



# Complaints & Grievance Policy

## Background

The Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre (BNC) recognises that from time to time, individuals or groups may have an issue which needs resolution in the interests of the safe and harmonious operation of the Centre. BNC is committed to creating and maintaining constructive, productive, and supportive relationships with all who work in or use the facility. Complaints or grievances should be brought to the attention of Centre staff or the Committee of Management (COM) as soon as possible to ensure these matters can be resolved.

## Purpose

The aims of the policy are:

- To guide the COM, BNC members, staff, tutors, volunteers and other Centre users in resolving conflict, disputes, and grievance issues if and when they arise.
- To treat all complaints and grievances with due consideration, confidentiality and take steps to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of all parties wherever possible.
- To ensure all complaints and grievances are attended to promptly, fairly and transparently.
- To prioritise complaints that allege that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children has been compromised while being educated and cared for by our licensed service.

## Policy Statements

Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre will provide and maintain a positive environment in which all participants are able to work and interact constructively together.

Malicious or vexatious claims will not be tolerated.

The BNC Code of Conduct, Constitution, relevant Human Resources policies and the applicable Collective Agreement may also apply when considering complaints and grievances.

This policy does not apply to alleged criminal activity, suspected corruption or reportable conduct involving children, which must be reported promptly and directly to the Victorian Police or other relevant authority.

## Procedure for Making Complaints

Make a complaint directly to Centre staff at any time in person, by phone (03) 8768 4400 or email [contactus@bncinc.org.au](mailto:contactus@bncinc.org.au).

If the issue is sensitive or involves a particular staff member, written complaints can be directed to the Centre Coordinator ([coordinator@bncinc.org.au](mailto:coordinator@bncinc.org.au)) or the Committee of Management ([committee@bncinc.org.au](mailto:committee@bncinc.org.au)) as appropriate.

BNC is committed to handling all complaints, grievances and disputes in a confidential, effective, and timely way. Complaints will be acknowledged as soon as possible. Depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, various responses and timeframes may be expected, so specific details are clarified on a case-by-case basis. Communication is critical for the successful management of complaints and grievances. BNC staff, volunteers and COM will be respectful, listen to the complainant and provide regular feedback of progress throughout the resolution process.

Complaints may be made anonymously, but to facilitate the investigation of the complaint, providing contact details is recommended. Issues cannot always be resolved if information is unable to be collected or verified due to a choice of anonymity.

### **Licensed Children's Programs**

Although this policy is still implemented, matters arising in the Children's Room are further regulated by a robust set of policies and procedures. A complaint that alleges a breach of the Children's Services Act 1996 or Children's Services Regulations 2020, or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised must be reported by the Approved Provider to the secretary of the Department of Education and Training (DET) within 24 hours of the complaint being made. If unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact DET for confirmation.

The BNC Behaviour Management Policy contains relevant information for complaints and grievances regarding children's behaviour in the Children's Room. Children have the right to voice grievances and/or complaints and have these issues taken seriously and dealt with equally and fairly.

Effective management of complaints and grievances confirms to educators, management, staff, families and the community that complaints are taken seriously and dealt with fairly and promptly by BNC. Complaints will be used to support continuous improvement of our service. Complaints and grievances are dealt with professionally and with appropriate communication techniques, such as putting the child first, listening and seeking resolution for all involved.

### **Process for Complaint and Grievance Resolution**

At no time will BNC Staff, volunteers, members, families or children be exposed to aggressive and abusive behaviour throughout any stage of the grievance and complaint resolution process. This may include vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse, threatening or offensive behaviour, or physical behaviour against a person or property. In situations where this behaviour happens, the conversation, meeting or call will be terminated.

All people involved in this process will retain the right to contact an external agency or person for advice, support, or assistance at any stage of the process, including any dissatisfaction with resolution of the complaint. Complaints or grievances may be withdrawn at any stage of the process.

