



*'With Jesus Christ as inspiration and guide, Centacare provides professional social services to empower communities, families, children, and individual adults to thrive.'*

## **FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY**

---

### **1. Mission and Values**

Centacare is cooperating with God in creating the kind of society God wants, a society in which there is full recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all, a community that values families and relationships and promotes dignity, equality, respect, and participation of all, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

### **2. Introduction and Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the agreed practices for feedback and complaints management within Centacare Central West and Orana in relation to its employees, clients, volunteers and contractors. This policy ensures feedback and complaints are dealt with in an effective, efficient, timely and specific process.

### **3. Scope and Expectations**

It is expected that all employees, volunteers and contractors of Centacare will adhere to the scope, procedures and implementation outlined in this document as these are the agreed practices of Centacare.

Clients and members of the community providing feedback or making a complaint will be informed of this policy and the procedures and processes contained within it.

Centacare must have a copy of this policy available to all stakeholders through its website and physical outlets.

Individuals making a complaint or expressing feedback can expect to be informed as to:

- the designated person who will investigate;
- the time frame for investigation - this may alter during the investigation but the parties will be kept informed;
- the processes involved in the investigation, including those of procedural fairness and good faith; and
- the processes and timeframe.

### 3. Definitions

#### **Complaint**

A complaint involves an expression of dissatisfaction or a concern about a Centacare employee or a volunteer, or contractor, process, or service. It also includes concerns about organisational and cultural matters. Complaints are an opportunity to identify issues and act to improve the situation or relationship and drive a culture of continuous improvement.

#### **Feedback**

Any opinion, comment, suggestion, compliment or expression of interest or concern made directly or indirectly about Centacare by a person or organisation where a response or resolution is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

#### **Complainant**

A person, organisation or advocate making a complaint or providing feedback.

#### **Designated Persons**

An impartial person who acts in a timely manner to investigate according to the Feedback and Complaints Management Standard Operating Procedure

#### **Good Faith**

A sincere intention to deal fairly with others without malice or the desire to harm others.

#### **Procedural Fairness**

It is a basic right of all individuals to have a legitimate expectation that Centacare staff will follow these principles when decisions are made affecting their rights, interests or legitimate expectations.

#### **Resolution**

A complaint is resolved when the issue raised has been dealt with in line with Centacare's Management of Complaints Policy. The resolution may or may not be to the complainant's satisfaction.

## 4. Guidelines

The following informs this policy:

### Good Faith

- All parties are responsible for participating in the process in good faith and will be treated with respect, impartiality, dignity, privacy and confidentiality
- Malicious or vexatious comments do not meet the good faith criterion
- Anonymous feedback and complaints may not be fully investigated as they may not meet the good faith criterion and may contain insufficient detail

### Procedural Fairness

- The principles of procedural fairness and timeliness will be applied
- All feedback and complaints will be treated confidentially and all parties involved must adhere to confidentiality principles
- Investigations will be open and unbiased with all parties receiving a fair hearing
- No decisions or resolutions should be made until all the facts are clear
- The wishes of the complainant will be considered if possible in the investigation

### Legal Issues

- Any complaint that constitutes a child protection issue is managed in accordance with the Centacare's Child Protection Policy and under the relevant Child Protection legislation
- Any complaint which is about a potentially unlawful matter will be referred to an appropriate agency

### Conflict of Interest

- If a Conflict of Interest or perceived Conflict of Interest exists, the complaint will be investigated accordingly as outlined in the Conflict of Interest Policy, and may use an external agency

### Record of Complaints/Appeals

- Centacare maintains a Feedback and Complaints Register
- Documentation from the investigation is attached to the register
- Documentation from any appeals must be retained
- Records are stored for the required period

### Timeliness

- All phases of the process should be completed in a timely manner and communicated to the complainant if the process cannot occur in the recommended time frames.

- The Initial Phase should occur within 48 hours
- The Assessment Phase should occur within 2 - 4 weeks. This will depend upon information gathered and the nature of the issue being investigated
- The Resolution Phase should occur immediately after the Assess Phase
- Follow up should continue for a relevant period after Resolution Phase has been implemented

## 5. Procedures

### Complaint Process

1. The complainant determines whether the complaint is to be directed to the employee or their manager or Centacare Management.
2. The complainant should provide the complaint to the most relevant person depending upon the issue being raised.
3. The complainant may contact Centacare through email, by phone, in writing, or in person. The Centacare website has the option for potential complainants to register their complaint.
4. If the person whose aggrieved is a child or not able to act on their own, then a parent/carer or another person with the legal responsibility for them, may act on their behalf.
5. The complainant can expect the complaint to be dealt with in a timely manner through having it entered into the Complaints Register and a person designated to deal with the complaint.
6. The designated person will contact the complainant within 48 hours informing them of the process to be followed to investigate the complaint.
7. The designated person will implement an investigation into the complaint and maintain contact with the complainant during this period to clarify or gather additional information.
8. The complainant may contact the designated person, if required, regarding progress of the complaint, it's investigation, and resolution.
9. The designated person will inform the complainant the outcome of the investigation and processes to be implemented as a result.

