Governance and Compliance records all compliments, complaints and feedback in the relevant section of the register. They also track that complaints have been responded to and only close a complaint off in the register when they have received details of the resolution outcome.

The Compliments, complaints and feedback register helps us to:

- ensure PWDA deals with complaints effectively and efficiently in the least time possible
- monitor trends if there is a number of similar issues being raised in complaints
- help PWDA to keep improving how we handle complaints and help us improve our services and the way we work.

## **How we handle complaints**

A CRO is appointed to handle the complaint. This is usually the direct manager of a staff member or a senior manager of the relevant team or department. If the matter involves the CEO, the complaint will be referred to the Board, who will appoint a CRO. In either of these situations, the CRO will be appointed within 2 business days. If the complaint is about the Board, this is referred to the CEO who will forward to the Board for review and action.

## **Who can be a CRO?**

The CRO must:

- have a good understanding of the PWDA Compliments, Complaints and Feedback policy and procedures
- be competent in investigating and dealing with complaints and resolving disputes, and
- not have any conflict of interest regarding any of the people involved or the issue the complaint is about.

## **Acknowledging a complaint**

The Manager Governance and Compliance forwards the complaint to the relevant manager who becomes the CRO. They review and contact the complainant within 3 business days to check that the person's details are correct, including any support needs and how they prefer to be contacted. The CRO also checks that the details of the complaint are correct.

The CRO explains informal and formal complaints options and asks whether the complainant thinks the problem could be fixed informally or if they want to lodge a formal complaint.

They tell the complainant that informal complaints are still recorded, that PWDA can support the person to sort out the problem, and it is usually the quickest and easiest way to deal with less serious complaints. PWDA respects people's choices on how they would like their complaint to be handled. The CRO then explains the next steps and how long the process will take.

### **Handling complaints in an inclusive way**

PWDA understands that both complainants and respondents may have access needs and experience barriers. We handle complaints in ways that recognise this, arranging supports and the CRO will arrange and manage any reasonable adjustments that are needed, while the complaint is being handled. This may include:

- providing information in the person's preferred format
- translation and interpreter services (including sign interpreter)
- access to independent (non-PWDA) individual advocacy support
- other reasonable adjustments they may need.

If a complainant or respondent's access needs or barriers are directly relevant to the complaint, then PWDA will make it a priority to find a solution which is inclusive.

Complainants and respondents have the right to have their own advocate and/or supporter with them while the complaint is being handled.

### **Anonymous complaints**

Complaints can still be made without giving a name. However, this makes it harder to investigate, and the complaint may not be able to be handled formally.

It may be more difficult to get accurate information from the person or people the complaint is about if they don't know who made the complaint.

Complainants should also keep in mind that it may be possible to identify them from the details of their complaint.

PWDA still records and investigates all anonymous complaints. We will do what is possible and necessary, especially where the complaint raises serious concerns about the conduct or alleged criminal activity of a staff member, Board member or volunteer.

### **Unreasonable behaviour by members, clients or complainants**

There could be situations where a person acts unreasonably when they want their complaint to be addressed. They may use aggression or abusive language, argue, be unreasonably persistent, make inappropriate contact and be uncooperative.

If a staff member taking a complaint believes that a member, client or complainant is behaving unreasonably, they should tell the complainant that they are going to refer the matter to their manager, who will decide how to manage the complaint fairly, ethically, reasonably and safely, and explain to the complainant why their behaviour is not acceptable.

If the person continues to behave unreasonably, the CRO must tell the CEO who will review the situation. The CEO is responsible for making decisions about what to do and advising the Board.

If a person continues to behave disrespectfully to staff, PWDA may revoke their membership or refuse to provide them with services. We would only do this in extreme circumstances. In these instances, the CEO would apply to the Board for a final decision. Only the CEO and Board can make these decisions.

PWDA will ensure that unreasonable behaviour does not stop valid complaints from being addressed.

### **Complaints that PWDA does not handle**

If a complaint doesn't relate to PWDA, where appropriate, the Manager Governance and Compliance will explain this to the complainant. They will also ask for the

complainant's consent to refer them to an agency or agencies that are better placed to help them resolve their problem.

