



## **Feedback, complaints and appeals policy for flexible funding for permanent care project**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCAF) values feedback as a constructive way to reflect on and improve policy and practice. Feedback assists in the development of responsive and solution focused service.

As the delivery organization of the flexible funding project, PCAF encourages all forms of feedback about the way it works, its interactions and relationships with the community and the services and programs it provides. People who use the flexible funding project are encouraged to contribute to the quality of the programs and services.

PCAF will act fairly and transparently and treat those who provide feedback and those who are the subject of the feedback (positive or negative) with dignity, courtesy and respect. The privacy and confidentiality of all parties will be protected.

PCAF and the broader flexible funding Alliance will be responsive to feedback and accountable for the management and outcomes of feedback. Feedback is an indication of the community's perception and respect for the flexible funding project.

PCAF will:

- actively encourage feedback from users of the flexible funding project
- take all feedback (positive or negative) seriously and respond promptly
- judge all complaints on their merits and facts and act on any conflict of interest
- provide an appropriate remedy for any complaint that is substantiated
- provide a clear explanation of why and what actions have been undertaken as a result of the feedback or complaint
- provide those giving feedback with access to the make a complaint or appeal a decision
- record, assess and review feedback, positive or negative
- manage information obtained through the feedback process according to privacy and confidentiality requirements.

The gathering and acceptance of feedback will support the development and continuous improvement of the flexible funding project.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this policy is to inform consumers and clients of the flexible funding project with information about how to provide feedback, make a complaint or appeal a decision.

It also provides guidelines for the collection of feedback, including complaints and explains the responsibilities of PCAF, OzChild and the broader Alliance.

It specifies the processes for resolution of complaints made by people who come into contact with the flexible funding project, including avenues for complaint resolution outside the organisation.

## **DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**Feedback** includes praise, suggestions for improvement, comments, compliments, complaints, allegations and thanks.

Feedback will be collected routinely as part of the evaluation and improvement process.

**Forms of feedback** include letters, complaint forms, surveys, evaluation or response sheets, conversations, community consultations, consumer reference groups.

**Feedback collection methods** include surveys, end of program or exit surveys and interviews, suggestion boxes, focus groups, client questionnaires, community and/or stakeholder consultation, thank you cards etc.

**Complaints** are expressions of dissatisfaction made by people who come into contact with the flexible funding project.

**Remedies** may include an apology, an explanation, an admission of fault, changes to policies or procedures, changed decisions, disciplinary action, mediation, referral to external body for investigation.

**Prescribed access** means that access to information is protected and limited to a defined small group to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

**External authorities** include police, protective services, the Victorian Ombudsman, the Victorian Disability Commissioner, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

**Scope** All PCAF workers and volunteers will observe and implement this policy. The feedback policy applies to feedback (including complaints) about the flexible funding project and all staff, and volunteers involved in this project.

The feedback policy and process is available to all people who come into contact with or use the flexible funding project.

## 1. **Feedback**

- 1.1 Every client who contacts PCAF regarding the flexible funding project will be sent the feedback form (Appendix A) and the complaints and appeals flowchart (Appendix B).
- 1.2 This shall initially be provided as an anonymous online survey however hard copies will be provided via mail at the clients request
- 1.3 If a client has accessibility requirements, the feedback survey will be sent in an appropriate format
- 1.4 Similarly, if a client requires the survey in a language other than English, this shall be accommodated

## 2. **Feedback review**

- 2.1 All feedback shall be reviewed by PCAF workers and CEO
- 2.2 It will also be presented to the Alliance Working Group on a quarterly basis
- 2.3 And the Consult8 (consumer advice group) bimonthly
- 2.4 The flexible funding project will respond to positive and negative feedback as appropriate in order to enhance the project's effectiveness and achieve the desired outcomes

## 3. **Appeals**

- 3.1 Clients may make an appeal either for the outcome of their application, or if they believe that their complaint has not been adequately addressed
- 3.2 Appeals should be submitted in writing to PCAF and should detail the reason for the appeal and the appellants preferred method of resolution

## 4. **Appeal review**

- 4.1 Appeals will be considered by two or more members of the Alliance
- 4.2 Alliance members who were involved in the complaints process will not be involved in the appeal process
- 4.3 Appeals should be resolved within 10 working days, if this is not possible, the appellant will be given an approximate date of resolution

## 5. Complaints

- 5.1 Clients are encouraged to make a complaint if they believe that they have been unfairly treated in their engagement with the flexible funding project
- 5.2 Complaints can be made to the CEO of PCAF at [brenda@pcafamilies.org.au](mailto:brenda@pcafamilies.org.au)
- 5.3 All complaints will be recorded on the complaints register and reported annually to the Department of Health and Human Services

## 6. Complaint review

- 6.1 All complaints shall be reviewed by PCAF workers and CEO
- 6.2 It will also be presented to the Alliance Working Group on a quarterly basis
- 6.3 And the Consult8 (consumer advice group) bimonthly
- 6.4 PCAF will respond to all complaints within 10 working days. If this is not possible, the complainant will be given an approximate date of resolution
- 6.5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, they will be eligible to lodge an appeal
- 6.6 All complaints shall be informed of their option to appeal

## 7. Consult8

- 7.1 All feedback, complaints and appeals will be reviewed by the Consult8 group, which is made up of carers and people who have participated in the flexible funding program
- 7.2 All information presented to Consult8 will be de-identified to protect privacy
- 7.3 Consult8 will review feedback, complaints and appeals and make recommendations to the Alliance in order to improve the project's quality and accessibility and inform the decision making principles used to assess applications.

**Policy Authorisation Date:** 20 July 2016

**Policy Commencement Date:** 20 July 2016

**Policy Review Date:** 20 July 2017