

# **Consumer Complaints**

**Standard 5: Complaints and Disputes Services**

**Standard 6: Advocacy**

**Standard 7: Efficient & Effective Management**

## **Summary**

Technology Assisting Disability WA welcomes information and feedback from consumers which will enable it to improve the quality of services.

All consumers should be made aware of their right to complain, and should fully understand the complaints procedure and the use and availability of advocates.

Consumers have a right to complain about the service they are receiving without fear of retribution and can expect complaints to be dealt with promptly.

Information on the complaints procedure of Technology Assisting Disability WA is to be included in the Consumer Brochure and presented to and explained to clients at the time of assessment.

The consumer has the right to use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf with the staff and/or management of Technology Assisting Disability WA. This may be a family member or friend, or an agency such as Advocare telephone free call 1800 655 566 or 9479 7566.

All complaints are to be recorded and tracked on the 'Complaint Record Form'.

Person(s) affected by the complaint should be fully informed of all facts and given the opportunity to put their case.

TADWA will have a system in place to show how consumer feedback received is used to drive continuous service improvement, (refer *Continuous Improvement to Quality of Services Policy*).

## **1. Complaints Principles**

The principles that underpin the complaint management process are: -

- rights and responsibilities of consumers
- promotion and transparency
- organisational commitment to effective complaint management

- fairness and accountability
- timeliness of response
- making the complaints process accessible to consumers
- continuous service improvement and
- privacy and open disclosure

## **2. Rights and Responsibilities of Consumers**

### **Consumers can expect to: -**

- be treated with respect, dignity and consideration for their privacy
- have complaints treated as genuine and properly investigated
- be given appropriate and easily understood information regarding the complaint process
- be asked what outcome they are seeking from the complaint, to reach resolution
- have their complaint issues adequately addressed
- participate in decisions about the management of their complaint
- have personal information remain confidential within the complaint management process
- be able to comment on the progress of the complaint management process
- have their comments regarding their experience of the complaint management process respected, documented and acted upon and
- not experience any negative impact as a result of making a complaint.

### **Consumers are expected to: -**

- provide pertinent information to TADWA staff regarding the issue of the complaint
- respect the role of TADWA staff and their right to respond to a complaint
- treat all TADWA staff with courtesy and consideration
- ask for assistance and further information when unsure about information provided to them regarding the complaint management process

- keep scheduled appointments, bringing relevant documents and information and
- raise any concerns about the complaints management process with TADWA staff as soon as possible.

### **3. Timeliness of Response**

TADWA shall demonstrate commitment to the resolution of complaints in a timely manner by:

- acknowledging complaints within 3 working days of receipt of the initial complaint
- informing the complainant of the approximate time that it will take to resolve the complaint
- commencing an investigation of complaints within 3 working days of receipt
- resolving complaints as soon as practicable in the best interest of all parties, ideally within 10 working days of receipt and
- advising the complainant if there is a delay and providing updates on the progress of the investigation at 5 working day intervals

### **4. Making the Complaints Process Accessible to Consumers**

TADWA shall demonstrate commitment to the delivery of safe, high quality services by encouraging all consumers to provide feedback on the safety and quality of services, including concerns and complaints by: -

- ensuring information on TADWA's complaints management process is available in plain English and in a range of formats
- seeking feedback from consumers offering a variety of ways for them to raise concerns and complaints
- providing for complaints to be made anonymously
- ensuring consumers with special needs (e.g. disability, elderly, remote, indigenous and CALD) are provided with appropriate information and/or assistance in making a complaint
- offering assistance/support to the complainant in making a complaint
- encouraging complainants to bring a family member/support person to any meetings with TADWA staff
- providing confirmation of the receipt of a verbal complaint and providing a written summary of the complaint to the complainant and

- providing assistance to enable staff to complete a report in response to a complaint and to provide advice on accessing counselling/debriefing services as necessary.

## **5. Continuous Service Improvement**

TADWA uses complaints to improve the quality and safety of its services and regularly evaluates the complaints management policy and practices. This includes: -

- ensuring rapid and effective notification to senior management of all complaints with significant or severe risk, with an action plan and review process to ensure that action has been taken
- regularly evaluating policies and practices on complaints to determine effectiveness and making improvements
- monitoring whether complainants are satisfied with the complaint resolution process and the explanation or other outcome given
- regularly auditing the complaint management system against predetermined criteria and
- involving consumers and staff in the design and evaluation of the complaint management system.

