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Drafted by	Jane Mclvor	Approved by Board on	
Responsible person	Jane Mclvor	Scheduled review date	

## INTRODUCTION

# COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Big Yellow Umbrella recognises the important role of an effective complaints management process in providing high quality customer service. Big Yellow Umbrella acknowledges that it is accountable for its decisions and actions and its complaints management process is designed to ensure that it is customer-focused and can respond in a timely and appropriate manner to client and service provider complaints. The complaints management process plays an important role in identifying problems and providing information to improve Big Yellow Umbrella's business processes.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide Big Yellow Umbrella's staff, students and volunteers with guidelines for formal and informal complaints resolution and to provide information on an external review for unresolved complaints.

## POLICIES

This policy applies to all staff, students and volunteers of Big Yellow Umbrella. Big Yellow Umbrella expects staff, students and volunteers at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

### **Big Yellow Umbrella's definition of a complaint:**

*Any expression of dissatisfaction or grievance made against Big Yellow Umbrella or against one or more of its directors, staff, students volunteers or anyone else acting on its behalf, where the organisation has allegedly failed to meet a requirement. The commitment might be related to Big Yellow Umbrella's activities, use of resources, mission, values, staff conduct / behaviour or legal requirements.*

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Chief Operations Manager and the Strategic Finance Executive are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of all aspects of this Policies and Procedures.

All staff, students and volunteers are responsible for reading and understanding this Policies and Procedures.

**All staff, students and volunteers** are responsible for providing a high standard of service to clients and service providers and play an integral role in the frontline complaints handling process. Staff, students and volunteers have the authority to address less serious complaints such as incorrect address, errors in records and lack of response to correspondence or telephone calls, as they are received and should address such complaints quickly and efficiently following the procedure set out below:

- Register the complaint in the Complaints Register ensuring all details are completed at the time the complaint is made or as soon as possible afterwards. All details of the complaint including all communication with the complainant and any actions to resolve the complaint will be recorded in the same place.
- Take the necessary steps to rectify the complaint, communicating and working with appropriate Big Yellow Umbrella staff, students and volunteers to find a satisfactory solution.
- Notify the complainant about the corrective action that has been taken.
- Update the Complaints Register to record the action that has been taken to resolve the complaint and any corrective action that is necessary to avoid further similar complaints.
- Where the complainant requests a review of this initial response, the complaint should be forwarded to the Chief Operations Manager or delegated (Strategic Finance Executive) for further action.
- Where, after initial assessment, the complaint is found to be unsuitable for frontline review, the complaint should be forwarded to the Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive).

**The Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive)** is responsible for coordinating the internal complaint resolution process when a less serious complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved through the frontline complaints handling process or the complaint is of a more serious nature. The Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic

Finance Executive) is also responsible for the maintenance and monitoring of the Complaints Management Record System.

When handling a complaint, the following procedure should be followed:

- Request the complainant to complete the Complaints Form which must be made available to the complainant. Assistance can be provided to complete this form, including the provision of a translating and interpreting service. Additional information may be sought from the complainant during the complaint resolution process.
- Register the complaint in the Complaints Register, ensuring all details are completed and data is updated to reflect the current status of the complaint as noted above.
- Review all written responses for consistency, accuracy and completeness.
- Work with staff, students and volunteers where appropriate, to find a satisfactory resolution of the complaint.
- Provide timely and consistent updates of the complaints resolution process to the complainant and any staff or volunteers involved.
- Communicate the outcome of the complaint to the complainant in writing.
- Report the outcome of the complaint to any relevant staff or volunteer and make recommendations for system enhancements that may prevent complaints of a similar nature in the future.
- If the complainant requests a review of the complaints handling process or appeals the decision, the Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive) will advise the complainant to appeal in writing to the Chief Operations Manager.

**Note**

- *If the complaint is against the Chief Operations Manager or the Strategic Finance Executive, the complainant should be referred directly to the Management Committee who will be responsible for undertaking the complaints handling procedures.*
- *If the complaint is of a legal or criminal nature, the Chief Operations Manager should inform the Management Committee of the complaint. The Management Committee will refer the complaint to the appropriate authorities.*

**The Chief Operations Manager** is responsible for overseeing the appeals process with support from the Strategic Finance Executive where relevant. On receipt of a written appeal from the complainant, the Chief Operations Manager will investigate all aspects of the complaints handling process with the view to resolving the complaint satisfactorily. The

Chief Operations Manager will advise the complainant in writing of any actions or decisions made.

## **PROCEDURES**

The following procedures apply:

### **Complaints Management Process**

Big Yellow Umbrella's complaints management process is structured to ensure there is a fair and detailed consideration of complaints that will result in a satisfactory resolution for the complainant. It provides for internal review of the complaint as well as an external and independent review where necessary.

**1.**

#### **Frontline Complaints Function**

Empowers all Big Yellow Umbrella staff, students and volunteers to resolve less serious complaints at the outset quickly and efficiently.

***Involves***

- Complaints registration.
- Attempted resolution of the complaint.
- Referring higher level complaints directly to the next stage.

**2.**

#### **Internal Complaints Review**

Undertaken by the Chief Operations Manager or designated person (Strategic Finance Officer) to resolve complaints when a review of the frontline decision is requested or the matter is unsuitable for frontline review.

