



HEARTLAND
SUPPORT SERVICES

**Feedback and Complaints
Policy**

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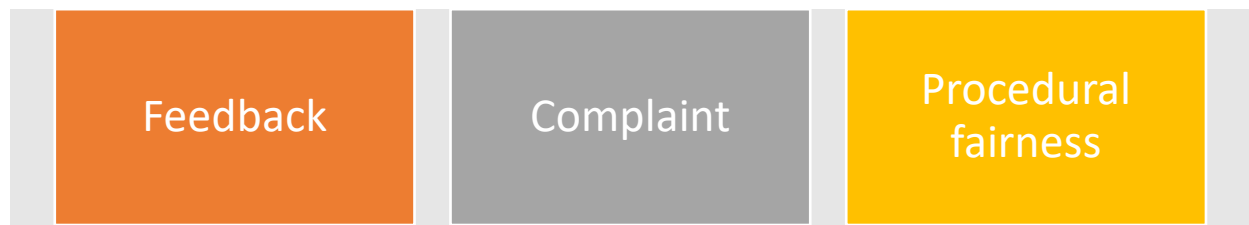


Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the Feedback and Complaints Policy (Policy) is to provide simple and clear information about how Heartland Support Services responds to feedback and complaints about our services.

Heartland Support Services is committed to improving our services. Feedback helps us enhance our services and respond to community needs and expectations. Feedback and complaints provide valuable information we can use to improve future customer experiences and satisfaction and helps us know what we're doing well and what changes we need to make.

We have therefore established a policy with procedures that identify any problems with service delivery, ensuring that complaints are handled fairly and effectively, and that resolution of complaints will be consistent with a rights-based principle fundamental to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Feedback

Feedback is any reaction to supports you deliver or your conduct in providing these, both positive and negative. It is encouraged from participants, families, staff, and other providers and can be received via multiple mechanisms.

Complaint

A complaint is anything which a participant thinks is unsatisfactory or unfair or which makes them unhappy with your service. NDIS Commission definition is "A complaint is 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 expected or legally required."

Procedural Fairness

The key principles of procedural fairness include: All people involved in the incident will be informed about what has happened or alleged to have happened. They will have the opportunity to explain their view of the incident. Corrective action will be based on relevant facts and circumstances. The investigator and decision maker will be impartial and even-handed.

It's important to know that this does not mean your matter will be referred for further investigation or compliance action. However, we will review and assess whether the relevant process was followed and whether the matter was handled professionally.

Exclusions

This Policy does not apply to:

- minor issues raised directly with a Heartland Support Services staff member, or their team leader, that can be addressed during a standard interaction
- contents of a compliance notice or the penalty associated with an infringement notice
- current/ongoing Heartland Support Services matters
- matters previously/currently dealt with by an external agency, tribunal, or court.

General service enquiries are not managed as part of the feedback and complaint's function. For general workplace relations advice or assistance with a workplace dispute, please submit an online enquiry to feedback@thehss.com.au.

Policy

Heartland Support Services feedback and complaint policy ensures that a positive attitude towards complainants is advocated and that a commitment to resolving complaints will create a noticeable improvement in client and NDIS participant satisfaction.

We foster an environment where complaints and suggestions are welcomed and viewed as an opportunity for acknowledgement and improvement. This process ensures that individuals have the right to make complaints and are encouraged to exercise their right in a blame-free and resolution-focused culture, respecting an individual's right to privacy and confidentiality.

Specifically in relation to people with disability, we follow the guiding principles that people with disability have a right to have a say about and be involved in decisions affecting their lives must inform the approach to complaints management and resolution.

Our policy follows the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice and comply with the requirements under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018 and NDIS (Procedural Fairness) Guidelines 2018, including:

informing a person if their rights or interests may be adversely or detrimentally affected in a direct and specific way,

- giving notice of each prejudicial matter that may be considered against them,
- giving a reasonable opportunity to be heard on those matters before adverse action is taken, putting forward information and submissions in support of an outcome that is favourable to their interests,
- ensuring that the decision to take adverse action should be soundly based on the facts and issues that were raised during that process, and this should be apparent in the record of the decision,
- ensuring that the decisionmaker should be unbiased and maintain an unbiased appearance.

Furthermore, the person making the complaint, and any person with disability affected by issues raised in a complaint, should be included throughout the process to the extent possible and are:

appropriately involved in the resolution of the complaint, and kept informed of the progress of the complaint, including:

- any action taken,
- the reasons for decisions made, and
- options to have decisions reviewed.

