

COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK MANAGEMENT POLICY



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POLICY STATEMENT

We recognise that children, families, educators, other staff and the community need to feel confident that any concerns or issues they may raise will be handled promptly and professionally. We value the importance of open communication and receiving and responding to all forms of feedback as part of our commitment to continuous improvement and quality service provision for children. We are committed to resolving concerns promptly and collaboratively to ensure the best outcomes for those involved.

BACKGROUND

The Education and Care Services National Regulations require policies and procedures in place to dealing with complaints.

Policy Sponsor: Governance and Performance

Document Type: Policy

Applicable To: Catholic Early EdCare

Approved By: Director, Catholic Early EdCare

Last Updated: 1 February 2026

Due for Review: 1 February 2029

Version: 2026.1

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Section 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
Section 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
Reg 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
Reg 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Reg 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
Reg 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
Reg 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
Reg 176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
Reg 183	Storage of records and other documents

Family Assistance Law

A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 and subsequent updates.

Child Care Provider Handbook, Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 2	Children's Health and Safety
Quality Area 4	Staffing Arrangements
Quality Area 5	Relationships with Children

Quality Area 6		Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
Standard 6.1	Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
Element 6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
Element 6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child’s learning and wellbeing.
Standard 6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children’s inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
Element 6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
Element 6.2.3	Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.
Quality Area 7		Governance and Leadership
Standard 7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
Element 7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
Standard 7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.
Element 7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.

Child Safe Organisation Legislation (QLD)	
Standard 6- Complaints Management	
Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child-focused	
6.1	An accessible, child focused complaint handling policy exists, which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of individuals at each level of the organisation and their approach to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and their obligation to act and report.
6.2	Policies and Procedures are in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with authorities who have a responsibility to investigate.
6.3	Where appropriate, ensure there are First Nations-led complaints handling and reporting mechanisms (e.g. involving First Nations Liaison Officers and trusted community elders in the process).
6.4	Ensure investigations into complaints do not retraumatise children.
6.5	Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children, families, staff and volunteers and are culturally safe.
6.5	Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

PRINCIPLES

- We notify the regulatory authority of any complaints alleging the occurrence of a serious incident or contravention of the Education and Care Services National Law in line with regulatory requirements and within the required time frames.
- We value the contributions gained from families and children as they are integral to our services and welcome their input into all aspects of service operation, including any complaints or feedback they may have. We view all contributions, feedback and compliments as valuable input into each service Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
- We view complaints as an opportunity to enhance the quality of our education and care practices, and reflect upon each complaint received, identifying any issues or areas of improvement for services.
- We support families' participation in our services by being flexible with our communication strategies and providing services a range of tools, supports, and suggestions to gather feedback, and ensure our processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
- We ensure avenues for providing feedback or raising a complaint are visible at the entrance to the service and ensure that the contact information of key stakeholders is clearly displayed and encouraged for use.
- We take all concerns, complaints or feedback on areas for improvement seriously and prioritize the safety and wellbeing of all people.
- We support people to feel safe and comfortable when making a complaint, including children, and respect their request for anonymity.
- We encourage, where possible, the raising and resolution of concerns between the parties involved. Where concerns are unable to be resolved both parties have the option of taking the concern to management levels.
- We take all complaints concerning any child exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to themselves or another child seriously and have systems in place to support the receipt of these complaints within our Safeguarding Children Procedure.
- We embrace the learnings from Catholic Social Teachings and support families in kind and respectful ways when resolving understandings and compliance with our policies and procedures.
- We ensure we meet all legislative requirements and obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations.
- We prioritise good governance and quality management by supporting Service Leaders and staff with policies, procedures, and guidelines which clearly outline their roles and responsibilities, focusing on quality outcomes for children.
- Where we identify a conflict of interest in managing a complaint (e.g., where the complaint involves a staff member who would usually handle complaints or a supervisor) we will assign an independent senior staff member or external party to oversee the complaint management process. We are committed to ensuring fairness, transparency and impartiality.

