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Workers Health Centre Complaints Management Policy

1. Purpose

Workers Health Centre (WHC) is committed to providing safe, respectful, professional and high-quality workplace rehabilitation services.

WHC recognises that feedback and complaints provide an important opportunity to identify areas for improvement, address concerns and improve the quality and effectiveness of our services.

This Policy establishes a clear, accessible and consistent process for receiving, assessing, investigating, responding to and resolving complaints about WHC services, staff, contractors or processes.

The Policy is designed to support WHC's obligations as a SIRA-approved Workplace Rehabilitation Provider and to reflect SIRA's customer conduct principles, including fairness and empathy, transparency and participation, and timeliness and efficiency.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to complaints made about WHC by:

- injured workers;
- employers;
- insurers;
- unions;
- referrers;
- service providers;
- family members, carers or authorised representatives; and
- other stakeholders who interact with WHC.

A complaint may relate to, but is not limited to:

- the quality or delivery of WHC services;
- the conduct, communication or behaviour of a WHC employee or contractor;
- delays in service delivery or communication;
- concerns about the actions or decisions of WHC;
- privacy or confidentiality concerns;
- accessibility or communication issues;
- the handling of a previous complaint; or
- any other matter where a person expresses dissatisfaction and expects a response or resolution.

3. Policy Principles

WHC will manage complaints in accordance with the following principles.

3.1 Accessible

People should be able to raise a complaint easily and without unnecessary barriers.

WHC will provide clear information about how to make a complaint and will consider reasonable adjustments where required to assist a person to participate in the complaints process.

3.2 Fair and respectful

Complaints will be managed fairly, objectively and respectfully.

Complainants will be given an appropriate opportunity to explain their concerns and provide relevant information.

3.3 Confidential

Complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially, with information only shared with those who need it to assess, investigate or resolve the complaint, subject to applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

3.4 Independent and impartial

Where possible, a complaint will be assessed and investigated by a person who is appropriately independent of the matter being complained about.

Where a complaint concerns a Team Leader, Manager or senior employee, responsibility for managing the complaint will be escalated to an appropriate person who is not directly involved in the matter.

3.5 Timely

WHC will manage complaints promptly and keep the complainant informed of progress.

WHC will aim to:

- acknowledge receipt of a complaint within **2 business days**;
- complete an initial assessment and advise the complainant whether WHC can manage the complaint within **5 business days**; and
- resolve and close the complaint within **20 business days**, where reasonably practicable.

Where a complaint is complex, requires information from external parties, or cannot reasonably be resolved within 20 business days, WHC will advise the complainant of the reason for the delay, provide an updated timeframe and continue to provide progress updates as appropriate.

These timeframes are WHC service standards and are intended to align with the complaint-handling timeframes published by SIRA.

4. How to Make a Complaint

A complaint can be made:

- by email to complaints@workershealth.com.au
- by telephone to WHC;
- in writing; via mail to
Workers Health Centre
Level 4, Suite 320
24 Wentworth Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150, or
- verbally to a WHC employee or contractor.

Where a verbal concern is considered to be a complaint, the WHC employee receiving the complaint should document the relevant details and ensure the matter is referred to the appropriate person for assessment.

A person may make a complaint on behalf of another person where they are authorised to do so.

WHC will not require a complainant to first raise their concern with the person who is the subject of the complaint.

5. Complaints Process

5.1 Step 1 – Receipt and acknowledgement

When WHC receives a complaint, the complaint will be recorded and acknowledged within **2 business days**, where practicable.

The acknowledgement will:

- confirm that the complaint has been received;
 - provide the complainant with information about the complaints process;
 - identify the person responsible for managing the complaint, where appropriate; and
 - advise the complainant that WHC may contact them if further information is required.
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5.2 Step 2 – Initial assessment

WHC will assess the complaint within **5 business days**, where practicable, to determine:

- the nature and scope of the complaint;
- whether WHC has responsibility for the matter;
- whether additional information is required;
- the appropriate person to manage the complaint;
- whether immediate action is required to address any safety, privacy, regulatory or service delivery concerns; and
- whether the matter should be referred or escalated to another organisation or authority.

Where WHC cannot manage all or part of a complaint, the complainant will be advised of this and, where appropriate, provided with information about the relevant alternative pathway.

5.3 Step 3 – Investigation

Where investigation is required, WHC will undertake an appropriate and proportionate review of the issues raised.

This may include:

- reviewing relevant records and documentation;
- reviewing case notes or service records;
- speaking with the complainant;
- speaking with the employee or contractor involved;
- obtaining information from relevant stakeholders;
- reviewing relevant policies, procedures or service agreements; and
- considering whether the matter indicates a broader process, quality or compliance issue.

The investigation will be conducted objectively and without predetermined conclusions.

5.4 Step 4 – Outcome

Following the investigation, WHC will determine an appropriate outcome based on the available information.

Possible outcomes may include:

- the complaint is substantiated in whole or in part;
- the complaint is not substantiated;
- further action or clarification is required;
- an apology or explanation is provided;
- corrective action is undertaken;

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- a process or service is reviewed or changed; or
 - no further action is required.

The complainant will be advised of the outcome and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decision.

WHC will consider the privacy and confidentiality of other individuals when determining what information can be provided to the complainant.

