

Client Feedback and Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

This Policy outlines how wayss will promote a culture where feedback, both positive and those suggesting areas for improvement, and complaints are welcomed as an important component of our commitment to a respectful and professional relationship with our clients and renters.

2. Commitment Statement

wayss is a Child Safe organisation and child safety is at the forefront of our program delivery. Our policies ensure that child safety is a primary part of everyday thinking and practice. All employees, contractors and volunteers have an obligation to ensure we keep children safe from harm and abuse.

We're committed to upholding the rights of all of our stakeholders and creating a workplace that fosters inclusion and diversity. We believe that by bringing our authentic selves to wayss, we can contribute to building strong teams, cultivating leaders, and creating an organisation that is well-suited for every individual. It's essential to us that we establish an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, can be themselves and feel safe, valued and respected. Regardless of whether you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or LGBTIQ member, are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, or a person living with a disability, as an individual associating with wayss, you have the right to participate and engage in an environment that is free from discrimination and bias, and we strive to create a workplace that honours that commitment.

3. Scope

This policy is specifically for clients and renters. Feedback and complaints from other parties, such as staff (including temporary, contractors or casual staff, referred to together as **team member**) and neighbours are covered in separate policies and procedures, such as the **Neighbours Policy** and **Wayss Staff Complaints Policy**.

4. Policy Principles

Clients and renters will be informed of their right to give feedback and make a complaint and will be provided with information about how to do this.

For the purposes of this policy, feedback is defined as negative or positive comments about wayss' services or team members with no expectation of a formal response or resolution. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about wayss team members, services, or facilities, where a response or resolution is expected.

wayss will uphold the following principles with respect to feedback or complaints:

- Commitment to the rights of clients and renters to provide negative feedback or make a complaint and to expect an efficient and fair resolution.
- A feedback and complaint management process which is fair to all parties involved.
- Providing information about how to provide feedback or make a complaint.
- Ensuring the feedback / complaint process is simple and easy to access.
- Assisting clients to provide feedback or make a complaint if they need it.
- Reviewing and where required, actioning feedback and complaints swiftly.

Client Feedback and Complaints Policy

- Providing information to clients and renters about any actions taken because of their feedback or complaint.

5. Advocacy

Where a client or renter wants to provide feedback or make a complaint and requires the support of an advocate to assist with this, waysss will provide information on how to access this service.

An advocate can be a friend, family member, waysss team member or person from an advocacy agency. Where a client or renter chooses to have an advocate act on their behalf, consent will be obtained from the client so that information can be released or discussed with the advocate. The client or renter has the right to withdraw this consent at any time during the process.

6. Confidentiality

All clients or renters or advocates who provide feedback or make a complaint will have their privacy respected in accordance with **Client Privacy Policy**.

A waysss team member who is the subject of negative client or renter feedback will have their privacy respected in accordance with **Workforce Privacy Policy**. In these cases, negative feedback will only be discussed with management and the appropriate parties involved.

7. Receiving Feedback

All feedback and complaints received will be recorded in the feedback register and shared with the Executive Management Team monthly.

Where negative feedback has been received, the waysss executive team will assess if further review is required and will ensure that any areas for improvement are addressed. Where a client or renter makes a complaint, waysss will acknowledge that complaint within 5 days of receiving it and will conduct an investigation and ensure a satisfactory resolution, within 30 days of receiving the complaint.

8. Definitions

waysss identifies and categorises feedback and complaints as per the following definitions.

Positive feedback	Clients express satisfaction with the services provided and/or the support received from staff during service delivery.
Negative feedback/Informal complaint	Clients and/or client advocates express dissatisfaction with the services provided, the access to services or team member behaviour during service delivery. The client/advocate has not explicitly stated that they wish to lodge a formal complaint.
Formal Complaint	Clients and/or client advocates express dissatisfaction with the services provided, the access to services, or team member behaviour during service delivery. The client/advocate has requested an investigation has been asked by an appropriate waysss team member if they wish to lodge a formal complaint or has lodged a complaint via external avenues.
Enquiries	Clients and/or client advocates may submit enquiries regarding waysss services and/or programs through the Feedback channels.

9. Categories of feedback

ways will define categories of feedback, where possible, to assist in analysis, identification of systems issues and to inform continuous improvement.

The following are broad categories of complaints:

- Client rights
- Privacy or confidentiality
- Service Access
- Service Information
- Service Delivery
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Facilities
- Tenancy
- Safety
- Continuous Improvement
- Other