If it is more than 3 months since the subject of the complaint last happened, we will tell the complainant it will be more difficult to look into the complaint and deal with any problems. However, PWDA will try to deal with the complaint especially if it is about a serious matter.

## **Managing a complaint**

The CRO will investigate the complaint, check the facts and gather all the relevant information, including speaking with the complainant and any other people involved in the complaint.

If the CRO decides the complaint was justified, they will tell the complainant.

If the CRO decides the complaint was not justified, they will tell the complainant in writing why they made this decision. They will also tell them about what they can do if they are unhappy with this result, including further options at PWDA and contact details for external complaints organisations. These organisations are listed in

### **Appendix 1: External Complaint Agencies.**

If the CRO's investigation shows that there should be disciplinary or other corrective action against a staff member, the matter will be referred to the Director, People and Culture who will follow the relevant PWDA policies and procedures.

## **How long does it take?**

PWDA aims to handle and close off most complaints within 14 days. Only more serious and/or complex complaints should take any longer than this.

## **Confidentiality**

PWDA deals with complaints in strict confidence.

We will only tell people who need to know about the complaint.

This will include the CEO or Board, any people the complaint is about, and anyone else who has information that will help with investigating and resolving the complaint.

In certain cases, the law says PWDA must tell other agencies about a complaint. For example, if the complaint:

- suggests allegations about criminal conduct, we must tell the police
- involves current serious risk of harm to a child, we must tell local child protection authorities
- results in a breach of PWDA's Codes of Conduct and Ethics, we must report this to the Department of Social Services.

It is also possible for a Court to subpoena a complaint file, and PWDA must provide it by law.

## **Informal and formal resolution**

**Informal** complaint resolution is when the complainant and other people involved work together to develop a way to solve the problem. If required, the CRO can help to facilitate this.

**Formal** complaint resolution is when the CRO investigates and makes decisions about the complaint.

## **What kinds of complaints will never be dealt with informally?**

PWDA will never deal informally with any complaint that includes claims of violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation or where there is a significant power imbalance between the complainant and the person or people the complaint is about. PWDA will always deal formally with these complaints.

If there is any immediate or ongoing risk to a person, and/or the situation or incident must be reported, we will do this immediately.

## **Follow up actions of a complaint resolution process**

If actions need to be taken because of a complaint resolution process, the CRO will document these in a Complaint Resolution Action Plan Form (Appendix 4).

The CEO/Board will monitor the Complaint Resolution Action Plan, via the Manager Governance and Compliance, to make sure that all actions are completed.

### **When a complaint raises broader issues**

Some complaints may show that there are broader issues that PWDA needs to work on. For example, the complaint might highlight a problem with a PWDA policy, or a problem in our administrative systems or how we work.

PWDA will research, document, and learn from any broader issues uncovered through individual complaints, to help us continuously improve our work.

The CRO will say if there are any broader issues when they report to the CEO or Board, when finalising a complaint. It is then up to the CEO or Board to develop a plan to address these broader issues.

### **What happens if a person disagrees with the outcomes of a formal complaint resolution process?**

People involved in a formal complaint can ask the CEO or Board to review the CRO's decisions.

The CEO or Board will review the complaint handling process and the outcomes. They can decide on different outcomes.

The CEO or Board may also decide that there needs to be more investigation of the complaint. They will say what needs to be investigated and how it will be done.

The CEO or Board's decision of the review will be final. However, people can still raise their concerns with external complaint agencies. Refer to Appendix 1: External Complaint Agencies for more information.

### **How does PWDA keep records of complaints?**

The Manager Governance and Compliance maintains a **Compliments, complaints and feedback register**, as well as individual files about each complaint. They give each complaint a unique identification number.



The Compliments, complaints and feedback register sets out:

- date the complaint was received.
- name of the complainant and respondent.
- name of the CRO who handled the complaint.
- methods/strategies used – what was done - to resolve the complaint.
- date the complaint was finalised / closed.
- final status of the complaint – whether it was withdrawn, resolved informally, substantiated, substantiated in part, not substantiated, taken further with CEO or Board and the outcome of that.

PWDA stores all documents relating to a complaint in a single complaint file. Each file and every document in the file are marked with the complaint's unique identification number. We file the documents in date order – in the order we receive them.