5.5 Step 5 – Closure and review

A complaint will be formally closed once:

- the complaint has been investigated to the extent reasonably practicable;
- the outcome has been communicated to the complainant;
- any agreed corrective actions have been identified; and
- any required internal follow-up has been completed or assigned.

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request a review.

The request should explain why the complainant believes the outcome was incorrect, incomplete or otherwise requires reconsideration.

The review should, where practicable, be undertaken by a person who was not responsible for the original decision.

6. Complaints That Require Escalation

Some complaints may require immediate escalation rather than following the standard complaints process.

This includes matters involving:

- actual or potential harm to a person;
- serious misconduct;
- allegations of discrimination, harassment or abuse;
- privacy or confidentiality breaches;
- conflicts of interest;
- suspected fraud or unlawful conduct;
- serious or systemic service failures;
- significant regulatory or compliance concerns; or
- matters that may require notification to SIRA or another regulatory authority.

The relevant WHC executive or delegated manager will determine whether external notification or escalation is required.

7. Complaints Outside WHC's Authority

WHC will distinguish between complaints about WHC's services and matters that are outside WHC's authority.

For example, a complaint may relate to:

- an insurer's decision regarding a workers compensation claim;
- payment or entitlement disputes;
- decisions made by an employer;
- matters within the jurisdiction of another regulator or statutory body; or
- matters requiring legal or formal dispute resolution.

Where WHC is unable to determine or resolve a matter, WHC will explain this to the complainant and, where appropriate, provide information about the relevant organisation or pathway.

SIRA identifies different pathways for complaints concerning workplace rehabilitation providers, insurers, employers and other participants in the NSW workers compensation system.

8. Protection from Detriment

A person who raises a genuine complaint will not be disadvantaged, penalised or treated adversely because they have made a complaint. WHC will take reasonable steps to ensure that making a complaint does not adversely affect the person's access to appropriate services.

While complainants are protected from adverse treatment for raising a genuine complaint, WHC may take reasonable and appropriate action where:

- a professional or therapeutic relationship has broken down, and services can no longer be provided safely or effectively;
- there are conflicts of interest, safety concerns or other circumstances that prevent WHC from continuing to provide services;
- a complaint involves deliberately false information, threatening behaviour, harassment, violence or other unacceptable conduct; or
- there is another lawful and legitimate reason for discontinuing services.

Where practicable, WHC will take reasonable steps to support continuity of care or transition to an alternative provider in accordance with its professional and legal obligations.

9. Record Keeping

WHC will maintain an appropriate record of complaints received.

The complaints register should record, as appropriate:

- complaint reference number;
- date received;
- complainant;
- source of complaint;
- nature/category of complaint;
- WHC employee, contractor or service involved;
- person responsible for managing the complaint;
- date acknowledged;
- initial assessment outcome;
- investigation undertaken;
- outcome;
- corrective or improvement actions;
- date closed;
- whether the complainant requested a review; and
- review outcome.

Complaint records will be managed in accordance with WHC's privacy, information management and record-keeping requirements.

10. Monitoring, Reporting and Continuous Improvement

Complaints will be monitored to identify recurring issues, trends, risks and opportunities for improvement.

WHC will periodically review complaint data, including:

- number of complaints received;
- complaint categories;
- source of complaints;
- time taken to acknowledge and resolve complaints;
- complaints outstanding beyond the target timeframe;
- outcomes;
- repeat complaints;
- complaints requiring escalation; and
- corrective and preventative actions.

Complaint trends should be reported to relevant management and used to identify opportunities for service, process and quality improvement.

Where a complaint identifies a systemic issue, WHC will consider whether a broader review or corrective action is required.

11. Responsibilities

All WHC employees and contractors

All employees and contractors are responsible for:

- treating complaints seriously and respectfully;
- ensuring complaints are not ignored or unnecessarily delayed;
- recording and referring complaints appropriately;
- maintaining confidentiality; and
- cooperating with any complaint investigation.

Complaint Manager / Delegated Manager

The person responsible for managing the complaint is responsible for:

- acknowledging the complaint;
- undertaking or coordinating the assessment;
- ensuring the investigation is fair and proportionate;
- maintaining appropriate records;
- communicating with the complainant;
- monitoring timeframes;
- documenting the outcome; and
- identifying any corrective or improvement actions.

Management

Management is responsible for:

- ensuring the complaints process is implemented consistently;
- reviewing complaint trends and significant matters;
- ensuring appropriate escalation occurs;
- monitoring compliance with the Policy; and

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- using complaint information to support continuous improvement.

12. External Escalation

WHC recognises that a person may have the right to raise a complaint about a SIRA-approved Workplace Rehabilitation Provider with SIRA.

SIRA advises that concerns about a workplace rehabilitation provider should initially be discussed with the provider's manager. If the issue is not resolved, the worker may contact their insurer case manager and, if the issue remains unresolved, SIRA. SIRA may request the provider to review the complaint in accordance with its complaints management and dispute resolution processes. Information about contacting SIRA is available through the SIRA website.

13. Related Documents

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- WHC Privacy Policy;
- WHC Code of Conduct;
- SIRA Workers Compensation Workplace Rehabilitation Provider Approval Framework; and
- applicable NSW workers compensation legislation, guidelines and regulatory requirements.

14. Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed periodically and following any significant change to:

- SIRA requirements;
- relevant legislation or regulatory guidance;
- WHC's service model;
- WHC's complaints management process; or identified risks or systemic issues arising from complaint trends.