- We acknowledge the power imbalances that exist between complainant and respondent during the complaints handling process. We implement strategies to mitigate these imbalances, including providing access to a support person, facilitating meetings in neutral spaces, and ensuring independent oversight where appropriate.
- Upon receipt of a complaint involving allegations of harm to a child or adult at risk, we will immediately conduct a preliminary risk assessment, referring to our Safeguarding Risk Management Matrix. This assessment will determine whether proactive measures are needed to safeguard the individual(s) involved, pending investigation outcomes.
- We are committed to treating respondents who are the subject of a safeguarding complaint fairly and respectfully. Our appropriately trained personnel will engage with respondents to provide pastoral care and support. We will implement monitoring and supervision arrangements where required to mitigate ongoing safeguarding risks during the investigation process.
- We manage all complaints, particularly those relating to abuse, using a trauma-informed and victim-centered approach. We support complainants with sensitivity, dignity and confidentiality and offer support options including referrals to external counselling and pastoral care services.
- We will confidentially store and retain all records relating to safeguarding complaints, including disclosures, investigations and outcomes for a minimum of 50 years in accordance with the National Safeguarding Standards and privacy legislation.
- We support a culture of safe reporting. Staff who raise concerns in good faith are protected under our Whistleblower Policy. We provide information on how to access Whistleblower protections during induction and through resources available on the Archdiocesan Intranet.
- We provide de-identified trend reports on complaints data and safeguarding concerns to our Safeguarding Committee and Archdiocesan Council. This process ensures continuous monitoring, analysis of systemic issues and supports the ongoing improvement of safeguarding practices.
- We make complaints information and procedures available in accessible formats for our diverse community members, including easy-read versions and alternative communication methods where required.
- We are committed to maintain a complaints management system that is child-focused, trauma-informed, transparent, accessible and responsive. Our processes comply with the National Safeguarding Standards (Edition 2), ensuring that we handle all concerns respectfully, confidentially and in ways that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk.

KEY TERMS

Term	Meaning	Source
ACECQA	Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority. The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.	Guide to the NQF
Approved Provider	Approved Provider is a person who holds a provider approval. A provider approval authorises a person to apply for one or more service approvals and is valid in all jurisdictions.	
Complaint	Expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its product or service, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.	Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations
Complaints Management	Resolving individual complaints and identifying opportunities to make systemic improvements.	Queensland Ombudsman
Educator	An individual who provides education and care for children as part of an education and care service.	Guide to the NQF
Family Assistance Law	The legal basis for the Australian Government to provide childcare fee assistance, and for the approval of childcare providers to administer childcare fee assistance on behalf of families.	Department of Education
Investigation	A formal and systematic inquiry to establish facts about a complaint by collecting, documenting, examining and evaluating evidence. An investigation is not an end in itself. Throughout an investigation, the investigator should keep an open mind about the possible outcomes of the investigation, such as education, compliance action, or a decision not to pursue the matter.	Guide to the NQF
Nominated Supervisor	A person who is nominated by the approved provider of the service to be a nominated supervisor of that service and, unless the individual is the approved provider, has provided written consent to that nomination	

Term	Meaning	Source
Personal Information	<p>Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whether the information or opinion is true or not; and 2. Whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not. 	<p>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</p>
Responsible Person	<p>An individual who is physically present and is responsible for the operation of a centre-based service for an agreed period of time. A responsible person must be present at all times that the approved service operates and can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the approved provider or a person with management or control of the service; • a nominated supervisor of the service; or • a person placed in day-to-day charge of the service in accordance with the National Regulations 	<p>Guide to the NQF</p>
Staff Member	<p>Any individual (other than a nominated supervisor or a volunteer) employed, appointed or engaged to work in or as part of an education and care service.</p>	

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- [Complaints and Feedback Management Procedure](#)
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Procedure
- [Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy](#)
- [Providing a Child Safe Environment Procedure](#)
- [Safeguarding Children Procedure](#)
- [AOB Code of Conduct](#)
- [SV APPENDIX Performance Standards](#)
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Interactions with Children Procedure
- [Enrolment, Orientation and Booking Policy](#)
- [Enrolment, Orientation and Booking Procedure](#)
- [Governance and Service Management Policy](#)

INDUCTION AND **ONGOING TRAINING**

This policy will be available on the Archdiocesan Intranet (AI) and the Catholic Early EdCare website. Service Leaders and Managers are responsible for ensuring staff are able to access policies and supporting documents. All staff are responsible for understanding and complying with this policy. Educators and families are able to access this policy on the Catholic Early EdCare website.

- Educators and families will be invited to participate in the review of this policy.
- Families will be able to access a copy of this policy during the enrolment process.
- Summary information will be included in the CEEC information handbooks.
- Changes to this document will be shared with families and educators.
- Ongoing training opportunities for educators will be provided using a range of learning platforms.

Please contact the Policy Sponsor for further interpretation of this policy.

MONITORING **EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

Monitoring of compliance with this policy and the related procedure will be completed by the Governance and Performance team.

The review process for this policy will begin 8 (eight) weeks prior to the stated review date and include a consultation period with families, educators, Catholic Early EdCare team and any other relevant stakeholders and will be facilitated by the Research and Policy Officer.

Communication about any changes in or review of the policy, procedure or related supporting documents will be provided to Catholic Early EdCare team, Service Leaders, educators and families once finalised.

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with under Centacare's misconduct provisions, as stated in the Employment Guidelines Code of Conduct.

