



BUNJUM ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
ABN 99 527 548 145

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Important Facts

- Bunjum is committed to having a complaints policy that enables its staff to respond to complaints in a courteous manner, in good faith, whilst having a transparent process for following up the issues raised and replying to the complainant ensuring and respecting their privacy
- Our Complaints Policy refers to all Funded Programs

Vision Statement

The vision of Bunjum Aboriginal Corporation is to proactively aspire to rise above the inequalities, by maintaining our cultural identity and values through the provision of holistic, integrated services and programs, which enables and empowers local Aboriginal Community Members

Board Commitment

Bunjum Aboriginal Corporation (Bunjum) and its subsidiaries Bunjum Aboriginal Early Childhood & Family Services Pty Ltd and Bunjum Social Housing Pty Ltd is committed to having a structured fair and transparent format for dealing with complaints in a courteous manner, responding and dealing with the various parties and resolving the complaint as quickly as possible.

Date of Policy and approval version

This policy was amended at Ballina on the 29 March 2018 and is version 6. The Policy is reviewed by the Operations Manager bi-annually or as required.

Linked documents

The following policies also link in with this policy;

Incident and Hazard Policy

WHS

Housing Policy

Tell Us What You Think Form

Whistle Blower Policy

Legislation

- Community Services (Complaints Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993
- Ombudsman Act 1974

Purpose of policy

Operate a formal process for complaints handling including;

- providing guidance for employees who may be required to receive and or address complaints received
- ensure complaints are handled in a fair, courteous and respectful manner which includes privacy of all parties
- ensure that reasons are provided for decisions made
- ensure that all employees of Bunjum are aware of their responsibilities and how they assist with the complaint handling process

This policy will enable Bunjum to maintain professional service delivery and of the highest quality, and also assist Bunjum to look for ways to improve their service delivery.

Definitions

The following regulations or meanings apply;

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| Bunjum | Bunjum Aboriginal Corporation |
| CATSI act | Australian Federal Government administered by Office of Registrar Indigenous Corporation (ORIC) |
| SafeWork | SafeWork NSW obligations |
| Directors | Elected Directors of Bunjum |
| Employees | Staff working for Bunjum in whatever Form-casual, part time, full time etc. |
| Associated companies | Bunjum Aboriginal Early Childhood & Family Service Pty Ltd and Bunjum Social Housing Pty Ltd |
| Complaint | Any written or verbal statement outlining a problem or concern involving the organisation including its staff, the service they provide, or the terms of engagement or contract with the organisation |
| Feedback | Information given by a service user, stakeholder or community member in relation to the organisation and may be in the form of a compliment, suggestion or complaint |
| Compliment | A explicit expression of satisfaction or praise in relation to the organisation or a staff member working on behalf of the organisation. |
| Suggestion | A comment that indicates how the organisation could improve its service delivery. It may be part of a compliment or complaint but may also be offered as standalone information |
| Complaint resolution | A complaint is resolved when both parties reach an agreement. The parties will be informed, in writing, of the complaint agreement |
| Vexatious grievances | Where complainants use the complaint/grievance resolution process without reasonable cause, the processes as outlined above will still be adhered to. If complaints are malicious or vexatious and therefore not made in good faith, the complainant may be referred to undertake counselling and/or other actions if appropriate |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Corrective action | Addressing an ongoing systemic issue to eliminate the root cause of the problem to prevent recurrence |
| Confidentiality | Only people directly involved in the complaint as part of the nature of the complaint or the resolution of it will have access to the information about the complaint |

Application/ coverage

This policy covers all employees of Bunjum in whatever capacity they operate to allow all to understand and follow up on all complaints in whatever service is provided in a courteous and respectful manner. This procedure will allow a transparent approach to complaint handling.

Procedures

Communicating the Complaint Policy

Information is available to service users and stakeholders about mechanisms to communicate feedback, comments and complaints. This information is available on the website and in the service user handbook.

Information includes:

- How to make a complaint or provide feedback to Bunjum.
- Right to make a complaint without fear of retribution.
- The complaints process, confidentiality, timelines and management of feedback.
- The process for pursuing the complaint through an external body such as the NSW Ombudsman by visiting www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Receiving Complaints and other Feedback

All employees and Board members are able to receive feedback or a complaint in writing or verbally from service users or stakeholders. If verbal feedback or complaint is received the staff or Board member completes the Tell Us What You Think Form detailing the information.

Feedback

Depending on the nature of the feedback, one or more of the following actions may be appropriate:

- Record the information (if communicated verbally) and pass the information on to the specific individual concerned and Management, if appropriate
- Raise the information at regular staff and/or Board meeting, and

- Record the information in the relevant staff, service user or project file. The General Manager may include the feedback in reports to the Board of Directors and funder.

Complaints

Complaint information should be forwarded to the Management who will review the information and coordinate a response. If the complaint concerns the Management it is forwarded to a Director.

