



Queensland Stoma Association Ltd Complaints and Feedback Policy

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1. Introduction

Queensland Stoma Association Ltd (QSA) values the feedback it receives from members, their families and carers, and other stakeholders in our organisation. QSA also acknowledges that people have a right to make complaints about its service or actions.

Through the development of policies and procedures, QSA uses all opportunities available to identify areas for improvement and to share positive member and stakeholder feedback and experiences. This Complaints and Feedback Policy also ensures that complaints can be responded to and disputes resolved fairly, quickly and professionally

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Complaints and Feedback Policy is to provide members, their families and carers, employees and other stakeholders of QSA the opportunity to make complaints, to raise disputes and to offer feedback to the organisation. The Complaints and Feedback Policy includes clear guidelines about how to make a complaint or raise a dispute, the QSA complaints and dispute handling process, and about how to provide feedback.

The policy is intended to:

- support people to give feedback, to make a complaint or raise a dispute
- make it easier for Queensland Stoma Association Ltd to investigate and respond to complaints, and to investigate and resolve disputes
- help Queensland Stoma Association Ltd improve its services
- give employees, members, supplier and other stakeholders confidence in Queensland Stoma Association Ltd.

3. Scope

This Complaints and Feedback Policy includes information about how feedback and complaints can be made and how disputes can be raised, how we investigate, manage and resolve complaints and disputes, and how information will be shared and used by QSA to improve our services.

4. Feedback

The Collins Dictionary defines “Feedback” as “*Advice, criticism, or information about how good or useful something or someone's work is*”.

Feedback is important to QSA because it

- Helps us to identify areas for improvement and growth, and

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- Helps us to better understand what is important to our members and other stakeholders

QSA collects feedback through:

- Member and stakeholder satisfaction surveys
- Direct methods via telephone and email
- Social Media Monitoring
- Written testimonial
- Monitoring membership trends (eg: new member applications and transfers)

Feedback will be collated and reviewed regularly at staff and Board meetings, and used to positively reinforce practices and services, and as a tool for improvement and growth.

5. Complaints and Disputes

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint management in organisations - AS/NZS 10002:2014 (AS/NZS Complaint Management Standard) defines a complaint as an *“Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required”*.

A complaint or dispute can be about conduct, about service, or about a product. Examples are complaints about discriminatory behaviour, or dissatisfaction about the quality of a product or service provided.

The following is not considered to be a complaint:

- A request for information or an explanation of QSA policies or procedures
- An expression of concern where a response or resolution is not explicitly requested or implicitly expected
- An expression of opinion – for example, feedback given where a response is not requested or implicitly expected)

Complaints are an important way for QSA to be accountable to its members, their families and carers, and other stakeholders. Complaints also provide valuable prompts to review QSA worker and organisational performance.

Complaints and disputes may be made:

- in writing by email or letter,
- verbally in person or by telephone,

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- in writing through the contact form available on the QSA website,
- anonymously,
- on behalf of another person,
- in any other way that suits the needs of the complainant.

Where a verbal complaint or dispute has been made, the QSA employee or volunteer taking the complaint or dispute will record it immediately and ensure that the details are correct by verifying them with the complainant. If a verbal complaint or dispute is complex, the Manager may ask for further details to be made in writing.

Where a complaint or dispute is made on another person’s behalf as their advocate or representative, QSA will check that the person is happy for QSA to respond directly to their representative.

6. Policy Content

It is QSA’s intent to have a clear and transparent complaints process in place for members, their families and carers, employees and other stakeholders of QSA. It is the responsibility of all QSA workers to ensure that the policy is followed, and that all complaints and disputes are dealt with in a respectful and fair manner.

It is the responsibility of the QSA Manager to investigate and respond to complaints, to investigate and resolve disputes, and to document all complaints and disputes received by the organisation. The Manager will also be responsible for ensuring that the Complaints and Feedback Policy is reviewed and updated as appropriate in consultation with the QSA Board.

QSA will ensure the following points are adhered to:

- Information about how to make a complaint or dispute is readily available to all members, their families and carers, employees and other stakeholders of QSA. Complaints information is included in the new member welcome pack and details are also available on the QSA website.
- All QSA staff and administration volunteers will be trained in the complaints handling process during their initial induction into the organisation and in ongoing updates through regular staff meetings and professional development. QSA will ensure that the complaints policy and a review of complaints and disputes received is a regular part of staff meetings.
- Any person wishing to make a complaint or raise a dispute will be given the necessary information that they need to make the complaint or raise the dispute.

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All QSA staff and administration volunteers will be able to provide the relevant information on request.

- Complaints or disputes may be made anonymously and will be treated in the same way as any other complaint.
- Any person wishing to make a complaint or raise a dispute will be offered support and assistance.
- QSA is aware that at times the process for the complaint or dispute making may need to be flexible to suit the nature of the complaint/dispute and the person making the complaint/dispute.
- All people involved or impacted in any complaint made will be kept informed as to the progress of the complaint investigation and the resolution process.
- QSA will ensure that all people making a complaint or raising a dispute are treated with respect. Information will be shared with them openly and no adverse action will be taken against any complainant.
- All complaints and disputes will be acknowledged when they are made.
- All information contained within a complaint or dispute will be kept confidential and will only be disclosed if required by law or other appropriate circumstances.
- Where a complainant wishes to escalate their complaint or dispute, QSA will provide support and assistance to the complainant.
- QSA will ensure that the Complaints and Feedback Policy is reviewed and updated regularly.
- QSA will maintain all complaint and disputes records for a period of 7 years and will ensure that all details are collated to show improvement and how the complaint data is used for the betterment of the organisation and service delivery. Where there is a repeated complaint issue, the organisation will investigate the best way to resolve the issue.

