



Complaints Handling Feedback Policy

Quality Area 7: Governance & Leadership

Policy Statement

Feedback from educators, staff, families, and the wider community is an important component in the delivery of high-quality early childhood education. Our philosophy provides a framework for open communication as we work in partnership with all stakeholders. We encourage open communication by providing opportunities to give feedback on all aspects of our preschool service. A component of this feedback is the ability to make a **complaint** and have this managed appropriately with due consideration for accountability and quality improvement.

Policy Goals

Tathra Preschool affirms that people have a right to question and influence decisions made and services provided. We embrace feedback and take complaints seriously and manage them in a confidential, timely, transparent, and meaningful way. We will:

- Maintain the confidentiality of all parties in line with policy and legislative requirements.
- Acknowledge that the common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
- Act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner.
- Handle complaints objectively and ensuring that complainants do not suffer any reprisals from making a complaint.
- Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame.
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Strategies: How will it be done?

Making a Complaint

- Written guidelines detailing complaint procedures are available in the Preschool Enrolment Handbook and displayed in the foyer. Guidelines and procedures can be found on the Preschool website and form an important part of part induction for all families, staff, students, and volunteers.
- Families may make a complaint directly to the child's teacher, educator, the Approved Provider, or the Nominated Supervisor.
- Educators will discuss complaints procedures with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have.

Responsiveness

All complaints will be acknowledged and responded to as soon as practicable. Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and complainants will be kept informed about the progress of their complaint and anticipated timeframes. Allegations of suspected harm or risk of harm to a child or possible victims of crime, will be actioned immediately by urgent referral or reporting to the relevant agency.

Refer to ACECQA for relevant timeframes:

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/notification-types-and-timeframes>

Managing a Complaint

Where possible, complaints will be dealt with immediately, by the child's teacher (person in charge) as this is usually the person with the closest relationship with the family. If the complaint is about an issue that the teacher considers to be outside their control, or the family does not feel they wish to share it with the teacher, the complainant will be directed to the appropriate person for their complaint to be resolved.

Where a teacher/educator believes, they will have to share in confidence with another person in order to resolve an issue, or if the nature of a complaint requires that a third party

has to be informed in order to meet legislative requirements, they will inform the family of the need prior to any further discussions on the matter.

- The complaint will be documented and any legal requirements in relation to the complaint considered, such as the need to notify regulatory authorities.
- The teacher/educator will attempt to diffuse emotions by acknowledging what they are feeling, and state positively that you wish to seek a solution to the issue that is causing concern.
 - Ask questions to help identify or clarify their concerns. For example, the statement, “I never know what is happening with my child” may be further clarified by asking questions such as, “What things would you like our preschool to share with you about your child’s day?”
 - Ask the complainant if they have any strategies or solutions that they feel could be put in place to resolve their issues.
- If possible, the problem will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible, the complainant will be advised that the issue will be given high priority and dealt with as soon as possible and a suitable time and place will be organised to discuss the issue.
- If the issues are complex the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing.
- Where mediation is required, all parties will have the right to agree to the appointment of the mediator.

Notifiable Complaint

Complaints alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached must be reported by the Approved Provider to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)).

Refer to the service Child Protection Policy and Procedure.

Complaints, incidents and serious incidents must be notified to the Regulatory Authority through the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA IT System). Log in to access the

portal where you can select the incident or complaint type and enter the required information.

Approved Providers are required to notify the Regulatory Authority of a complaint that alleges:

- A serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by Tathra Preschool.
- The National Law and/or National Regulations have been contravened.

A serious incident can include:

- Any incident where you reasonably believe that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the preschool.
- Any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the preschool.
- The death of a child while that child is being educated and cared for at the preschool or following an incident while that child was being cared for by the preschool.
- A serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which:
 - Requires urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
 - The child attends or should have attended a hospital.
- Any incident involving serious illness at the preschool, where the child attended, or should have attended a hospital (e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis)
- Any circumstance where a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for.
- Any circumstance where a child appears to have been taken or removed from the preschool premises by someone not authorised to do this.
- Any circumstance where a child is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the preschool premises or any part of the premises.
- Any emergency for which emergency services attended. NOTE: It does not mean an incident where emergency services attended as a precaution.
- A serious injury, illness or trauma includes but is not limited to:
 - Amputation

- Anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation.
- Asthma requiring hospitalisation.
- Broken bone/Fractures.
- Bronchiolitis.
- Burns.
- Diarrhoea requiring hospitalisation.
- Epileptic seizures.
- Head injuries.
- Measles
- Meningococcal infection.
- COVID-19.
- Sexual assault.
- Witnessing violence or a frightening event.

