

<b>9.9</b>	<b>MANAGING COMPLAINTS</b>
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<b>Applies to:</b> Staff, Management Committee,
<b>Specific responsibility:</b> HECIS Co-Ordinator, Management Committee, President

<b>Version: 3</b>
<b>Date approved: 20.2.18</b>
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<b>Policy context:</b> This policy relates to	
Standards or other external requirements	
Legislation or other requirements	
Contractual obligations	

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

HECIS is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using HECIS services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organisation and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

The organisation will provide a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- is simple and easy to use
- is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders
- ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements.

### **PRINCIPLES**

HECIS will:

- consider all complaints it receives
- treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant
- maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution
- ensure advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support
- resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- deal with all complaints in a timely manner
- keep parties to the complaint informed of progress of the complaint
- ensure that the Management Committee members and staff are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints.
- ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures
- ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the progress of an issue.
- ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **Information for clients and stakeholders**

HECIS complaints and appeals procedure will be documented for clients and stakeholders in the HECIS Manual which is made available at the HECIS Office and a copy is held at all child care services in the Hawkesbury LGA.

## *HECIS: Managing Complaints*

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation. Information about making a complaint is included in the Summary Information Handbook which is given to all client families as part of the referral process.

The HECIS Manual will contain information on the following:

- how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal
- contact person for lodging a complaint or appeal
- how the organisation will deal with the complaint or appeal, the steps involved and the timelines
- the rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person or interpreter
- how the person will be informed about the outcome of their complaint or appeal
- how to make a complaint to an external body including contact details.

### **Making a complaint**

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing, through the HECIS website, or verbally to:

- the staff member they were dealing with at the time
- the HECIS Co-Ordinator
- the President or
- the Management Committee.

A complaint may be made anonymously.

If the complaint is about:

- a staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the HECIS Co-Ordinator
- The HECIS Co-Ordinator, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the President
- the President the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Management Committee

The client making the complaint has the right to nominate the key contact person of their choice who will be responsible for managing all communication between HECIS and the client.

Written complaints may be sent to **H.E.C.I.S. 12 Stewart Street, South Windsor NSW 2756**. The HECIS Co-Ordinator will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.

### **Lodging an appeal**

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organisation, or by a staff member that the complaint relates to. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the HECIS Co-Ordinator (or in the complaint relates to the HECIS Co-Ordinator, to the President).

### **Procedure for complaints and appeals management**

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

1. Processing the complaint or appeal:

- registering the complaint or appeal in the complaints register.
- informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame. (The client may nominate an alternate contact person who will complete this process).

## *HECIS: Managing Complaints*

### 2. Investigating the complaint or appeal:

- examining the complaint within 14 days of the complaint being received
- investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond
- informing the complainant by letter within 14 days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution. (The client may nominate an alternate contact person who will complete this process).

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 14 days of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

### 3. Resolving the complaint:

- making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 14 days of the complaint being received
  - informing the complainant of the outcome:
    - upheld (and if so what will be done to resolve it)
    - resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
    - if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
- Informing the complainant of any options for further action if required

### 4. Reviewing the complaint:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal they can seek a further review of the matter by the President/management Committee.

### 5. Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will be referred to an external agency for assistance in resolving the dispute.

## **Record keeping**

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in the HECIS Main Office. The register will be maintained by the HECIS Co-Ordinator and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint
- Date lodged
- Action taken
- Date of resolution and reason for decision
- Indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- Complainant response and any further action

Copies of all correspondence will be kept in the HECIS Main Office.

The complaints register and files will be confidential and access is restricted by the HECIS Co-Ordinator and made available to the Management Committee, and to staff as required.

A statistical summary of complaints and appeals will also be kept and maintained by the HECIS Co-Ordinator who will be responsible for preparing a report on of any complaints in the Co-Ordinators report to the Management Committee.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the HECIS Co-Ordinator and Management Committee and

## *HECIS: Managing Complaints*

used to:

- inform service planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- inform decision making by including a report on complaints and appeals as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas

### **Complaints involving specific staff members**

The HECIS Co-Ordinator has delegated responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members.

Internal complaints, where a staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, will be dealt with in accordance with the HECIS Grievance, Complaints and Disputes Policy.

External complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member will be managed by the HECIS Co-Ordinator who will:

- notify the staff member of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party
- take any other action necessary to resolve the issue.

Any disciplinary action against a staff member arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in the HECIS Disciplinary procedures.

Complaints involving the HECIS Co-Ordinator will be managed by the President.

### **Complaints involving organisation members or Management Committee members**

Complaints made against a Management Committee will be referred to the President. The President, or their delegate, will:

- notify the person about whom a complaint is being made of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party.

Where the President is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to another Executive Management Committee member.

