

Policy CO:05

Complaints management system



Document Control

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| Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer | Policy Number: CO:05 |
| Contact Officer: Incidents and Complaints Advisor | Policy Area: Governance |
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Scope

This policy provides a framework to guide all actions for the C&K Board, C&K staff, C&K Central, branch services, affiliate services, children, parents / guardians, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

This policy is a core Central Governing Body (CGB) policy for C&K affiliate members.

This policy does not cover employee grievances or privacy complaints:

- For matters regarding an employee grievance (e.g. work dispute, concern regarding the working environment or an employment relationship) please refer to *HR: 05 Policy Employee Grievances*.
- For privacy complaints please refer to *CO: 06 Policy Privacy*.

Introduction

C&K affirms and supports the right of complainants to provide feedback and have complaints heard and actioned within acceptable timeframes. C&K recognises that feedback, both positive and negative, is essential in order to assist us to provide quality services. Complaints that are properly handled help C&K improve operations and business processes. Therefore, time spent effectively handling complaints is an investment in improved services and outcomes.

This policy (and its associated documents):

- Provides a framework to guide the actions of all C&K services and employees to manage and resolve complaints in a prompt, fair, confidential and effective manner
- Reflects the guiding principles of the *Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations* and the *Queensland Ombudsman guidelines for complaint management*
- Supports and aligns with C&K's Strategic Direction of:
 - Having a capable, engaged, diverse workforce and high performance culture
 - Being a well-run, sustainable organisation.

Please refer to Appendix One - a flow chart summary of this procedure.

Definitions & acronyms

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| Complainant | Any person or organisation (or their representative) making a complaint |
| Complaint | Expression of dissatisfaction made to, or about C&K, related to their products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required |
| Feedback | Opinions, comments or expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to, or about the organisation related to their products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint |



Policy Statement

1.0 Guiding principles

- C&K's Complaints Management System (CMS) is based on the following guiding principles:

1.1 Enabling complaints – customer focused, visible and accessible

- C&K to implement a customer-focused CMS encouraging a culture of treating a complaint as an opportunity to improve performance and service
- All C&K employees to be committed to resolving complaints
- Complainants will be treated with respect and courtesy
- C&K's CMS to be made accessible to all community stakeholders and partners and the wider community
- C&K to assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those with visual and hearing impairment and those who cannot read or write, to record a complaint
- Where practical, C&K to ensure the CMS remains flexible, including the provision for anonymous complaint lodgment.

1.2 Managing complaints – responsive, objective and confidential

- C&K to promptly acknowledge each complaint received
- C&K to assess and give appropriate priority in accordance to the risk level and urgency of each complaint
- Whenever possible, minor complaints raised at a service level (front line) to be addressed by the Director or relevant manager. However serious / high risk complaints, or where the complaint is unable to be resolved at a local level, to be escalated to senior management and / or C&K Board level
- A case manager to be allocated to each complaint
- Resolution time frames to be tracked and monitored
- Where appropriate and practical, complainants to be reasonably and regularly informed of the progress of their complaint
- C&K to actively manage complainant's expectations
- C&K will strive to ensure that each complaint is managed in an objective, unbiased and equitable manner. The CMS aims to reflect principles of social and natural justice through inclusive practices that respect and support people from a diverse range of backgrounds including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with additional support needs
- To ensure confidentiality, personal information relating to the complaint only to be used for the purpose of addressing the complaint and for complaint reporting and analysis
- Conflicts of interest to be identified and declared early in the CMS process
- Reasonable steps to be taken to ensure complainants are not adversely affected because of the complaint made by them
- Complaints will be treated on their merit
- If legal action is taken, the CMS to cease until the outcome of those proceedings is known
- Allegations concerning the conduct and practice of C&K employees to be managed in accordance with relevant C&K Human Resource policies and processes
- C&K to reflect principles of confidentiality, and procedural fairness as per the established employment relationship and duty of care to our employees

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1.3 Managing all parties

- C&K endeavors to ensure employees are properly educated and empowered (e.g. clear procedures, appropriate training) to implement the CMS as relevant to their role
- C&K to implement policies clearly articulating the behaviour expected of all parties
- C&K to implement policies to ensure the health and safety of employees involved in complaint management
- Where a complaint involves multiple areas within C&K, the case manager will be responsible for communicating with the complainant
- C&K to aim to ensure a resolution or remedy is provided for each valid complaint. C&K will provide actions to resolve the issue and / or mediate the risk of the issue recurring
- Complainants to be advised of outcomes as soon as possible after a decision has been made
- C&K to provide opportunity for an appeal, describing process and timeframes, if a resolution or remedy is unacceptable to the complainant

1.4 Reporting, analysis and continuous improvement

- Depending on the type and seriousness of a complaint; statutory bodies (e.g. OECEC) to be notified within the required timeframes
- C&K acknowledges that responding and learning from complaints is an essential factor of continuous improvement and providing high quality services
- Regular reporting, evaluation and analysis of the CMS will be completed across all areas of C&K for senior management and the C&K Board
- C&K will implement strategies and processes that minimise the possibility of complaints escalating into ongoing disputes

Acknowledgements and references

- Standards Australia (2014). *Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations.*
- The State of Queensland (Office of the Ombudsman) (2006). *Guide to Developing Effective Complaints Management Policies and Procedures.*

Revision record

| Version | Approval Date | Authorised by | Effective Date | Review Cycle | Next review date |
|---------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1.0 | 22 Sep 2010 | C&K Board | 22 Sep 2010 | Biannual | 22 September 2010 |
| 2.0 | 22 Sep 2012 | GM - Children's Services | 22 Sep 2012 | Biannual | September 2014 |
| 3.0 | 19 May 2016 | C&K Board | 1 July 2016 | Biannual | 1 July 2018 |

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Appendix one – C&K Complaint Management System