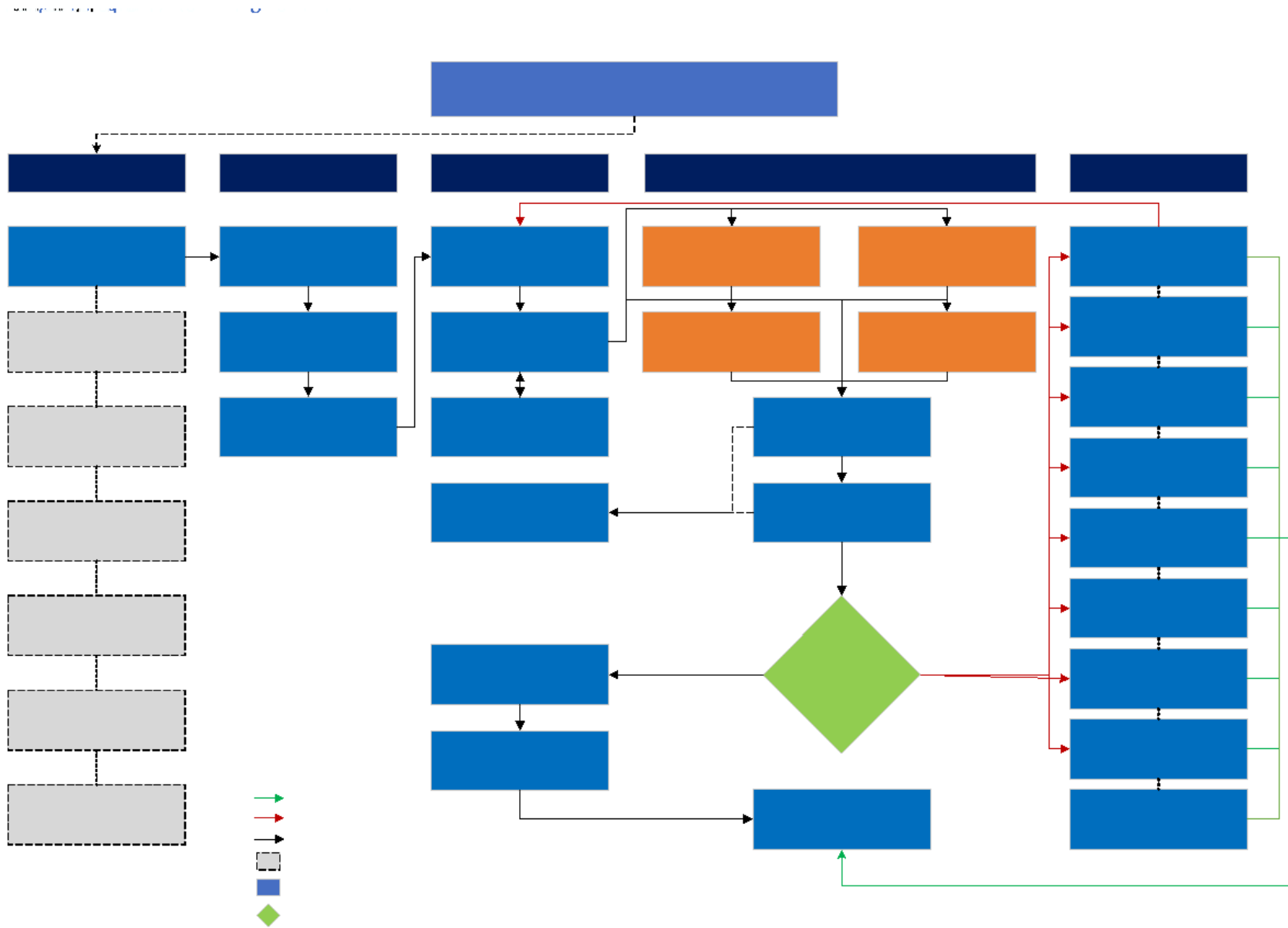
ways recognises that the adoption of an effective feedback procedure is more likely to lead to client satisfaction and enables the service to evaluate the need for improvement.

ways will record and monitor all client feedback. An analysis of this data will be used to improve client services.

10. Wayss Complaints Handling Process

ways welcomes its clients and renters to query any decisions it makes and/or ask questions about our work practices. If a client or renter wishes to provide feedback to ways and/or believes a decision or action made by ways is incorrect, the first step is to request that the complaint be reviewed, or that the decision/action be reconsidered by ways as per this policy and our **Client Feedback and Complaints Procedure**. The flowchart below demonstrates the process undertaken at ways to review complaints and feedback received by our clients, renters or their advocates, and the available external escalation points where they can take their complaint if they are not satisfied with the outcome reached by ways.

Client Feedback and Complaints Policy



11. Unsatisfied with the Complaint Outcome – Victims of Crime Commissioner (VOCC)

If you have become a victim of crime and believe ways has failed to follow the [Victims' Charter principles](#), you may be able to make a complaint to the Victims of Crime Commissioner (VOCC).