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7. The Complaints Model

The QSA Complaints and Feedback Policy is a step by step way to receive, record, assess, review, respond and report on complaints and disputes. It recognises that complaints are usually made verbally to the QSA Manager, and to QSA staff and volunteers.

- Stage 1:** Complaints and disputes are initially managed and resolved by the Manager.
- Stage 2:** Unresolved complaints or disputes are referred to the Queensland Stoma Association Ltd Board for review and response.
- Stage 3:** People who are not happy with the way QSA has handled their complaint or dispute can contact the Australian Council of Stoma Associations Inc or the Commonwealth Department of Health, Stoma Appliance Scheme Enquiry line for help.

Complaints and disputes will be dealt with quickly and efficiently. Complaints should also be handled in a fair and objective way. When QSA deals with a complaint or dispute, it should:

- talk to the person making the complaint to check whether they understand all the issues
- gather and consider all relevant information about the complaint or dispute
- identify and consider relevant laws, policies and procedures
- give anyone affected by the complaint a fair hearing before the complaint is decided
- decide what action should be taken to respond to the complaint or to resolve the dispute.

8. The Complaints Handling Process

Accepting the complaint or dispute

QSA workers and volunteers should take the following steps when accepting a complaint or dispute:

1. Listen to the person making the complaint carefully and do not interrupt them.
2. Acknowledge their concerns by expressing your understanding of the problem. This helps the person to understand that they have been heard correctly.
3. Apologise sincerely for the person's dissatisfaction and let them know that you want to help them to receive a favourable outcome.

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4. Provide the person making the complaint with a copy of the QSA Complaints Handling Process and any other information they may need to make a complaint.
5. Record the details of the complaint or dispute on a QSA Complaints form (Appendix 1) or provide the complaint form to the person to complete.
6. Where a complaint or dispute is made other than in writing (eg: by telephone), ensure that the details of the complaint are correct by verifying the information recorded on the complaint form with the person making the complaint.
7. The complaint or dispute should be immediately referred to the Manager.

Timeframes

Acknowledgement: The complaint or dispute will be acknowledged within two days of the date that it was received. Acknowledgement may be provided verbally including by telephone, or in writing including via email where available. The acknowledgements should provide details about how long it will take to investigate the complaint or dispute, to respond to the complaint or dispute, and the contact details for the person dealing with the complaint or dispute.

Outcome: QSA will make every attempt to respond to the complaint or to resolve the dispute and to communicate the outcome to the person who made the complaint or dispute within 15 working days from the date it was received. The final response can be provided verbally, but should be confirmed in writing. If the final response cannot be provided within this time, QSA should let the person know how their complaint or dispute is progressing and when they can expect a response.

Reviewing and Investigating the complaint or dispute

1. The Manager will open a case file and record details of the complaint or dispute into the complaints register (Appendix 2). The complaints register should record:
 - a complaint reference number
 - the name of the person making the complaint
 - the date the complaint was received and how
 - what the complaint or dispute is about
 - information collected and considered

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- complaint or dispute outcome, actions or resolutions taken, and the reasons for these actions or resolutions
- the date the final response was communicated to the complainant

2. The Manager will consider each complaint or dispute carefully to determine:

- what the complaint or dispute is about
- how it should be managed, including whether it is urgent
- if any extra information is needed.

Factors to be considered should include:

- The seriousness of the complaint or dispute
- whether the complaint or dispute involves an action of QSA or its staff
- whether the person making the complaint or dispute is directly affected
- what investigation of the complaint or dispute is required
- whether the person making the complaint or dispute has a right to appeal the decision
- whether the complaint or dispute is within the delegation of QSA
- the outcome sought by the person making the complaint or dispute.

Outcomes may include:

- An apology
- A change in policy, practice, or procedure
- fixing misleading or inaccurate records
- offering help/support, providing further information or referring the complaint to someone who can help.

3. The QSA Manager will commence investigating the complaint or dispute and notify those involved or impacted of progress.

Deciding on a resolution and communicating the outcome

Once investigation of the complaint or dispute has been finalised, the outcome and/or resolution will be shared with the person who made the complaint or dispute and anyone else involved or impacted. The final response should include:

1. the decision and the reasons for the decision
2. resolutions to be taken (if any)
3. contact details for the person handling the complaint or dispute

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4. information about any right of appeal.

Where a complaint or dispute requires escalation or the complainant chooses to escalate the complaint or dispute, the Manager will ensure that all relevant details are provided to the complainant.

9. Reporting on Feedback and Complaints

A Complaints report will be tabled at the next QSA Board meeting for discussion and further investigation into resolutions and improvements if indicated. The report should:

- Identify and analyse complaint trends and significant issues to assess whether the Complaints and Feedback Policy is working effectively
- Include recommendations for improvement
- Detail ways that QSA will implement accepted recommendations.

10. Policy Review Statement

This policy will be reviewed annually as a part of the ongoing review and continuous improvement of all QSA policies and procedures.

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