The CRO's Report and any Complaint Resolution Action Plan developed to resolve the complaint are placed as the first documents in the files. Closed complaint files are kept in secure storage for a period of 7 years, then destroyed.

## Related documents

### **Relevant legislation, regulations and standards**

- National Disability Services Standards
- ACNC Standards
- ACFID Code of Conduct

### **Related PWDA policy documents**

- Compliments, Complaints and Feedback – Easy Read
- Staff Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Board Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Privacy Policy
- Staff and Board Conflicts of Interest Policies

- Child Protection Policy
- Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy
- Performance Management Policy
- Risk Management Plan
- Continuous Improvement Plan

### **Supporting documents**

- Appendix 1: External Complaint Agencies
- Appendix 2: Complaint Resolution Process
- Appendix 3: Complaint form
- Appendix 4: Complaint Resolution Action Plan form

## Appendix 1: External complaint agencies

### ACFID

After raising any issues with PWDA complaints can then be made to the Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee:

- in writing – c/- ACFID, Private Bag 3, Deakin ACT 2600
- by email – [Code@acfid.asn.au](mailto:Code@acfid.asn.au)

### Department of Social Services

Complaints that breach the PWDA Codes of Conduct and Ethics must be reported to DSS: <https://www.dss.gov.au/contact/feedback-compliments-complaints-and-enquiries/feedback-form>

These include complaints relating to:

- individual freedom of expression
- individual self-determination
- individual decision-making
- privacy of people with disability
- safety, competence, care and skill when providing services and supports
- integrity, honesty and transparency on the part of PWDA
- timeliness and responsiveness to matters that may impact the quality and safety of services
- timeliness and responsiveness to instances or allegations of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of people with disability
- taking reasonable steps to prevent violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of people with disability
- taking reasonable steps to prevent sexual misconduct.

PWDA must support DSS investigations and implement any recommendations.

## **The Complaints Resolution and Referral Service**

The Complaints Resolution and Referral Service is a free service for people with disability who use Australian Government funded services including Disability Advocacy services.

To make a complaint:

- Call **1800 880 052** (toll free)
- Callers who are Deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment can contact the National Relay Service (NRS) by calling **1800 555 677** then asking for **1800 880 052**
- Callers from a non-English speaking background can use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) by calling **13 14 50**
- Submit your complaint via the Online Complaints Form  
<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/contacts/online-complaint-form>

## **State and Territory Organisations**

### **Australian Capital Territory (ACT)**

Human Rights Commissioner ACT

Web: [www.hrc.act.gov.au](http://www.hrc.act.gov.au)

Email: [human.rights@act.gov.au](mailto:human.rights@act.gov.au)

Phone: (02) 6205 2222

SMS: 0466 169 997

TTY: (02) 6205 1666

### **New South Wales**

Ombudsman NSW

Web: [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au)

Email: [nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au)

Phone: (02) 9286 1000

Toll free: 1800 451 524 (outside Sydney metro)

### **Northern Territory**

Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner

Web: [www.hcsccl.nt.gov.au](http://www.hcsccl.nt.gov.au)

Email: [hcsccl@nt.gov.au](mailto:hcsccl@nt.gov.au)

Phone: (08) 8999 1969

Toll free: 1800 004 474

### **Queensland**

Ombudsman Queensland

Web: [www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au)

Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au)

Phone: (07) 3005 7000

Toll free: 1800 068 908

### **South Australia**

Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner

Web: [www.hcsccl.sa.gov.au](http://www.hcsccl.sa.gov.au)

Email: [info@hcsccl.sa.gov.au](mailto:info@hcsccl.sa.gov.au)

Phone: (08) 8226 8666

Toll free: 1800 232 007 (from Country SA lines)

### **Tasmania**

Ombudsman Tasmania

Web: [www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au)

Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au)

Phone: 1800 001 170 (Toll free within Tasmania)

## **Victoria**

Disability Services Commissioner

Web: [odsc.vic.gov.au](http://odsc.vic.gov.au)

Email: [complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au)

Phone: (03) 8608 5780

Toll free: 1800 677 342

TTY: 1300 726 563

## **Western Australia**

Health and Disability Services Complaints Office

Web: [www.hadsco.wa.gov.au](http://www.hadsco.wa.gov.au)

Email: [mail@hadsco.wa.gov.au](mailto:mail@hadsco.wa.gov.au)

Phone: (08) 6551 7600

Administration: (08) 6551 7620

Country freecall: 1800 813 583

TTY: (08) 6551 7640

## Appendix 2: Complaint Resolution Process

Staff should be guided by the steps below when managing a complaint and adhere to the timeframes and responsibilities for each stage of the complaint resolution process.

