

# CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

---

## POLICY

Riverlink Interchange Incorporated (Riverlink) is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using Riverlink services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organisation and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

The organisation will provide a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- 1) is simple and easy to use;
  - 2) is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders;
  - 3) ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly;
  - 4) is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice; and
  - 5) complies with legislative requirements.
- 

## DEFINITIONS

### Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction with the agencies policies, procedures, charges, employees, agents and or quality of services.

---

## PROCEDURES

Riverlink will:

- 1) consider all complaints received;
  - 2) treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of the complaint is important to the complainant;
  - 3) maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution;
  - 4) ensure advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support;
  - 5) resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant;
  - 6) deal with all complaints in a timely manner;
-

- 7) keep parties to the complaint informed of progress of the complaint;
- 8) ensure that Management Committee members, staff and volunteers are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints;
- 9) ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures;
- 10) ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the progress of an issue; and
- 11) ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements.

### ***Information for Consumers and Stakeholders***

In the first instance, less serious complaints and/or most verbal complaints will be dealt with informally over the phone. A progress note will be made of the complaint and the resolution.

For more serious and formal complaints, Riverlink complaints and appeals procedure is documented for clients and stakeholders in the Consumer Handbook which is also made available on Riverlink's website ([www.Riverlink.org.au](http://www.Riverlink.org.au) )

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

Complainants may nominate the Riverlink staff member they want as the key contact regarding the complaint.

The Consumer Handbook will contain information on the following:

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

The information will also be made available to clients with limited access to written English through interpreters and through the translation key on the website.

### ***Making a Complaint***

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

- 1) the staff member they were dealing with at the time
- 2) the Executive Officer, or
- 3) the Management Committee

If the complaint is about:

- 1) a staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Executive Officer
- 2) the Executive Officer, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the President of the Management Committee.

Written complaints may be sent to PO Box 418 Ermington NSW 1700. The Administration Officer will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.

### ***Lodging an Appeal***

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organisation. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the Administration Officer.

### ***Procedure for Complaints and Appeals Management***

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

- 1) Processing the complaint or appeal:
  - a) registering the complaint or appeal in the Complaints Data Base
  - b) informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame.
- 2) Investigating the complaint or appeal:
  - a) examining the complaint within 5 working days of the complaint being received;

- b) investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond; and
- c) informing the complainant by letter or email within 10 working days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 15 working days of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

3) Resolving the complaint:

- a) making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 15 working days of the complaint being received
- b) informing the complainant of the outcome
- c) upheld (and if so what will be done to resolve it)
- d) resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
- e) if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
- f) 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 President of the Management Committee within 5 working days of the date of the resolution letter.

5) Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will be referred to the NSW Deputy Ombudsman:

NSW Deputy Ombudsman  
Community and Disability Services Commissioner  
Level 24, 580 George Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: 9286 1000  
nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au

### ***Record Keeping***

A register of complaints or appeals (Complaints Data Base) will be kept in a data base on Riverlink's intranet or secure computer system. The register will be

maintained by the Executive Officer and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- 1) Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint
- 2) Date lodged
- 3) Action taken
- 4) Date of resolution and reason for decision
- 5) Indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- 6) Complainant response and any further action

Copies of all correspondence will be kept in the client's file.

The complaints Data Base and files will be confidential and access is restricted to the Executive Officer.

The Executive Officer, will be responsible for preparing a report on complaints each six months to the Management Committee.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the Executive Officer and the Management Committee to:

- 1) inform service planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- 2) 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 or Volunteers***

The Executive Officer has delegated responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members or volunteers.

Internal complaints, where a staff member or volunteer makes a complaint concerning another staff member or volunteer, will be dealt with in accordance with the organisation's Staff Grievance Procedure (Ref: 3.16).

External complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member or volunteer will be managed by the Executive Officer who will:

- 1) notify the staff member or volunteer of the complaint and its nature
- 2) investigate the complaint and provide the staff member or volunteer with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised

- 3) attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party
- 4) take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member or volunteer arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in the organisation's disciplinary procedures.

Complaints involving the Executive Officer will be managed by President of the Management Committee.

### **Complaints Involving Organisation Members of The Management Committee**

Complaints made against a member of the Management Committee will be referred to the President. The President, or their delegate, will:

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

Where the President is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to the Secretary or the Treasurer.

If the matter remains unresolved, the Secretary or the Treasurer will raise the matter at the next Management Committee meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Management Committee may:

- 1) deal with the matter at its meeting  
or
- 2) refer the matter to the process outlined in Riverlink's constitution.

#### **Related Forms:**

Complaint Record form

Complaints Data Base

Supporters Handbook  
Consumer Handbook  
Riverlink Constitution

**Related Policies:**

- 2.05 Service Access
- 2.09 Prioritising requests for assistance
- 2.12 Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
- 3.13 Staff Performance Issues
- 3.16 Staff Grievance Procedure

**Relevant Standards:**

NSW Disability Service Standards:

Standard 4; Feedback and Complaints

National Standards for Disability Services 2013:

Standard 4; Feedback and Complaints

**Legislation:**

Disability Services Act (NSW) 1993

Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993  
No 2 (CS CRAMA)



.....  
Ray Palmer  
Executive Officer

Date : *27/03/2018*  
.....

