



## Complaints Handling Policy

### 1. Purpose

The Disability Advocacy Network of Australia (DANA) aims to provide high quality services which meet the needs of those to whom services are provided. DANA believes this is achieved most of the time however DANA wants to know if it is not getting things right.

In order to ensure DANA's services remain at a high and improving standard, DANA has a complaint handling process through which people can let DANA know of any reason they are not satisfied with their dealings with the organisation.

This policy provides guidance to DANA staff, its board and anyone who may wish to make a complaint as to the key elements of DANA's complaints handling system. It applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and DANA's Board.

### 2. DANA's Promise

DANA promises to those who bring a complaint to:

- respond in ways that are timely, fair and transparent;
- listen respectfully and compassionately to the issues and concerns of the person bringing the complaint;
- support a comprehensive and thoughtful exploration of those issues and concerns;
- enable all involved to carefully and thoroughly consider all options and choices for resolving the matter;
- ensure staff or other persons associated with DANA are supported to address any behaviours that may have contributed to the complaint;
- ensure DANA's systems and/or the elements of the situation are also considered and reviewed in the complaints process;
- evaluate and amend any policies or procedures that may have led to the complaint;
- ensure that the person who brought the complaint is aware of their options for pursuing an independent investigation of their complaint.

### 3. Terms and Definitions

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about DANA. It could concern DANA's services, staff or the handling of a complaint itself.

An unresolved complaint becomes a **dispute** when it is escalated either within or outside of DANA.

Sometimes people will provide feedback to DANA about things they are not happy with.

**Feedback** is not the same as a complaint. It should nonetheless be the subject of review by DANA in order to ensure any potential for the improvement of service delivery is considered.

Where a staff member provides a formal written statement that details a concern or complaint about another staff member or a work-related problem this constitutes a **grievance**.

Staff grievances are addressed through provisions as described in DANA's employment conditions and/or staff contracts.

## 4. Principles of Complaint Handling

### 4.1 Accessibility

DANA will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised on our website (DANA.org.au). We will ensure that how we manage complaints is easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, DANA will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

### 4.2 Objectivity and fairness

DANA will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective, fair and unbiased manner.

### 4.3 Responding flexibly

DANA's staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible.

DANA will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.

DANA will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

### 4.4 Confidentiality

DANA will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations as detailed in DANA's Privacy and Confidentiality Policies.

### 4.5 Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

DANA will inform people who make complaints to, or about DANA, about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman or oversight regulatory bodies).

## 5. Policy

If you are not happy with DANA please tell us. If you are unhappy about any of DANA's services, please speak to the relevant staff member, CEO or raise the issue with the Chair of the Board.

If you are unhappy with an individual in DANA sometimes it is best to tell them directly. If you feel this is difficult or inappropriate then please speak to the CEO or the Chair of the Board.

DANA will always acknowledge all complaints it receives and aims to give you a response straight away.

When the matter is more complicated or in writing, we will response to you within ten working days.

## 6. Making a written complaint

If you are not satisfied with DANA's response or wish to raise the matter more formally, please write to the CEO or the Chair of the Board. All written complaints will be logged.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your written complaint within three working days.

DANA's aim is to always investigate your complaint properly and give you a response within ten working days, setting out how the matters you have raised will be dealt with.

If this is not possible, an interim response will be made informing you of the action taken to date or being considered.

## 7. If you are not happy with the outcome of the complaint handling process

If after DANA has responded to your complaint you are not satisfied, please write to the Chair who will report the matter to the next meeting of the Board which will decide on any further steps to resolve the situation. You will be advised of the date of the next Board meeting and the outcome from that meeting regarding your complaint.

If you are not happy with the way DANA's Board has managed your complaint you can request that either an independent investigator be appointed to undertake a further investigation or for independent mediation of the complaint. DANA will negotiate with you to choose either a mutually acceptable investigator or mediator. DANA will cover the reasonable cost of either the investigation or mediation.

## 8. DANA's Complaint Management Process

**The five key stages in DANA's complaint management process are:**



### 8.1 Receive complaints

Complaints may be made directly to DANA or a representative of DANA in person, on the phone, by email, via the Contact portal of the [www.DANA.org.au](http://www.DANA.org.au) website or other forms of writing. As well as complaints being made directly to DANA, some complaints made be made on social media.

### 8.2 Acknowledge complaints

DANA will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly. Where appropriate, DANA will use the same medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint.

Where a person makes a complaint in person DANA will immediately acknowledge the complaint. Written complaints will be acknowledged within three working days.

### 8.3 Assess and Investigate complaints

DANA will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with DANA. Where not possible for a complaint to be resolved at the first contact DANA will aim to address the matter within ten working days.

When appropriate, DANA may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

DANA is committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for DANA's actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process,
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint, and
- any options for further redress or review.

DANA will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

DANA will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker. See DANA's Conflict of Interest policy.

DANA will accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

### 8.4 Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, DANA will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action taken,
- The reason/s for the decision,
- The remedy or resolution/s that DANA is proposing or has put in place, and
- Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an independent review, mediation or appeal.

### 8.5 Close the complaint: document and analyse data

DANA will keep records about:

- How the complaint was managed.
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any

- decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes.

DANA will also ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the Chair of the Board.

## 9. Accountability and learning

### 9.1 Analysis and evaluation of complaints

DANA will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by staff, the CEO and the Board.

DANA will run regular reports on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided to the CEO and the Board for review, at least annually.

### 9.2 Monitoring of the complaint management system

DANA will continually monitor the complaint management system to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system, and
- monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

### 9.3 Continuous improvement

DANA is committed to improving the way the organisation operates, including the management of the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaint management system. To this end, DANA will:

- support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- implement best practices in complaint handling
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff
- regularly review the complaint management system and complaint data, and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.

## 10. Compliance with this policy

DANA will ensure all board members and staff are aware of this policy and its requirements.

DANA will provide a copy of this policy to all new staff and/or Board members and will ensure they receive the necessary induction, training or support to ensure compliance with this policy.

## 11. Related Documents

- Confidentiality Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Membership Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Records Management Policy

Approval, Implementation and Review	
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