## **6. Privacy and Open Disclosure**

TADWA recognises that consumers have a right to have their complaints regarding services investigated and resolved in a fair, transparent and confidential manner. Accordingly, TADWA will establish policies and procedures to ensure that relevant facts and decisions are communicated openly and the privacy of personal information is protected throughout the complaint management process. TADWA will ensure that:

- documented policies and procedures on privacy and open disclosure are understood by staff
- complainants are informed about how their personal information is likely to be used at the time a complaint is first acknowledged
- complaint records are collected and stored separately, ensuring that any identifiable information about the complainant is used only for the purpose of complaint resolution and
- complainants and staff involved in a complaint are provided with the known facts, a summary of the factors contributing to the complaint, information on action to be taken and how changes will be monitored.

It is noted that any information or documents provided to and generated by TADWA during the complaint management process may be subject to the statutory requirements of the FOI Act 1992.

## 7. Quality Improvement Principles

TADWA is required to provide safe and quality services, which are consistently evaluated through continuous quality improvement processes and systems to ensure that they meet consumer requirements.

The following quality principles demonstrate a commitment to best practice and guide the application of strategic initiatives. These principles are articulated as:

**Access** to services that are committed to the application of best practice approaches. TADWA is also committed to the provision of readily accessible information to consumers.

**Efficiency and Effectiveness** of service provision. TADWA is committed to the rational use of resources.

**Safety** of consumers is a major objective of TADWA. There is a commitment to risk management, which facilitates a proactive approach to maintain safety.

**Appropriateness** of services to meet individual needs. TADWA services are committed to application of the 'wellness' approach so that each individual consumer is provided with opportunities to attain optimum potential of health and well being.

**Participation of Consumers and Employees**, to ensure that TADWA is aware of their needs and modify and develop services accordingly. TADWA is committed to strengthening pathways for consumers to influence areas of its planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services.

These quality principles promote and support accountability and the use of de-identified complaint information for the continual review and improvement of services.

## 8. Complaint Management Process

The complaint management process allows TADWA to use consumer feedback to increase satisfaction and to make improvements through:

- accountability by TADWA
- management of complaints
- data collection and analysis
- risk management of potential problems and
- addressing systemic and recurring problems

## 8.1 Accountability by TADWA

TADWA's services shall have a culture of accountability that includes management & senior staff having responsibility for effective complaint handling, this includes:

- providing appropriate complaint management training to staff
- developing, monitoring and reporting performance criteria for complaint handling
- reviewing complaint management processes on an annual basis, including information on action taken in response to complaints and
- demonstrating a pro-active approach to consumer and staff feedback and
- each staff member accepting responsibility for safety and quality, including complaints.

## 8.2 Management of Complaints

The complaint management process operates within frameworks of natural justice and confidentiality. Consumers are encouraged to raise their complaint with the staff member concerned in the first instance. The staff member to:

- register the complaint on page 1 of the 'Complaint Record Form' (see Appendix 1)
- within 3 working days provide the complainant with acknowledgement of receipt of complaint, information on the investigation process, direct contact information and approximate time it will take to resolve the complaint
- commence an investigation of the complaint within 3 working days of its receipt
- resolve the complaint as soon as practicable in the best interests of all parties, ideally within 10 working days of its receipt. Advise the complainant if there is a delay and provide updates on the progress of the investigation at 5 working day intervals
- provide a final written response to the complainant within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint, including:
  - information relevant to the complaint
  - explanation of the event(s)
  - adequate reasons for any decisions made
  - any changes that have resulted from the complaint
  - provision of an apology as appropriate
  - information to enable the complainant to seek an independent review of the complaint if desired

- an acknowledgement of thanks to the consumer for their feedback
- ensure that the 'Complaint Record Form' has been completed and signed off by appropriate section head and CEO prior to filing.

Note: A complainant's request for a phone or face to face response instead of a written response should be noted in complaint file including date and time of the request.

If the consumer is not satisfied with the outcome, or not wish to discuss the issue with the staff member concerned, they should (or use an advocate on their behalf) contact the appropriate TADWA section manager i.e. TADWA Operations Administrator or Customised Aids and Equipment Manager or Computer Services Manager. The section manager will follow the process described above.

If the consumer is not satisfied with the outcome they should contact the Chief Executive Officer of TADWA, or use an advocate to negotiate on their behalf.

If the issue is still not satisfactorily resolved, the consumer or their advocate should raise the issue with a member of the TADWA Board of Management.

The consumer should be informed of the outcome of their complaint and asked for their feedback on the complaints procedure.

If after approaching the above people, the issue is still not resolved, the consumer or their advocate should forward the complaint in writing to:

*Director, Aged Care Policy Directorate, Department of Health, PO Box 8172, Perth WA 6849*

### **8.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

An effective complaint management process requires appropriate systematic recording of complaints and their outcomes. Feedback from verbal/written feedback, incidents and survey data also needs to be included in this process.

