

EP_EXTERNAL PARTY COMPLAINT POLICY

Reference to:

National Standards for Disability Services

- Standard 1 Rights
- Standard 2 Participation and Inclusion
- Standard 3 Individual Outcomes
- Standard 4 Feedback and Complaints
- Standard 5 Service Access
- Standard 6 Service Management

Human Services Quality Standards

- Standard 1 Governance and Management
- Standard 2 Service Access
- Standard 3 Responding to Individual Need
- Standard 4 Safety, Wellbeing and Rights
- Standard 5 Feedback, Complaints and Appeals
- Standard 6 Human Resources

Review Details:

Version No.	Details of Revision	Approval Date	Next Review Date
01	Original document	Endorsed at the Management Committee Meeting April 2004	2007
02	Policy review	Management Committee Meeting November 2007	November 2008
03	Policy review	Management Committee Meeting November 2012	February 2013
04	Policy review	Management Committee Meeting February 2013	June 2014
05	Policy review	Management Committee Meeting June 2014	March 2015
06	Policy review	Management Committee Meeting February 2015	February 2016
07	Policy review	Management Committee Meeting May 2017	December 2018

The purpose of this policy is to establish a general complaint handling process in respect to services provided by Independent Advocacy in the Tropics Inc., trading as Independent Advocacy Townsville (IAT) to any external parties.

The aim of the policy is to:

- support the provision of the highest possible quality service to our clients;
- increase the level of client satisfaction with the delivery of IAT's services;
- enhance our relationship with our clients and other parties, including the general public.
- enable ongoing improvement of service provision

Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy:

“External Parties” - defined as any person or group who is not employed by, or a member of IAT and is receiving a service from IAT.

“Complaint” - any expression of dissatisfaction, concern or other feedback made to IAT by, or on behalf of, an individual client, group (including other organisations) or member of the public, related to IAT's services, or the complaints handling process itself.

This does not include expressions of dissatisfaction, concerns or complaints received in respect to:

- Government policies and/or legislation (*Note: Information of this nature will be monitored and where considered relevant by IAT passed on to the respective policy makers for their information or the complainant will be referred to the relevant agency/person*); or
- Complaints that are covered by other formal procedures, such as the following, and shall be dealt with separately in accordance with the relevant procedures:
 - Complaints of discrimination and harassment that are dealt with under relevant Commonwealth or Queensland legislation,
 - Complaints of breach of privacy that are dealt with under relevant Commonwealth or Queensland legislation; and
 - The review processes available under the Commonwealth and Queensland Freedom of Information legislation.

Commitment

IAT is committed to:

- recognising a person's right to make complaints, comments or suggestions about the level and quality of services provided;
- encouraging the submission of any complaints people may have with services provided;
- providing an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints;
- ensuring that all complaints are heard and equitably resolved as soon as possible;
- ensuring individuals have no fear of retributive action when raising complaints
- monitoring complaints in an endeavour to improve the quality of services;
- providing people with information about the complaint handling process; and
- promoting a positive attitude towards people and the commitment to resolving complaints.

Policy

In respect to any Complaint, IAT will act accordingly in relation to:

Access: Ensure the complaint process is available to all external parties of IAT.

Accountability: All employees shall take responsibility for effective complaints handling. The Chief Executive Officer and Management Committee are responsible for implementing the policy and the procedures outlined in this document.

Assistance: Provide assistance for complainants in the formulation and lodgement of complaints if requested. (E.g. this may include provision of a translator or assistance in completing complaint documentation etc.). This shall also include support of the individual accessing assistance through a nominated support person.

Data Collection: Collect and record data on complaints lodged and outcomes to assist in the identification of systemic and recurring problems and/or potential improvements to service delivery.

Fairness: Recognise the need to be fair and equitable to both the complainant and the IAT person against whom the complaint is made.

Resources: Provide adequate resources with sufficient levels of delegated authority to ensure complaints received are addressed and concluded in a timely manner.

Responsiveness: Deal with complaints quickly, treat complainants with courtesy and wherever possible resolve complaints at the first point of contact.

Visibility: Promote IAT's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures for lodging complaints to all external parties.

Remedies: IAT will review the need to develop remedies that are fair and reasonable in the circumstances, to meet any legal obligations and generally comply with good management principles and practice.

Reviews: Regularly review the complaints handling process to ensure it is efficiently delivering effective outcomes.

Rights of Complainants

Fairness - Complainants have rights to:

- be heard;
- know whether IAT's relevant service procedures have been followed;
- be provided with, and request all relevant material to support the complaint, subject to Freedom of Information legislation;
- be informed of the criteria and processes;
- be informed of the response of the person complained of;
- be informed of IAT's decision and the reasons for that decision;
- know that a genuine, thorough and unbiased examination of the complaint has been undertaken,
- confidentiality, if requested.

Responsiveness - Complainants shall be:

- advised how long it will take to deal with the complaint; and
- be kept informed of progress by telephone advice, correspondence or interview.

Rights and Responsibilities

IAT Employees

Dealing Directly with the Complainant - Oral or Written

An IAT employee has a responsibility to:

- obtain sufficient detail about the complaint to enable a proper assessment, review and response to the complaint;
- advise the complainant of the time required to provide information to resolve the complaint;
- agree with the complainant about the form the response will take (oral or written);
- record complaint details, timing and the form of response where required for reporting purposes to the Chief Executive Officer or Management Committee delegate.

Written Complaints against an IAT employee.

An IAT employee against whom a complaint has been made has rights to:

- assemble sufficient detail about the complaint to enable the employee to properly respond to the complaint;
- place all relevant material before the person appointed to review the complaint;
- provide oral and/or written submissions regarding the complaint; and

- be informed of the decision and the reason for the decision.

Chief Executive Officer and Management Committee.

The Chief Executive Officer and Management Committee shall:

- appoint and empower people within IAT with the authority necessary to resolve complaints quickly and effectively;
- provide sufficient resources within their area of control to ensure the efficient and effective management of external party complaints;
- ensure appointed people are trained in general and specific complaint handling skills;
- ensure a no blame culture exists;
- ensure all complaints are dealt with in an acceptable and timely manner;
- monitor progress of their complaints handling process;
- maintain an appropriate recording mechanism for oral and written complaints;
- identify repetitive complaints;
- evaluate the data and determine the causes of complaints and whether remedial action is required;
- develop and implement continuous improvements to practices that are the cause of complaints within their area of responsibility; and
- report in IAT's Annual Report any significant complaint issues, particularly systemic complaints and those resulting in service improvements.

Form of Complaint

A complaint can be made by a person (or another person or an advocate representing the complainant) orally (in person or by telephone) or lodged as a written complaint (letter, facsimile, or e-mail).