### **Informal Resolution Procedure**

Many complaints can be dealt with informally. Whenever possible, the complaint will be dealt with immediately. This may include instant action that resolves the complaint such as physically removing an identified risk or threat, or providing other resources to effectively manage the issues identified in the complaint. Verbal conversations and easily resolved matters will not necessarily warrant a formal record of the matter.

If the matter is outside of the scope of the responding staff member's position, the person with concerns will be directed to discuss the situation with the Centre Coordinator. If the matter involves the Centre Coordinator personally, staff will refer the matter directly to the Committee of Management (COM) and offer contact details for the President or other appropriate member to follow the procedure in place of the Centre Coordinator.

In the case of a dispute, the parties involved are encouraged to attempt to resolve the matter between themselves. The Centre Coordinator or COM members will facilitate a dialogue if required. If an informal resolution between the parties is not acceptable to a person involved, not possible for

other reasons, or cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, a formal resolution procedure will be implemented.

### **Formal Resolution Procedure**

The Centre Coordinator will offer assistance to the person with concerns, talk about the problem or grievance and how they would like to see the complaint resolved, and explain the formal conflict and grievance resolution options that are available. All formal grievances and complaints are to be in writing to avoid confusion and misinterpretation of the issue and to ensure clear, precise, and transparent documentation. These should outline the complaint, and what the desired action or resolution to the issue may be.

The Centre Coordinator will offer informal mediation between the parties involved and attempt to find solution to the matter with discussion and constructive suggestions for all involved.

The Centre Coordinator will document all conversations, meetings and correspondence regarding the matter.

If the issue remains unresolved, the complaint will then be referred to the COM for consideration and resolution. If the person with concerns wishes to proceed at this stage, the Centre Coordinator will collate a written summary of the dispute to make sure the issues are clear, and that abusive language or put-downs are not included. All parties involved will read and sign that it is a fair representation of the matter. This document will be circulated to all members of the COM.

The COM will then address the matter at their next scheduled meeting. A special meeting may be called if the matter is deemed to be urgent and requiring immediate attention. The COM will determine an appropriate course of action if the matter can be addressed internally and/or refer the dispute to an independent mediator or arbitrator such as the Department of Justice Dispute Resolution Centre or Fair Work Commission with the power to deal with the dispute. The outcome will be communicated to all involved parties and the matter deemed to be closed.

Justice Connect may provide free legal services for BNC as a Not-for-Profit organisation if required. This may include using their resources for appointing a neutral mediator.

If any of the parties are still not satisfied with the resolution proposed by the COM, the COM will offer the contact details of an external agency such as Consumer Affairs Victoria, Office of Public Advocate or Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission if they wish to pursue the matter.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use complaints to be accountable, as well as provide valuable prompts to review organisational performance and the conduct of people that work within and for it.</li></ul>
Centre Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that all issues raised are given proper consideration and are responded to in an appropriate manner.</li><li>• Mediate any disputes in an impartial and independent manner.</li></ul>
Staff, Tutors, Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respond to every complaint immediately or refer it to the Centre Coordinator or Committee of Management.</li><li>• Place the safety, health, and wellbeing of children at the centre of decision-making regarding complaints.</li></ul>

Complainants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain calm and present facts.</li> <li>• Participate in the process with the intention of resolving the issue and potentially compromising to reach a fair and acceptable outcome for all involved.</li> <li>• Abide by management decisions regarding a resolution.</li> </ul>
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## Associated Documents

Code of Conduct

Member Code of Conduct

BNC Constitution: Division 3, Part 3

Neighbourhood Houses & Adult Community Education Centres Collective Agreement 2016

Aims and Objectives Statements

Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy

Behaviour Management Policy

## Document History

Version	Title	Author	Authorised	Date	Changes to Previous
1	Complaints Policy	COM	COM	Dec 2001	Original
2	Complaints Policy	COM	COM	2004	Yes
3	Complaints & Grievance Policy	Centre Coordinator	COM	Nov 2017	Yes
4	Complaints & Grievance Policy	Centre Coordinator	COM	Jun 2022	Yes