### Appeals process

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the handling, investigation or processes used in investigating a complaint, they have the right to follow the appeals process.
2. The complainant determines whether the appeal is to be directed to the Centacare Management or the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Bathurst through the Chancery office. Ideally appeals should be directed to where the complaint was initially handled.
3. The complainant must provide details of the appeal to the person or body to whom the appeal is being directed. Any appeal must be in writing and clearly articulate:

- a) the name of the designated person who handled the complaint; and
  - b) the handling, investigation or processes which they are dissatisfied with.
4. The complainant can expect the appeal to be dealt with in a timely manner.
  5. An investigation into the handling, investigation or processes used in investigating a complaint will be conducted.
  6. The complainant will be informed of the results of the appeal.
  7. Once a Complaint or Appeal is concluded, the process is finished and the results of the investigation and/or appeal will be implemented. No further appeals will be entered into.

## **Process for the Resolution of Feedback and Complaints**

### ***Initial Phase***

- The initial information from the complainant will be recorded by the employee who receives the complaint. The information will be forwarded to the Director using the Feedback and Complaints Form.
- The Director will acknowledge the complainant and will inform the complainant who will be investigating the complaint.
- The Director will record the complaint in the Complaints Register, if the complaint has been received in writing or using a paper Feedback and Complaints Form.

### ***Assess Phase***

- The Director or a delegate will contact the complainant and explain the Complaints Management Process. At this time additional information may be gathered and documented.
- The Director or the delegate will address the complaint with relevant parties and record responses. At this time clarification may be required and more than one communication may be required with the persons involved. All parties are welcome to have a support person present at any meeting.
- In the interests of confidentiality, only relevant witnesses will be interviewed and the importance of confidentiality will be stressed. A breach of confidentiality will be dealt with as a serious matter.
- The Director or the delegate will document the process and all information gathered at all stages.
- If deemed necessary, the police or another outside agency may be contacted for involvement.

### ***Resolution Phase***

- The Director will determine how the complaint is to be resolved and implement processes for the resolution if appropriate

- The Director will notify all parties of the resolution. The complainant will receive a written notification of the outcome and any resolution or processes to be implemented.
- The complainant will advise all parties of the appeals process.

### ***Follow up Phase***

- The Complaints Register is completed for this complaint and all documentation is attached. The Complaint is retained for the required period
- The Director or the delegate will monitor the situation to ensure a culture of improvement and processes to address the required outcome
- If issues are uncovered during Centacare’s investigation, possible processes to implement include:
  - a) training for relevant employees involved;
  - b) behaviour monitoring;
  - c) process monitoring;
  - d) counselling;
  - e) mediation; and
  - f) Involvement of an external agency to further investigate.
- Following the resolution of the complaint the following are possible outcomes:
  - a) review of processes or practices or culture
  - b) change of processes or practices or culture and ongoing monitoring of situation
  - c) training for relevant people
  - d) counselling
  - e) a written apology to the complainant
  - f) other action as deemed necessary
- Follow up Monitoring processes will be
  - a) determined and enacted by the designated person
  - b) recorded in the process

## **6. Related Policies and Guidelines**

Managing Workplace Grievances Policy

Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy

Workplace Health and Safety Policy

Child Protection Policy

Code of Conduct for Employees Catholic Diocese of Bathurst

Employee Discipline Policy  
 Conflict of Interest Policy  
 Responding to Feedback Standard Operating Procedure  
 Complaints Management Standard Operating Procedure  
 Feedback and Complaints Form (online and PDF)

## 7. Governing Legislation

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977  
 Racial Discrimination Act 1975  
 Disability Discrimination Act 1992  
 Sex Discrimination Act 1984  
 Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011  
 Ombudsman Act 1976 (NSW)

*A contravention of any of these laws may result in legal action being taken against employees and also expose Centacare to liability.*

In addition to the above Centacare is also committed to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Ratified in Australia 1990).

## 8. Policy Administration

It is the responsibility of anyone accessing this document to ensure that the current version is downloaded from the Centacare Document Register.

<b>Date of Implementation:</b>	April 2023		
<b>Date of Last Review:</b>			
<b>Date for Next Review:</b>	April 2025		
<b>Version Number:</b>	1.0		
<b>Version History:</b>			
Version	Date	Updated By	Amendments
1	28.04.2023	R.George	Creation of Policy

## 9. Appendix 1 – Complaints Resolution Flowchart