Direct Complaints

Families can make a complaint directly to the Regulatory Authority where the complaint alleges that:

- The safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is being compromised while that child or children is or are being educated and cared for by Tathra Preschool.
- The relevant legislation has been contravened.

Contact details are available in Tathra Enrolment Handbook, displayed in the foyer of the service and shared as part of induction for all families, staff, volunteers and students.

Follow-Up and Review

Each complaint will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement. After the complaint or grievance has been dealt with:

- We will analyse the complaint to determine if any policy or procedural changes need to be implemented.
- The Approved Provider will follow through to determine that complaints and grievances have been successfully resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Families will

be contacted to determine if they were satisfied with the way the issue was resolved, and educators' will be consulted about the outcome from an operational viewpoint.

Role and Responsibilities

Approved Provider will

- When a complaint or grievance has been assessed as 'notifiable', the Approved Provider must notify Regulatory Authority within 24 hours.
- In instances where the complainant reports directly to the Regulatory Authority, the Approved Provider will still have responsibility for investigating and dealing with the complaint or grievance as outlined in this policy, in addition to co-operating with any investigation by the Regulatory Authority.
- Identify, prevent, and address potential concerns before they become formal complaints/grievances.
- Ensure that the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are displayed prominently at the main entrance of the service.
- Ensure that the address and telephone number of the Regulatory Authority displayed prominently at the main entrance of the service.
- Advise parents/guardians and any other members of the preschool community of the complaints and grievances policy and procedures upon enrolment.
- Ensure that this policy is available for inspection at the service at all times.
- Provide a Complaints and Grievances Register.

Nominated Supervisor will:

- Respond to and resolve issues as they arise where practicable.

- Discuss minor complaints directly with the party involved as a first step towards resolution.
- Inform complainants of the Preschool's complaints and grievances policy recording all complaints and grievances in the Complaints and Grievances Register.
- Notify the Approved Provider if the complaint escalates or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner.
- Provide information as requested by the Approved Provider e.g. Written reports relating to the grievance.
- Complying with the Tathra Preschool privacy and confidentiality policy and maintaining confidentiality at all times.
- Work co-operatively with the Approved Provider, in any investigations related to a complaint made.

Early Childhood Educators will:

- Ensure that grievances and complaints are dealt with in accordance with this policy.
- Listen to and aim to resolve complaints and grievances in a positive way.
- Report any grievances and complaints to the Nominated Supervisor and maintain all relevant documentation.
- As requested, support the Nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider in the above roles.

Families will:

- Raise a complaint directly with the person involved, in an attempt to resolve the matter without recourse to the complaints and grievances procedures.
- Communicate any concerns relating to the management or operation of the Preschool as soon as is practicable.

- Raise any unresolved issues or serious concerns directly with the Approved Provider, via the nominated supervisor or staff.
- Maintain complete confidentiality at all times.
- Co-operate with requests to provide relevant information when requested in relation to complaints and grievances.

Feedback

Management at Tathra Preschool embraces a proactive approach to obtaining feedback. We will ensure:

- Policy and procedures empower all stakeholders to provide formal and informal feedback. Note stakeholders includes children.
- Feedback from families is encouraged and educators and staff will take this feedback into account in ongoing planning and quality improvement.
- Families will be informed as to how their feedback has contributed to improvements in the preschool through information notice board displays, emails, and/or newsletters.
- A variety of opportunities exist for stakeholders to provide feedback.
 - The Daily Program - will have a section dedicated to comments or feedback on the program. Teacher/ educators may write comments on behalf of families to help with evaluations of the program and encourage further family input.
 - Nurturing respectful and reciprocal interactions invite feedback.
 - Opportunities to converse with educators at pick up and drop off time.
 - Families invited to email or call throughout the day.
 - Family meetings scheduled for term 1 and term 3.
 - Annual feedback survey for families. This information is used inform our quality improvement plan for the following year.
 - Exit survey for students and volunteers.

Monitor, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the preschool will review this Policy every 3 years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the preschool will ensure that families of children enrolled at the preschool are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the preschool; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Relevant Legislation

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Sections 172, 174
- Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 168(2)9o), 173, 176(2)9b) ◁ Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy Regulation 2013

Guidelines, Standards and Frameworks

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership – Standard 7.1

- ACECQA – www.acecqa.gov.au

**Sources and
References**

- Using Complaints to Support Continuous Improvement
www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-04/QA7_UsingComplaintsToSupportContinuousImprovement.pdf
- Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint management in organisations – AS/NZS 10002:2014
- Commonwealth Ombudsman
- Better practice complaint handling guide.
- 2021, Community Early Learning Australia (CELA).

Updated

April 2024

Review Date

2027 or when procedure, practice or legislation changes.