Complaints Register

Once the Client Feedback Form is received by Management details are recorded in the Complaints Register, including the date the complaint was made, name and contact details of complainant, nature of complaint, staff involved (if any), action taken and results. (Refer to the Complaints Register Template - n:\administration & policy & procedures\Bunjum complaint register)

Responding to Feedback

Depending on the type of feedback received, particularly if it is a comment or suggestion for improvement, it may be appropriate to contact the individual who gave the feedback to communicate any changes made as a result of their suggestion. This will contribute to a positive relationship between the organisation and its service users and stakeholders.

Responding to a Complaint

A letter will be sent to the complainant (or the complainant's nominee) within 5-7 working days of the complaint being received. The response details what is being done to investigate and resolve the complaint.

In responding to complaints, staff and Board members:

- Acknowledge the complaint - acknowledge the concerns and experiences of someone making a complaint, particularly if the issue has caused distress or considerable inconvenience.
- Attempt to resolve the complaint directly with the complainant - clarify the specific issue that the individual is complaining about and their desired outcomes. It may be necessary to contact the complainant to ask for more information.
- Detail how the complaint will be investigated - provide clear timeframes and the contact details for an appropriate person that can be contacted by the complainant if necessary.
- Consider the sensitive and/or confidential nature of a complaint and the privacy of the individual making the complaint - staff will carefully consider what information is recorded and to whom within the organisation the information is communicated

to. When completing a Complaints Form, only record factual information that can be supported by evidence or note that the information is not yet substantiated.

- Consider whether the complaint needs to be managed in a particular way either because the person making a complaint has specific rights of review or because the complaint includes allegations that must be reported to an external body. For example, criminal allegations should be reported to the Police.
- Reassure the complainant that making a complaint will have no negative consequences or repercussions on their service provision.
- Inform the complainant they can select which staff member is their primary contact regarding the complaint and ask if they wish to nominate a particular person.
- Inform the complainant they can determine how, when and where the complaint will be discussed.

Bunjum aims to investigate and resolve all complaints within one month of receiving the complaint. If this timeframe cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative timeframe for resolution.

Bunjum aims to keep the complainant informed at all stages of the decision making process concerning their complaint and the reasons for those decisions.

Complaints Involving Staff Members

Complaints involving staff members, excluding Management should be forwarded to Management who will coordinate a response to the complaint in conjunction with the staff member's supervisor.

Staff are to be kept informed at all times about any service user complaint involving them.

Complaints by service users about staff will not be seen as negative comments about the staff, but as comments on the service provided by the organisation. Staff play a vital role in supporting service users to complain and will not be penalised for doing so. Staff will be positively recognised for advocating on behalf of a service user, including when the service user makes a complaint. Staff will not be penalised as a result of a service user complaint unless malpractice has occurred.

Responding to the complaint may involve:

- Investigating the complaint and providing the staff member with an opportunity to respond to issues raised
- Attempting to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter

- Taking further action necessary to resolve the issue (e.g. external mediation and dispute resolution services)
- Any disciplinary action against a staff member arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the Performance and Development Policy, and
- Any action against a staff member for reportable conduct will be taken in accordance with the Protecting Children and Young People and Reportable Conduct Policies.

Complaints involving the Management should be referred to the Board Chair. The process for complaints involving Management is the same as for complaints involving other staff, except the Board Chair facilitates the resolution.

Complaints Involving Board Members

Complaints concerning a Board member should be referred to the Board Chair. The Chair, or an approved delegate, will attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant. Where the Chair is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to another member of the Board.

A response to the complaint may involve:

- Investigating the complaint and providing the Board Director with an opportunity to respond to issues raised.
- Attempting to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party.
- Take further action necessary to resolve the issue (e.g. external mediation and dispute resolution services).
- Raising the complaint at a Board meeting to determine a suitable course of action to resolve the issue, if appropriate.
- Action taken arising from a complaint about a Board member or a Board subcommittee member will be taken in accordance with the Constitution, the Board policy and procedures and the Board code of conduct.

Complaints Resolution and Follow Up

Within two months of the complaint being resolved, Bunjum will follow up with the complainant to review their satisfaction with the actions taken.

Feedback information (both positive and negative) is to be considered in operational planning as well as implementation and review activities in the areas of governance, risk management, client services, project management and workplace health and safety.

Confidentiality of Complaints and Disputes

As far as possible, the fact that a service user has lodged a complaint and the details of that complaint are kept confidential amongst staff directly concerned with its resolution. The service user's permission is obtained prior to any information being given to other parties that it may be desirable to involve in order to satisfactorily resolve the complaint or dispute.

Monitoring and Reporting Information about Complaints

Information regarding complaints is collated and provided to the Board of Directors at each regular Board meeting unless Management considers that it is to be communicated to the Board urgently.

The Board should include a standing agenda item on complaint handling at all Board meetings.

The General Manager analyses complaints for trends and provides recommendations for action to be taken. Recommendations are discussed at Board and/or staff meetings.

Provision of Staff Training in Complaints Handling

Bunjum will provide and ensure all staff, management and volunteers receive information and training as part of their induction on complaints handling. Refresher training will be provided every year.

| Item | When due for training |
|--|-------------------------------|
| What is a complaints policy Bunjum's obligation under complaints policy and housing policy Responsibilities in dealing with a complaint The appeals process Recording of a complaint | Annually for all items listed |