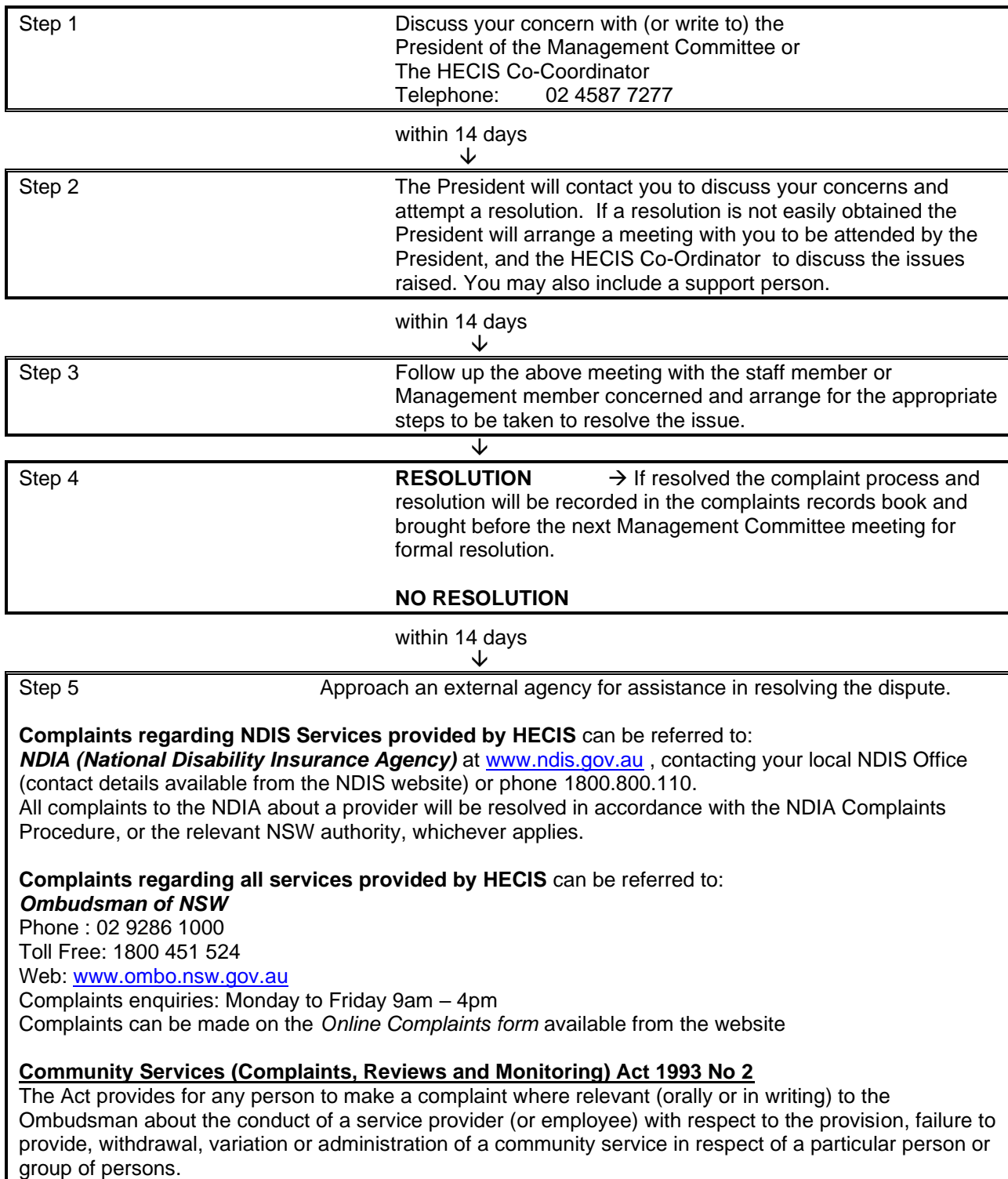
If the matter remains unresolved, the Executive Member handling the complaint will raise the matter at the next Management Committee meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Management Committee may:

- deal with the matter at its meeting
- or
- refer the matter to a special meeting of the Executive Committee members or to the next general meeting.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

You can make a complaint at the level you feel most comfortable – either verbally or in writing. To aid this procedure the following steps should be taken:

### **CONSUMER WITH A COMPLAINT - PROCEDURE**



**DOCUMENTATION**

<b>Documents related to this policy</b>	
Related policies	HECIS Grievance, complaints & disputes policy HECIS Disciplinary procedures policy
Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents	HECIS Manual HECIS Complaints register 9.a Client/Family Complaints Procedure Summary Information Handbook

<b>Reviewing and approving this policy</b>		
<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Approval</b>
Annually	HECIS Co-Ordinator	Management Committee

<b>Policy review and version tracking</b>			
<b>Review</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Next Review Due</b>
1	24.11.15	HECIS Co-Ordinator	Nov 2016
2	4.8.16	HECIS CoOrdinator	Aug 2017
3	15.8.17	HECIS CoOrdinator	Aug 2018
4	6.9.18	HECIS CoOrdinator	Aug 2019
5	17.9.19	HECIS CoOrdinator	Aug 2020
6	15.9.20	HECIS CoOrdinator	Aug 2021

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