

MANAGING COMPLAINTS POLICY

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POLICY STATEMENT

Fitzroy Legal Service (FLS) is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using our services has the right to lodge a complaint and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency.

The organisation will provide a complaints procedure that:

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

PRINCIPLES

Fitzroy Legal Service 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;
- 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 Board and Committee members, staff and volunteers 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 and stakeholders 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; and
- ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements.

PROCEDURES

Information for clients and stakeholders

Fitzroy Legal Service complaints process will be documented for clients and stakeholders in the Client Charter and Complaints form which is made available through Fitzroy Legal Service reception at both the Reservoir and Fitzroy Town Hall premises and on the Fitzroy Legal Service website.

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation.



The Client Charter and Complaints form will contain information on the following:

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

The information will also be made available to clients who have English as a second language through the use of Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) as required.

Making a complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so to:

- the relevant Principal Lawyer of the service the complaint relates to

If the complaint is about:

- a staff member (other than the Principal Lawyer), the complaint will normally be dealt with by the relevant Principal Lawyer;
- a Principal Lawyer, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the CEO; or;
- the Chief Executive Officer, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Board.

Upon request, a staff member of FLS will provide the complainant with the organisation's complaint form. Written complaints may be sent to PO Box 297, Fitzroy 3065 or via email to enquiries@fitzroy-legal.org.au. Administration staff will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.

If a verbal complaint is received by a staff member other than the relevant Principal Lawyer, the staff member is to advise the client of this policy. If the complaint is written it must be forwarded to the relevant Principal Lawyer, CEO or Board Chair, as appropriate. .

Procedure for complaints and appeals management

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

1. Processing the complaint:

- informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame within seven days of receiving the complaint.

2. Investigating the complaint:

- examining the complaint within two weeks of the complaint being received;
- investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond; and
- informing the complainant by email or letter, within two weeks of the complaint being received, of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints will be investigated and resolved within one month 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:

A complaint should be resolved as follows:

- by making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within one month 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. Referral to alternative procedure:

Complaints can also be made to:

Victorian Legal Services Board + Commissioner

Level 5, 555 Bourke St, Melbourne Vic 3000

Tel: 9679 8001

Local call: 1300 796 344

Email: admin@lsbc.vic.gov.au

Web: www.lsbc.vic.gov.au

Complaints to the Commissioner must be made in writing. Forms can be downloaded from their website.

Record keeping

All correspondence relating to complaints will be kept by the relevant Principal Lawyer, CEO or Board Chair (as appropriate) in a confidential location.

Board oversight

A summary of complaints received and outcome/resolution will be reported to the FLS Board on a twice yearly basis.