

# St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn

## Complaints Management Policy

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The Society provides goods and services to people in need. Sometimes, those people we assist or impact upon are dissatisfied with decisions made, the quality of services provided or the behaviour of individuals. It is essential that the Society has a consistent, fair and timely process for responding to any complaints received. This facilitates harmonious relationships with all stakeholders, the continuous improvement of services, compliance with government contracts, and reduces the risk of legal action or reputational damage.

### Scope

This policy applies to all oral or written complaints received from external stakeholders in relation to any of the Society's operations and applies to all employees, members and volunteers. The policy does not apply to internal disputes or grievances that only affect members, employees or volunteers.

### Policy

#### **We encourage feedback**

The Society encourages all forms of feedback, including complaints, as a means of improving its services and maintaining its reputation. It is widely recognised that only a small percentage of aggrieved persons complain. Hence complaints need to be treated as "gifts" as they are often indicative of broader issues. The way in which a complaint is managed can make all the difference between a positive and negative outcome for both the complainant and the Society.

#### **Important Principles for the management of complaints**

The following principles apply to the management of all complaints received by the Society:

- All stakeholders including service users will be made aware of their right to complain at the earliest possible opportunity and will have the complaints management policy and procedures made available to them in written form; where appropriate the procedures will also be explained orally;
- Complaints may be made orally or in writing, although complainants will be encouraged to put their complaint in writing – if a complaint is made orally it will

be documented at the earliest opportunity by Society staff, members or volunteers;

- Complaints will be examined in a manner which is courteous, fair and just – all complainants and respondents will be accorded “natural justice”;
- There will be no implication of retribution or any negative consequences resulting from the lodgement of a complaint – eg denial of future services;
- The privacy of complainants will be preserved and the wishes of the complainant with regards to confidentiality respected;
- Each complaint will be managed in an efficient and timely manner – complaints will be acknowledged in writing and processing timeframes advised;
- The use of an advocate by the complainant will be encouraged in appropriate circumstances;
- At the conclusion of the assessment process complainants will be provided with a written response;
- If complainants are dissatisfied with the response they will be advised of the process for internal review;
- If complainants are still dissatisfied with the outcome of internal review they will be advised of any relevant external mechanisms (eg Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, Ombudsman, Privacy Commissioner)

### **Responsibility for investigating complaints**

Complaints must be managed in a way so that an actual or perceived conflict of interest does not arise.

Where a complaint relates to the members and/or activities of a conference the complaint will be referred to and investigated by the Vice President Conferences. If an internal review of the outcome is required it will be undertaken by the President.

Where a complaint relates to other operations and/or employees and volunteers related to those operations (eg Centres, Marketing, Administration, Youth, Special Works) the complaint will be referred to and investigated by the relevant Director. If an internal review of the outcome is required it will be undertaken by the CEO. If the Director is the subject of the complaint it will be investigated by the CEO. If the CEO is the subject of the complaint it will be investigated by the President.

### **How to contact us**

Individuals can obtain further information in relation to this complaints management policy, or provide any comments, by contacting us:

Email: [info.cg@vinnies.org.au](mailto:info.cg@vinnies.org.au)

Phone: (02) 6282 2722

Fax: (02) 6281 4743

Post: PO Box 51, Deakin West ACT 2600

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