PWDA aims to handle and close off most complaints within 14 days.

Only more serious and/or complex complaints should take any longer than this.

### Stage 1: Intake and assessment

Step	Timeframe (business days)	Procedure	Responsibility
Step 1	Within 1 day	<p>Receive complaint and explain to complainant that we will follow PWDA Privacy Policy when handling their complaint. We will only share with people who need to be involved to help resolve the problem.</p> <p>Record and forward details of the complaint and complainant contact information to <a href="mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au">feedback@pwd.org.au</a>.</p>	Whoever receives the complaint.
Step 2	Within 2 days	<p>Enter the complaint details into the register.</p> <p>Appoint a CRO.</p>	Manager Governance and Compliance
Step 3	Within 3 days	<p>Make an initial assessment of the complaint to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine if it raises criminal or child protection issues that must be referred to the police or other appropriate authorities.</li> <li>If there are any matters that need to be taken to a Senior Manager/Director.</li> </ul>	CRO

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the complaint is suitable for an informal complaint resolution approach.</li> </ul> <p>Contact the complainant to confirm details and discuss the complaint and next steps.</p> <p>Also ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the complainant requires interpreter or translation services. If the complainant requires an independent (non-PWDA) individual advocate. Contact the complainant. Confirm any support needs and confirm their preferred way of being contacted.</li> <li>• If there is anything in the complaint which will need external, expert complaint resolution skills.</li> </ul>	
Step 4	Within 3 days	<p>Write to or email the respondent to the complaint to tell them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that a complaint has been received by the CRO.</li> <li>• the name of the CRO who will handle the complaint.</li> <li>• about the allegations, and any evidence, the complainant has put forward to support the allegations.</li> </ul>	CRO
Step 5	Within 3 days	<p>Determine if a complainant or respondent's access needs or barriers are directly relevant to the complaint. If so, the CRO will work to make sure the process and resolution is inclusive of this.</p>	CRO



Step 6	Within 5 days	Contact the complainant first, and then the respondent, to ask if they are willing to take part in an informal complaint resolution process, or if a formal process is required.  Decide whether the complaint will be dealt with formally or informally.	CRO  CRO, in consultation with the CEO/Board
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## Stage 2A: Complaint resolution – informal resolution process

There are two options for handling a complaint informally. Option 1 involves a facilitated meeting between the complainant and respondent/s. In Option 2, the Complaints Resolution Officer communicates with each person separately. Consider which option is more appropriate depending on the type of complaint, level of seriousness or complexity, whether the complainant and/or respondent want to meet and any other relevant factors.

### Option 1

Step	Timeframe (business days)	Procedure	Responsibility
Step 1	Within 7 days	Facilitate a meeting between the complainant and respondent.  Invite the complainant to explain their complaint to the respondent. Ask them what it would take to resolve it.  Invite the respondent to reply to the complainant about the complaint. Ask them to reply to the complainant's proposal to resolve the complaint.	CRO

		<p>Allow each person to make their statements without interruption.</p> <p>Facilitate a conversation, until both can agree on how to resolve the matter.</p> <p>Document the agreement. If required, write a Complaint Resolution Action Plan.</p> <p>If it looks like both people cannot agree on how to resolve the matter within a reasonable period of time:</p> <p>Ask the complainant if they want to continue with the complaint.</p> <p>If yes, ask each person if they think there is a good chance of resolving the complaint informally, or if they now want to proceed with a formal approach to resolve the matter.</p> <p>If they want to continue informally, ask each person to think about a genuine proposal for resolving the complaint. Say you will contact them within 2 days to ask for their proposal.</p> <p>Email an update to <a href="mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au">feedback@pwd.org.au</a></p>	
Step 2	<p>Within 10 days</p> <p>Complete and close within 14 days</p>	<p>Contact each person and ask for each one's proposal for resolving the complaint. If a proposal is not reasonable, discuss this with them and try to come to a useful proposal.</p> <p>Look at both proposals, identifying areas of common ground, areas of difference, and think about some constructive ways to resolve the complaint.</p>	CRO

