

1.8	MANAGING COMPLAINTS
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Applies to: Board, staff, and students/trainees/volunteers	Version: 1
Specific responsibility: Business Coordinator	Date approved: Dec 2016
	Next review date: Dec 2019

Policy context: This policy relates to	
Standards or other external requirements	Standard 1: Promoting, upholding and exercising rights
Legislation or other requirements	See below
Contractual obligations	NSW FaCS Funding Deed, Program Level Agreement and Service Delivery Schedule

Policy statement

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

IMPACT EUROBODALLA Inc will provide 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.

Principles

IMPACT EUROBODALLA Inc will:

- consider all complaints it receives
- treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant
- maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution

- ensure advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support
- resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- deal with all complaints in a timely manner
- keep parties to the complaint informed of progress of the complaint ensure that Board members, staff, contractors, trainees and volunteers/others are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints
- ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures
- ensure a complainant is not penalised in any way or denied the use of services during the progress of an issue
- ensure feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organizational reviews and in planning service improvements.

Procedures

Information for clients and stakeholders

IMPACT EUROBODALLA Inc complaints and appeals procedure will be documented for clients and stakeholders in our *Clients rights and responsibilities/Your privacy and complaints* brochure which is available in leaflet form, on our website www.impacteurobodalla.org.au and displayed in our workspaces.

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regard to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation.

Our *Clients rights and responsibilities/Your privacy and complaints* will contain information on the following:

- how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal
- contact person for lodging a complaint or appeal
- how the organisation will deal with the complaint or appeal, the steps involved, and the timelines
- the rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person or interpreter
- how the person will be informed about the outcome of their complaint or appeal
- how to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

The information will also be explained verbally to clients with limited access to written English.

Making a complaint

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

- the staff member they were dealing with at the time
- the manager/supervisor of that staff member
- the Chairperson of the IMPACT EUROBODALLA Inc Board

If the complaint is about:

- a staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Chairperson of the IMPACT EUROBODALLA Inc Board

Written complaints may be sent to PO Box 107, Moruya NSW 2537. The Business Coordinator will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the Chairperson.

Lodging an appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by IMPACT EUROBODALLA. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the Chairperson of the IMPACT EUROBODALLA Inc Board.

Procedure for complaints and appeals management

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

1. *Processing the complaint or appeal:*

- registering the complaint or appeal in the IMPACT EUROBODALLA complaints register
- informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and timeframe.

2. *Investigating the complaint or appeal:*

- examining the complaint within 7 days of the complaint being received
- investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond
- informing the complainant by letter within 7 days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected timeframe for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 21 days of being received. If this timeframe cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative timeframe for resolution

3. **Resolving** the complaint:

- making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 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 has been achieved)
 - if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
- informing the complainant of any options for further action if required.

4. **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 writing to the Chairperson IMPACT EUROBODALLA Inc.

5. **Referral** to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will be referred to the NSW Ombudsman or FACS Southern region NSW within 7 days of receiving the letter of appeal.

6. **Advising** FACS of complaints:

- A summary of the number of complaints and compliments received in a financial year and their outcomes will be reported to FACS contract managers during the annual self-assessment process.

Record keeping

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in the electronic IMPACT EUROBODALLA Complaints register maintained by the IMPACT EUROBODALLA Business Coordinator and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint
- date lodged
- action taken
- date of resolution and reason for decision
- indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- complainant response and any further action.

Copies of all correspondence will be kept in the complaints file.

The complaints register and files will be confidential and access is restricted to IMPACT EUROBODALLA Board and Business Coordinator.

A statistical summary of complaints and appeals will also be kept in the electronic IMPACT EUROBODALLA Complaints register/spreadsheet and maintained by the Business Coordinator who is also responsible for reporting on complaints received as part of the routine report prepared for the IMPACT EUROBODALLA Board meetings held at least six times per year and in the annual report.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the Board and used to:

- inform service planning by including a review of complaints 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

Complaints involving specific staff members, contractors, trainees or volunteers

The IMPACT EUROBODALLA Chairperson has responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members, contractors, trainees or volunteers.

Where a staff member, contractor, trainee or volunteer makes a complaint concerning another staff member, contractor, trainee or volunteer, this will be dealt with in accordance with the IMPACT EUROBODALLA *Conflict resolution and grievance policy*.

Complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member contractor, or student/trainee will be managed by Chairperson who will:

- notify the staff member contractor, or student/trainee of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the staff member contractor, or student/trainee with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party
- take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member contractor, trainee or volunteer arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in the IMPACT EUROBODALLA *Counselling and disciplinary procedure*.

Complaints involving Board or Association members

Complaints made against a Board or Association member will be referred to the Chairperson. The Chairperson will:

- notify the person about whom a complaint is being made of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party

Where the Chairperson is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to the Deputy Chairperson or another office bearer. If the matter remains unresolved, it will be raised at the next Board meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may:

- deal with the matter at its meeting
- handle in accordance with the provisions outlined in the IMPACT EUROBODALLA Constitution 2013 part 11 *Disciplining of members*.

Quality assurance

- Board members, staff, contractors, and students/trainees made aware of this policy as part of induction.
- Complaints register a standing item at every Board meeting and reported annually to funding body via annual report
- Any incidents dealt with in accordance with this policy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Impact Eurobodalla acknowledges the policy template of FaCS SHS Practice Guidelines in the drafting of this policy and procedure document.

DOCUMENTATION

Documents related to this policy	
Related policies	Counselling and disciplinary procedure Conflict resolution and grievance policy
Forms, record keeping or other	"What you can expect from us" pamphlet

organisational documents	Complaints register, Board agenda template, Association Constitution, Annual reports, Board meeting minutes
Resources	

Reviewing and approving this policy		
Frequency	Person responsible	Approval
3 years	Business Coordinator	Board

Policy review and version tracking			
Review	Date Approved	Approved by	Next Review Due
1	Dec 2014	MWACS Inc Board	Dec 2017
2	Dec 2016	Impact Eurobodalla Inc Board	End 2019
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