



## **Complaints & Suggestions For Improvement Policy & Procedure Policy No: 01**

Dated: 3 February 2012

Version 1.0

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Rainbow Tasmania (The Tasmanian Council for Sexual and Gender Diverse People Inc, i.e. “the Council”) is committed to being open and responsive to any complaints or suggestions for improvement made by its volunteers or other members of the community.

This policy is motivated by its objectives to assist the sexual and gender diverse community to ‘come out with pride’ and live in their community with dignity as fully respected and participating members. It is also inspired by values of respect, equity and access for our volunteers and members of our community.

The Council will at all times seek an outcome to a complaint through conciliation which is satisfactory to all parties, and will endeavour to incorporate suggestions for improvement into our advocacy work.

As a volunteer organisation, the Council values and respects the social capital provided by our members and is committed to their welfare and rewarding their investment in our common ground.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is:

1. To establish the principles which are to govern the Council’s response to complaints and suggestions for improvement.
  2. To ensure the existence of conciliation procedures through which volunteers and members of the community can communicate complaints and suggestions for improvement regarding any aspect of the Council’s advocacy, functioning or operations.
  3. To enable the Council to address all complaints through ensuring that they are recorded, considered, resolved and monitored.
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4. To ensure that suggestions for improvement are actively encouraged, received, considered and if appropriate, delegated with their implementation monitored and recorded.
5. To ensure that both volunteers and our community are aware of the content of this policy and its associated related procedures.

## **POLICY**

6. The Council shall implement and maintain a formal complaints procedure to ensure that all complaints are responded to in a timely and impartial fashion.
7. The Council shall ensure that all suggestions for improvement and complaints are recorded, considered and retained for process improvement purposes.
8. The Council encourages our volunteers and members of the community who have a suggestion for improvement or complaint in relation to any aspect of the Council or to the actions of a volunteer or Committee member to express this through the formal relevant procedures.
9. The Council shall ensure that all parties are informed of his or her right to have a support person or advocate present to assist or represent them during the formal complaints procedure. Formal complaints can be written or verbal. If verbal, the assisting Council member will document the complaint.
10. The Council shall address all complaints in a confidential manner. Only the people directly involved in making, investigating or resolving a complaint will have access to information about it.
11. The Council shall ensure that the complaint investigation process is impartial. No assumptions will be made nor any action taken until all relevant information has been collected and considered.
12. The Council shall ensure that any complaint is free of repercussions for the complainant. The Council will take all necessary steps to ensure that no victimisation occurs against anyone who makes a complaint.
13. The Council Chair (alternatively the Deputy Chair) will be responsible for managing the complaints procedure and will ensure that complaints are forwarded to the relevant volunteer for consideration and resolution. The Council shall ensure that volunteers or other members of the community are able to directly contact the Council Chairperson if it be their wish.
14. All information relating to a complaint will be kept on a confidential and secure Complaints Register and no documentation will be kept elsewhere.
15. The Council will ensure that all volunteers and members are aware of this policy and its related procedures.

16. The Council shall ensure that all volunteers and members are informed of the existence of this policy and its related procedures (including Access of Information when finalised) at the commencement of receiving services. A copy of this policy and the relevant procedure must be made available to volunteers and members in their preferred format as required.
17. The Council recognises the right of individuals to approach an external agency if the formal complaints procedure has not resolved the issue to their satisfaction or is more correctly directed to an organisation established for the particular complaint.
18. The Council Chairperson has overall responsibility for this policy.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Complaint:** Any issue of a negative nature that is formally brought to the notice of the Council in order to bring about a change or resolution to the Council in order to improve the operations of the Council.

**Volunteer:** A person who is a member of the Council and assists in achieving the objectives of the Association (Incorporation). It also includes members of the community who contribute to the objectives as a sponsor or donor.

**Member of the Community:** Any person who is not a client and who is part of, or a friend of, the sexual and gender diverse community and wishes to be associated with the Council or its member organisations.

## **Complaint and Suggestion for Improvement Handling**

A complaint or suggestion for improvement needs to be made in writing (or made verbally and transcribed by a Council member) and signed by the complainant or person making the suggestion for improvement. This can be made on the form attached or otherwise and addressed to the Chair at the Council address. The form will identify the person, class of persons, or organisation against whom the complaint is made. It will be lodged with the Chair - in person or by post or by any other means the Chair allows.