The Operations Manager or an appropriately delegated person is responsible for coordinating and handling complaints and feedback and ensuring the complaint or feedback is properly managed.

To lodge feedback or a complaint

We can accept feedback and complaints through any channel; however, we encourage you to use Heartland Support Services online form or email feedback@thehss.com.au. This helps us ensure feedback is centrally managed in our system.

When lodging your feedback or complaint, please include enough information so we can understand your concerns. We ask that you:

- consider the key issues (such as what happened, when the situation occurred, who was involved)
- provide all the relevant information relating to your Heartland Support Services interaction, and
- tell us what part of the process or services wasn't followed or performed appropriately.

What can you expect from us?

- We will treat you with courtesy, consideration, and respect.
- We will listen to your concerns.
- We will take reasonable steps to resolve your issue.
- We will keep you informed of progress.
- We will apologise if we have made a mistake.

What we expect from you?

- That you actively participate, such as cooperating with any requests for information or evidence.
- That you engage and communicate with us in a respectful manner. Abusive or threatening correspondence or conduct will not be tolerated.
- That you make only reasonable follow-up contact and requests after providing the initial feedback or complaint.

How we handle feedback and complaints



Receive and acknowledge

We will confirm receipt of all feedback and complaints, generally within 2 business days. Where required we will also provide you with an opportunity to provide further information relevant to your matter.

Timely feedback and complaints help us respond to and better manage any issues and evolving needs. The age of an issue can impact what potential outcomes or resolutions are available. Where possible, a request for review should be lodged within 28 days of the original decision.

Assess

All feedback and complaints will be treated fairly and impartially. The assessment of these matters will be based on the information and evidence available. If feedback is anonymous, it will be reviewed and considered for business improvement opportunities, but no further action will be taken.

In assessing feedback and complaints we consider all relevant circumstances, including:

- the seriousness of the allegation or concern
- whether the decision made by Heartland Support Services was communicated effectively
- how long it's been since the issue occurred
- any sensitivities associated with the matter
- if there's a systemic or administrative issue
- if an advocate would be beneficial
- whether the complaint needs to be forwarded to the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission

We won't accept feedback or complaints where:

- the allegations are outside of the scope of this Policy
- the complaint is vexatious and/or has already been raised and appropriately actioned
- there are other processes in place to address the concerns (such as disputing the content/issuing of a compliance notice), or
- a review has already been completed on the matter.

In certain circumstances we may decide not to undertake a request for review of your complaint. If this happens, we will explain why and provide you with an opportunity to provide further information.

Action

All matters are recorded in our Feedback and Complaints system, with all decisions recorded to ensure a transparent, accountable, and consistent approach to managing feedback and complaints.

We ensure procedural fairness by gathering the relevant facts to understand the issues. This may include asking you to provide more information or supporting evidence relating to your feedback or complaint.

Once we have gathered the relevant information and evidence, we will decide on the most appropriate action and response.

Heartland Support Services actions could include:

- acknowledging the issue
- referring the matter to the relevant business area, to a specific legislative or other process/mechanism, or to another agency (e.g. NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission)
- providing additional information or assistance
- reconsidering a decision.

In most instances feedback matters will be initially considered by the relevant business area of Heartland Support Services, to which the matter relates. This can include, but is not limited to, a re-consideration of a decision or whether the decision made by Heartland Support Services has been communicated effectively.

If your feedback or complaint cannot be resolved, we may undertake a more detailed internal review. A more formal review will generally be completed within 3 months from the date the request is received. However, this will depend on the complexity and nature of the review and timeframes may vary. Where a review is complex and/or takes longer than anticipated, we will keep you informed of progress with regular updates.

Once your complaint or request for procedural fairness review has been finalised, you will be notified of the outcome and provided information on the relevant next steps available to you, if applicable to your situation.

Privacy

We are committed to protecting your privacy. If you want to learn more about how Heartland Support Services handles privacy, you can request a copy of our Privacy Policy at any time.

You can provide feedback anonymously or use a pseudonym, however, this will prevent us from identifying your matter and assessing whether it was handled appropriately and in accordance with our usual processes.

Alternatively, a third party or advocate can submit feedback on your behalf or act as your representative. We need your permission (including from minors and employees with vulnerabilities) for a third party to act on your behalf, along with their contact information. Please note, your representative will only be able to act on this matter.

Additional feedback options

If you aren't satisfied with the way we handled your concerns, you can contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission in writing, by phone, in person or via an online form.



Phone: 1800 035 544

Email: contactcentre@ndiscommission.gov.au

Website: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/contact-us/makeacomplaint>

Interpreters can be arranged.