		<p>Talk these through with each person and try to reach a resolution that they are satisfied with. If so, document the agreement and if required, write a Complaint Resolution Action Plan.</p> <p>If there is still no reasonable chance of settling the matter, end the informal complaint resolution process.</p> <p>If the complainant wants to continue with the complaint, begin a formal complaint resolution process. Tell the respondent in writing that this is happening.</p>	
Step 3	<p>Within 7 days of resolution of the complaint, or termination of the informal complaint resolution process</p>	<p>Write a report on the outcome of the complaint resolution process outlining:</p> <p>The method used to resolve the complaint.</p> <p>The outcome of the complaint resolution process.</p> <p>The action plan agreed between the parties, if any.</p> <p>Any further action required.</p> <p>Any systemic or other issues raised by the complaint that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Email <a href="mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au">feedback@pwd.org.au</a> with an update or to close off the complaint in the register.</p>	CRO

## Option 2

Step	Timeframe	Procedure	Responsibility
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Step 1	Within 3 days	Ask the respondent to reply to the complaint either over the phone, face-to-face, in writing or by email.	CRO
Step 2	Within 7 days	<p>Let the complainant know how the respondent replied. Ask the complainant if they feel this resolves their complaint.</p> <p>If not, ask the complainant: Why the respondent's reply is not enough. They can answer verbally or in writing. If it is verbal, write it down and get the complainant to sign it.</p> <p>Ask if they want any further action.</p> <p>If so, do they want to continue informally or move to a formal process to resolve their complaint. Email <a href="mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au">feedback@pwd.org.au</a> with an update.</p>	CRO
Step 3	Within 9 days	<p>Let the respondent know about the complainant's response to their reply and ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (If relevant), if they would like to make any further reply. If so, ask the respondent to make this reply either verbally or in writing. If it is verbal, write it down and get the respondent to sign it.</li> <li>• If they want to continue informally or now want to move to a formal process to deal with the complaint.</li> </ul> <p>If required, develop a Complaint Resolution Action Plan to help resolve the complaint.</p>	CRO

Step 4	Within 7 days of resolution of the complaint, or termination of the complaint resolution process	<p>Write a report on the outcome of the complaint resolution process, outlining:</p> <p>The methods/strategies used to resolve the complaint.</p> <p>The outcome of the complaint resolution process.</p> <p>The action plan agreed between the parties, if any.</p> <p>Any further action required.</p> <p>Any systemic or other issues raised by the complaint that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Email <a href="mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au">feedback@pwd.org.au</a> with an update or to close off the complaint in the register.</p>	CRO
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## Stage 2B: Complaint resolution – formal resolution process

Step	Timeframe	Procedure	Responsibility
Step 1	Within 3 days of receiving formal complaint.	<p>Meet with the complainant and write a final list of allegations on which the complaint is based.</p> <p>Document any evidence the complainant offers to support the allegations.</p> <p>Get the complainant to sign this written list of allegations to confirm they are accurate.</p> <p>Ask the complainant what they want to happen as a result of making their complaint.</p>	CRO

Step 2	Within 5 days	<p>Develop a Complaint Investigation Plan, setting out how you will handle the complaint.</p> <p>The complaint investigation plan is to make sure:</p> <p>There is a rigorous and transparent investigation of the matters raised in the complaint.</p> <p>All relevant sources of evidence are identified.</p> <p>The process is fair for both the complainant and the respondent.</p>	CRO, in consultation with the CEO/Board
Step 3	Within 7 days	<p>Provide the respondent with details of the complaint allegations, including an outline of any evidence. Ask for a reply in writing.</p> <p>The respondent can give you a verbal response to the complaint. However, you must immediately write down the response and get the respondent to sign it. Email an update to <a href="mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au">feedback@pwd.org.au</a></p>	CRO
Step 4	Within 10 days	<p>Investigate the complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can ask for further information from the complainant and respondent, or any other person, to help you to decide about the complaint.</li> <li>• Also, review any relevant documentary evidence, including any PWDA policy and procedure that may be relevant to the issues raised in the complaint.</li> <li>• Tell both the complainant and respondent if any new issues or evidence emerges during your inquiries. Ask them both if</li> </ul>	CRO