## **Brief overview of complaints process**

A complaint is lodged at the Council office. The Chair determines whether the complaint is accepted or rejected for conciliation. The respondent is contacted only if the complaint is accepted for conciliation. The complainant has a right of review through any other avenues that are available outside the Council process.

An exchange of correspondence is conducted between the parties. This includes the complaint being made in writing. This is sent to the respondent by the Chair for a written response and agreement to a conciliation process. The Chair, or alternatively the Deputy Chair arranges for a skilled conciliator/mediator (volunteers with conciliation skills registered on a list held by the Chair).

The Complainant is asked to state his/her requirements to settle the complaint. Both parties can discuss independently with the appointed Conciliator to offer a response to the exchange of responses to the complaint. If both parties agree the Chair will arrange a suitable meeting time and place to discuss with the person appointed to conciliate the matter the complainant's written letter of requirements.

Both Parties consider some resolutions that they have proposed or have been suggested by the Conciliator. If agreement is reached, both parties agree to the solutions that are then enacted. Failing any agreement, the Conciliator can discuss independently with both parties any other areas of redress that they may have in addressing their complaint or concerns about the complaint.



## COMPLAINT / SUGGESTION FOR IMPROVEMENT FORM

### (1) About You

Preferred Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr etc) : .....

Your name: .....

Your address: .....

Postcode .....

Mailing address (if different from street address) .....

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Postcode.....

Telephone: (Home):..... (Work): .....

Mobile:..... Fax: .....

E-mail : .....

### (2) Who do you believe has offended you?

Name/Organisation.....

Address .....

Postcode.....

Telephone..... Fax.....

### (3) What is the person's/organisation's relationship to you?

Organisation she/he works for (if any).....

Address .....

Postcode.....

Telephone..... Fax.....

Head of organisation (if known).....

**(4) Is there anyone who is helping you with this complaint?**

What is their name?.....  
Who are they? .....  
Telephone/s:.....

**(5) When did it happen?**

For example, time of day, day, month, year. Give exact date and time if you can. If you cannot, please try to give an approximate date/time etc.

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**(6) Did these things happen more than 12 months ago?  Yes  No**

If the treatment you are making a complaint about happened more than 12 months ago, we may be unable help you unless you have good reasons for not making a complaint until now. Please tell us the reasons why you waited until now to make your complaint.

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**(7) Have you made a complaint to other agencies?**

For example, Anti Discrimination Commission your Union, Government department, the Ombudsman, Industrial Relation Commission, Workers Compensation Tribunal, lawyer or police?

If so, please give details of complaint and any outcome to date:

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**(8) How has this treatment affected you?**

For example, have you lost any wages or suffered personal loss or harm, been on stress leave or suffered sleeplessness, anxiety or humiliation, etc.

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**(9) What happened? Why do you think it happened?**

The Council needs to know: what happened and what it is about what happened that make you believe that you have been discriminated against. Please answer the questions below. If you need some more space please use additional paper and attach the extra pieces of paper to this form. Numbering the pages can help.

Please do not send originals of supporting documentation or copies on thermal paper.

Note: Remembering words said to you or particular acts, and dates or times, such as 'around New Year' or 'during the school holidays', or 'around lunchtime', 'early in the week', etc., can help us to understand and assess your complaint. Please write them down overleaf.

Write down the basic points you want us to know. We rely on you to help us understand your complaint. The Council will use what you say to make a decision on whether to accept or reject your complaint for investigation.

**This is your complaint and it is your responsibility to make it as clear as possible.**

*Please use additional space overleaf if there is not enough room to outline your complaint on this form.*

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(10) **What would you like to happen to sort out this complaint?**

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(11) **Consent to send a copy of complaint to the person/organisation involved.**

If your complaint is accepted for conciliation, a copy of your complaint and all attached documents will be sent to the person/organisation your complaint is about. If you want this to happen, circle yes. If you do not want a copy of your complaint and attached documents to go to them, circle no and we will send a summary of your complaint.

(b) **YES**

**NO**

\* You **MUST** circle one of the above

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Date : .....

If your complaint is accepted for conciliation, we will notify you **within 14 days** of receiving the complaint. If it is rejected, we will notify you **within 21** days or as soon thereafter as possible.

This is the **first step** in the complaint process. If we accept the complaint **for conciliation** we must investigate it. We start by telling you and the respondent, and asking the respondent for their response, so that they can **have their say** too. This makes the process **fair and even-handed** because the Chair's position **must remain** neutral.