In order to carry out effective and efficient processes for data collection, data analysis and dissemination & action of results, consumer and staff feedback needs to be recorded on the '**Continuous Improvement Register**' (see Appendix 2 of this policy document)

The data collection and analysis system implemented by TADWA includes the following issues:

- the number and type of complaints received
- the type of services or practices about which complaints are made
- response time against defined parameters
- demographic details e.g. name, age, gender

- demographic analysis (people, service and section)
- referral source of the complaint
- resources
- action planned or taken including remedies/determinants/results
- trend analysis of complaint issues and system changes and outcomes
- introduced as a result of the complaint

#### **8.4 Risk Management of Potential Problems**

Complaints may be an early warning system to identify opportunities for systemic improvement, thereby minimising the risk of recurrence of the incident for consumers.

The early identification of individual complaints of a serious nature or with a potential for escalation should therefore be the foremost concern for TADWA's risk management program.

#### **8.5 Addressing Systemic and Recurring Problems**

TADWA is required to classify and analyse complaints to facilitate the identification and regular reporting of systemic and recurring problems. Data highlighting systemic issues can be used by TADWA to:

- demonstrate commitment to using consumer feedback to change practices
- assess the performance of the service provided
- change organisational practices and procedures
- redesign services
- identify potential problems
- provide staff with feedback on changes to service delivery and
- continually reassess consumer needs

# APPENDIX 1

(1)

TECHNOLOGY ASSISTING DISABILITY WA

## **COMPLAINT RECORD FORM**

(Page 1 of this form to be completed by person receiving the complaint)

(Appropriate Staff/Section Head to complete Pages 2, 3 & 4 of this form)

(Completed form to CEO & Section Head for signature)

DATE OF COMPLAINT: .....

COMPLAINT RECEIVED BY: .....

COMPLAINT MADE VIA  TELEPHONE  
 LETTER (attached)  
 IN PERSON  
 OTHER .....

SUBJECT OF COMPLAINT: .....

.....

Details of the complaint should be written on the next page. If there is insufficient space, attach extra sheets.

### **INFORMATION TO BE GIVEN TO THE COMPLAINANT:**

- Inform complainant that their complaint has been received
- Reassure complainant that all complaints are treated confidentially and that they will suffer no loss of service because they have made a complaint.
- Explain Technology Assisting Disability WA's complaints procedure. (See 'Consumer Complaints Policy Section, 8.2, *Management of Complaints*')
- Remind the complainant that they have the right to use an advocate of their choice and refer them to appropriate consumer advocacy services. This may be a family member or friend, or an agency such as Advocare telephone free call 1800 655 566 or 9479 7566.
- Inform the complainant of the approximate time that it will take to resolve the complaint
- Thank the complainant for their complaint and explain that complaints are valuable in helping Technology Assisting Disability WA to maintain and improve service.

(2)

**NAME OF COMPLAINANT:** .....

**ADDRESS:** .....

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**PHONE NUMBER:** .....

**DETAIL OF COMPLAINT:** .....

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**COMMENTS:** .....

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**ACTION TO BE TAKEN:** .....

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**OUTCOME:** .....

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** .....  
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**Signed:**..... **Date**.....

**Position in Organisation** .....

**CONSUMER'S DETAILS:**  
(If different from complainant)

**NAME:** .....

**ADDRESS:** .....

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**PHONE NUMBER:** .....

**CARER'S DETAILS:** (if applicable)

**NAME:** .....

**ADDRESS:** .....

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**PHONE NUMBER:** .....

**RELATIONSHIP TO COMPLAINANT:** .....

**ADVOCATE'S DETAILS:** (if applicable)

**NAME:** .....

**ADDRESS:** .....

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**PHONE NUMBER:** .....

**ADVOCATE'S RELATIONSHIP**

**TO COMPLAINANT:** .....

**CHECKLIST** (to be completed prior to Section Head & CEO signing this form and filing in 'Feedback' file.

- All necessary details of the 'Consumer Complaint' form have been completed
- Final written response provided to complainant as per 'Consumer Complaints Policy Section, 8.2
- Recommendations and actions have been recorded on the 'Continuous Improvement Register' form (Appendix 2)

<b>Quality Timeframes Check</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Complaint acknowledged within 3 working days		
Investigation of complaint commenced within 3 working days		
Complaint resolved within 10 working days		

**STAFF COMPLETING REPORT SIGNATURE:** .....

**DATE** .....

**SECTION HEAD SIGNATURE:** ..... **DATE:** .....

**CEO SIGNATURE:** ..... **DATE:**.....