		they want to provide any further information or make comments.	
Step 5	Within 14 days	<p>Decide whether the complaint is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantiated (PWDA agrees the complaint is valid)</li> <li>• Substantiated in part</li> <li>• Not substantiated</li> </ul> <p>Write to both the complainant and the respondent, explaining the reasons for this decision.</p> <p>Include information in the letter about PWDA's internal review process; if either person is unhappy with the decision, they have the choice to take the matter further.</p> <p>Also include contact details for external complaint resolution organisations.</p>	CRO
Step 6	Within 21 days	<p>Write a report on the outcome of the complaint resolution process, outlining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The method used to resolve the complaint.</li> <li>• The outcome of the complaint resolution process.</li> <li>• A Complaint Resolution Action Plan to address the outcomes of complaint investigation, if required.</li> <li>• Any systemic or other issues raised by the complaint that need to be addressed.</li> </ul>	CRO

		Email feedback@pwd.org.au to close off the complaint in the register.	
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### Stage 3: Internal review - outcomes reached through a formal complaint resolution process

This process is only used if the complainant is unhappy with the CRO's reply and/or resolution and wants to take the decision further for review.

Step	Timeframe	Procedure	Responsibility
Step 1		<p>A complainant or respondent must write to ask for a review of the outcomes of a formal complaint resolution process within <b>28 days of receiving the CRO reply</b>.</p> <p>They should write to the CEO, or to the Board if the matter involves the CEO.</p> <p>They must include details in their request about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why they believe the outcomes were wrong, and</li> <li>• Any evidence they have to supports their claims.</li> </ul> <p>If the person cannot write their review request themselves, the CEO/ Board may appoint a PWDA staff member to do so on their behalf.</p> <p>The person asking for the review must then sign it.</p>	Complainant



Step 2	Within 7 days	<p>The CEO/ Board then reviews the formal complaint resolution process, and the outcomes reached, to decide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the process has been fair and reasonable to the people involved in the complaint.</li> <li>• If the evidence supports the decisions that were made.</li> <li>• If any recommended actions are reasonable, based on what was learned in the process.</li> </ul> <p>The CEO/ Board decides whether the outcomes of the formal complaint resolution process are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upheld (agreed with)</li> <li>• Upheld in part</li> <li>• Not upheld</li> </ul> <p>The CEO/Board must provide reasons for their decision.</p> <p>The CEO/Board may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change the outcomes of the formal complaint resolution process.</li> <li>• Ask for further investigation of the complaint, and decide what will be investigated and how it will be done, or</li> <li>• Substitute a correct or preferable decision.</li> </ul> <p>The CEO/ Board's decision on the review is final. However, if a complainant or respondent is</p>	CEO/Board
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		unhappy with the decision, they can raise their concerns with external complaint agencies.	
Step 3	Within 7 days after the decision reached by the CEO/Board	<p>Write to the complainant and respondent, telling them the outcome of the review of the formal complaint resolution process, and explaining the reasons for their decision.</p> <p>Include information and contact details for external complaint resolution organisations.</p> <p>in the letter. If either person is unhappy with the decision, they have the choice to take the matter further.</p> <p>Email an update to <a href="mailto:feedback@pwd.org.au">feedback@pwd.org.au</a></p>	CEO/Board

## Appendix 3: Complaint form

**Name:** .....

**Address:** .....

### **Contact Information:**

Home phone ..... Work phone .....

Mobile phone ..... TTY phone .....

Email: ..... Facsimile .....

**Please tell us about your complaint** (add more pages if you need to)

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**Tell us if you have any information, such as documents or a witness that might help us investigate your complaint? If possible, attach copies of any documents.**

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**Tell us what you think should happen to resolve your complaint?**

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**Your signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

## Appendix 4: Complaint resolution action plan

**Complaint Number:** .....

**Date Received:** .....

**Date Finalised:** .....

**Complainant:** .....

**Complaint Resolution Officer:** .....

### Action Plan

Action required	Who responsible	Completion date
(add rows as required)		

**Authorised by:** .....

CEO or President, PWDA Board

**Date:** .....