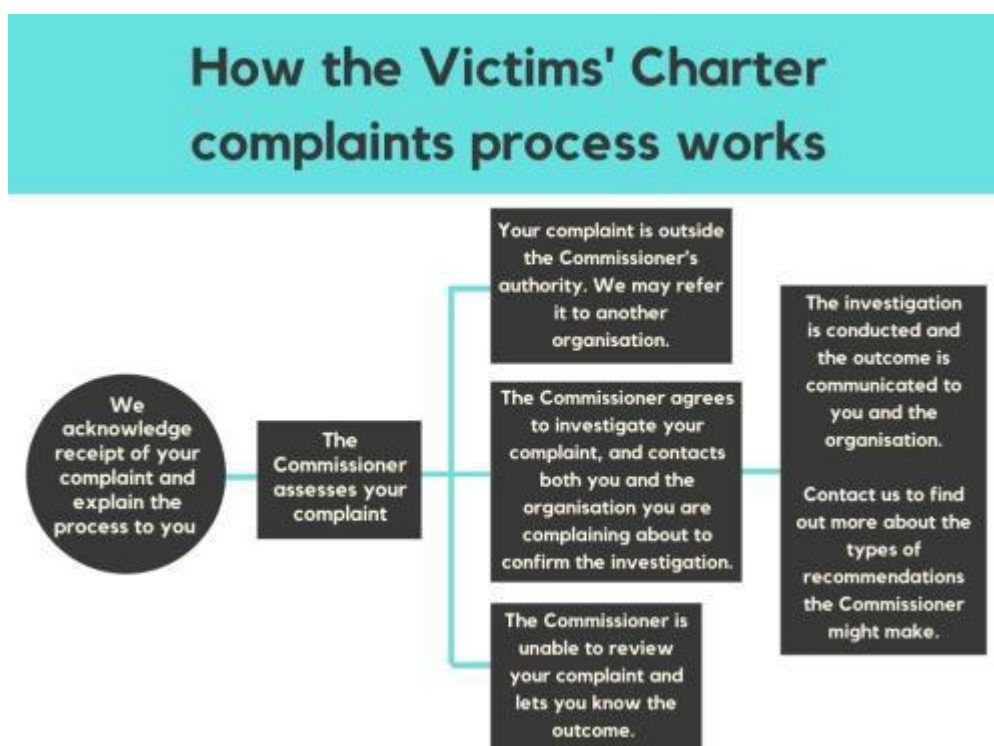
You can make a complaint to the Commissioner if you are a:

- victim of crime
- family member of a victim of crime who has died as a result of that crime
- family member of a child who is a victim of crime
- family member of a victim of crime with a mental impairment.

Before you make a complaint to the Commissioner, you must raise your complaint with ways first. Your complaint can be made through our website [WAYSS | Feedback – How are we doing? Tell us what you think](#).

What happens after a complaint is made to the VOCC?

Each complaint is acknowledged and assessed by the Commissioner within 28 days, following the VOCC's complaints process below.



12. Team Member Training

ways will provide team members with access to relevant training to further develop their skills in complaints handling.

13. Responsibilities

All Team Members

ways team members have the responsibility to:

Client Feedback and Complaints Policy

- Ensure clients and renters are informed of their right to provide feedback or complain
- Ensure clients and renters are informed of their right to appeal any decision made with respect to a complaint, including to the VOCC
- Ensure clients and renters have access to written information describing how feedback or complaints can be made and how they will be managed
- Attempt to resolve negative feedback or a complaint at the time it is made
- Assist the client to access advocacy agencies
- Ensure feedback and complaints are recorded in the Feedback Register

Managers and Team Leaders

Managers are responsible for:

- Receiving and responding to feedback and complaints in accordance with this policy
- Ensuring feedback and complaints are recorded in the Feedback Register, including the outcomes
- Advising clients of the outcome of the review and management of their feedback or complaint and the process for appealing an outcome

ways CEO, Board and Executive Team

The Executive Team are responsible for:

- Analysis of the feedback register to identify any systemic issues
- Evaluation of the feedback and complaints management process
- Responding to complaints from the Housing Registrar and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- Receiving reports on any high-risk feedback or unresolved complaints
- Supporting management with respect to actions needed to resolve a complaint
- Informing the ways Board of complaints that may have legal, regulatory or reputation impacts

Accountability Statement:

ways Board: Provide appropriate strategic governance, direction, and guidance across the organisation.

ways Leadership Team: Ensure that all Team Members are aware of all policies, procedures, documents and how they apply to the person's role.

Team Member: Comply with all aspects of ways policies, procedures, documents, and guidelines as required to meet professional standards and practices.

14. Review

ways will conduct a comprehensive review of this document every two years, aligning with the established policy review schedule. Additionally, revisions may occur sooner in response to legislative changes or feedback about service delivery that could affect the content of this document.

15. Related Policies and Resources

- DFFH Human Service Standards
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Client Feedback and Complaints Policy

- Privacy Act 1988
- Client Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Client Participation Policy
- Client Privacy Policy
- Neighbours Policy
- Quality Governance and Client Voice Frameworks
- Client Feedback and Complaints Procedure
- Workforce Privacy Policy

16. Change History

Date	Version	Summary of changes	Approved By
1/11/20	V1.0	Initial Draft	CEO
03/04/2023	V2.0	Updated to include Client Feedback Procedure and escalation points as per Housing Registrar compliance requirements	CEO
11/07/2024	V3.0	Updated to new template and to include compliance requirements from the Victims of Crime Commissioner	CEO