***Involves***

- Coordinating the internal complaint resolution process.
- Providing timely and consistent responses to the complainant.
- Resolution of the complaint

### 3.

#### **Escalated Internal Complaints Review**

Undertaken by the Management Committee to resolve complaints when a complaint is against the Chief Operations Manager or Strategic Finance Executive, it is of a legal or criminal nature or the internal complaints review cannot be resolved by the Chief Operations Manager or designated person (Strategic Finance Officer).

##### ***Involves***

- Coordinating the internal complaint resolution process.
- Providing timely and consistent responses to the complainant.
- Refer the complaint to the appropriate authorities or an independent external review
- Resolution of the complaint.

### 4.

#### **Independent External Review**

When complaints remain unresolved after internal review the complainant will be advised of their external review rights. Depending on the circumstances, clients can approach a number of external review organisations and tribunals.

##### ***Involves***

- Referring complainants to the NSW Ombudsman, the independent and impartial overseer of community services in NSW **or** other appropriate external agency.
- Responding to enquiries from the Ombudsman or other agency in a thorough, prompt and consistent manner, addressing all requests for information.

*Big Yellow Umbrella may also identify that a complaint should be referred to an external agency for review.*

## Response Timeframes and Communication

Big Yellow Umbrella is committed to responding quickly and courteously to complaints from its clients and service providers and to making it easy to lodge a complaint.

- Big Yellow Umbrella has a Complaints Register accessible to all Big Yellow Umbrella staff, students and volunteers where all complaints are recorded and monitored. It is essential all details are completed at the time the complaint is made or as soon as possible afterwards. All details of the complaint including all communication with the complainant and any actions to resolve the complaint will be recorded in the same place, ensuring a comprehensive record is kept and monitored.
- A copy of Big Yellow Umbrella’s Complaints Management Policies and Procedures and a Complaints Form is on its website.
- Big Yellow Umbrella can provide assistance to those wishing to make a complaint including access to a translating and interpreting service. The person handling the complaint needs to:
  1. Establish the facts and gather relevant information
  2. If necessary and / or practical, interview those involved
- All written complaints will receive written acknowledgement from Big Yellow Umbrella, including any action and resolutions.

The following table outlines Big Yellow Umbrella’s response times for each type of complaint.

<b>Nature of Complaint</b>	<b>Referred to</b>	<b>Initial Verbal Contact</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
Lower level/less serious complaints	Frontline	Immediately	2 working days
Referred complaint from frontline	Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive)	Within 2 working days	10 working days
Higher level/more serious complaints	Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive)	Within 2 working days	10 working days

	Management Committee		
Complaints Appealed	Chief Operations Manager and / or Management Committee	Within 5 working days	15 working days
Complaints of a financial nature	Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive) Finance Officer	Within 24 hours	48 hours
Unresolved Complaints	<b>NSW Ombudsman or other External Authority</b>		

### **Objectivity and Fairness**

Big Yellow Umbrella is committed to responding to complaints objectively and fairly:

- All complaints are to be recorded in the Complaints Register and are objectively evaluated to ensure fairness and compliance with all relevant legislative requirements.
- The Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive) will act in an impartial and unbiased manner and if it is deemed that he/she has a personal interest or involvement, the complaint will be referred to the Management Committee.
- All complaints are treated confidentially. All personal details will be recorded in a safe place and not divulged to third parties unless Big Yellow Umbrella has the complainant's written consent.
- The lodgement of a complaint will not compromise the complainant's ability to access services provided by Big Yellow Umbrella.

### **Resources and Training**

To support an effective complaints management process, Big Yellow Umbrella provides training to its staff, students and volunteers and the Complaints Management Policies and Procedures is available to all staff, students and volunteers on the Business Management System located on the Intranet.

The Chief Operations Manager or delegate (Strategic Finance Executive) is dedicated to the management of the internal review process.

The Complaints Register records and tracks complaints to ensure accuracy and quick response times and is also used as a reporting tool to analyse complaint trends and assess business practices.

Staff, students and volunteers who are handling complaints will also receive training on the following

- Receiving complaints: listening and empathy skills;
- Responding to complaints: using tact, understanding the complainant point of view and responding using constructive language;
- Responding to complaints and complainants in a safe and confidential manner, especially those being made by disadvantaged or vulnerable stakeholders;
- Investigating the complaint: gathering factual information, interviewing skills;
- Handling difficult complainants: how to respond under pressure.

This policy and procedure is available to all staff, students, volunteers and management committee members to support their training.

### **Business Improvement**

Big Yellow Umbrella regards the complaints management process as an important component of its review of business practices and is committed to learning and improving as a result of complaints. The effectiveness of the complaints process is monitored and reported to the Chief Operations Manager and the information is utilised to increase the effectiveness of the overall business operations.

### **External Review**

Big Yellow Umbrella acknowledges that its decisions and actions in the complaints handling process can have a significant impact on individuals and attempts to resolve all complaints in a fair manner. Big Yellow Umbrella also recognises the right to appeal its decisions and undertake to advise complainants of their rights to review by an external independent agency. Big Yellow Umbrella will provide contact details for the NSW Ombudsman or other external authorities on request.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Complaints Form

Complaints Register

NSW Ombudsman

Big Yellow Umbrella's Managing Difficult People Policies and Procedures



## **AUTHORISATION**

Signature of Board Secretary:

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Date of approval by the Board:

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On behalf of the Big Yellow Umbrel

