



Toukley Neighbourhood Centre

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TNC is the beating heart of our community. We foster connection, celebrate diversity, and provide a safe and welcoming space where people are supported, empowered, and equipped with the opportunity to grow, thrive, and achieve independence.

POLICY – COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

Policy Information

Title:	Complaints Management
Effective Date:	16 June 2025
Policy Owner:	Executive Officer
Applies To:	All staff and volunteers
Next Review Date:	June 2026

Change Control

Effective Date	Author	Approver	Comments
11-Sep-2023	Bronwyn Evans	BoM	Initial document
09-Sep-2024	Bronwyn Evans	BoM	Update to refer to EO instead of Executive Officer, minor role changes
16-Jun-2025	Donna Tudman	BoM	Convert to new template and remove Measurement Criteria Revert to Executive Officer and change policy owner Incorporate refinements for Child Safe
13-Oct-2025	Bronwyn Evans	BoM	Add no-contact/interim measures; clarify delegations where EO/Chair/BoM member is involved; add support person/EAP references; align records to action/request systems; minor typographical fixes.



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Purpose

This policy sets out TNC's policy for managing complaints / reports.

Context

This policy has been developed in alignment with the [TNC Policy Framework](#).

TNC Policy Documents are developed to:

- Assist TNC to meet the objects of the organisation and manage risk effectively
- Assist TNC staff and volunteers in performing their duties
- Outline how TCNC will meet governance expectations
- Provide transparency and clarity to TNC staff and volunteers.

TNC is bound by the [Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 \(Cth\)](#) and regulated by the [ACNC](#).

Definitions

Term	Explanation
ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
BoM	Board of Management
EO	Executive Officer
TNC	Toukley Neighbourhood Centre

Principles

Policies always contain a set of principles that provide information relating to the rationale for the document. Staff and volunteers must consider and comply with these guiding principles when performing their duties.

Principle 1: Any person / organisation using TNC services, or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint / report / disclosure or to appeal a decision of the organisation

All clients are informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints / reports / disclosures and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with TNC.

Principle 2: Concerns raised will be addressed in ways that ensure access, equity, fairness, accountability, transparency and timeliness

All incidents, complaints and reports are recorded and assessed within one week of being lodged, with a written update to the reporter within two weeks, and an aim to resolve within one month. Where this is not possible, the reporter will be advised of the reasons and a revised timeframe.

During active matters, TNC may issue interim directions (e.g., no-contact, temporary task/roster adjustments, separation of parties, stand-down where required) to protect safety, confidentiality and fairness. BoM has visibility of incidents and reports through the Incidents Register (part of the Risk Framework), presented at each BoM meeting. At the EO's discretion, the identity of the reporter may be withheld.

Principle 3: TNC's complaints / reports / appeals management procedure is simple, effectively communicated, and consistently applied

This policy is published and freely available at all TNC locations (including online).

Principle 4: TNC aligns to Child Safe practices

All children and young people have the right to speak up if something is wrong, and to have their concerns taken seriously, acted on promptly and respectfully, and resolved wherever possible.

In particular:

- TNC ensures that age-appropriate information about reports is available to children and young people.
- All reports from children or about the safety of children are treated with priority.
- Staff and volunteers are trained in responding to disclosures and reports from children.
- Staff and volunteers should use developmentally appropriate language and create safe opportunities for children to raise concerns informally.

Procedure

Making a Report / Disclosure

A person wishing to make a report / disclosure may do so in writing or verbally to:

- the staff member or volunteer they were dealing with at the time
- the EO (or designate)
- the Board of Management, or
- the NSW Department of Communities & Justice.

Written reports / disclosures should be directed to either:

- PO Box 55, Toukley NSW 226
- admin@tnc.org.au.

The EO will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.

Children and young people may make a report in whatever way feels comfortable — by speaking to a trusted adult at TNC, filling in a simple form, writing or drawing what happened, or asking a family member or friend to speak on their behalf. We take children's concerns seriously and will respond to them in a safe, respectful, and timely manner.

TNC ensures all children, young people, families and staff are aware of how to make a report. We will:

- Provide information in plain English and accessible formats (e.g., posters, one-page summaries, visual symbols).
- Include child-friendly reports information on our website and in relevant spaces.
- Explain rights and how to raise concerns as part of any programs that involve children.

Reporters may nominate a support person for any interview. Staff have access to TNC's EAP; volunteers may request a warm referral to external supports.

Lodging an Appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organisation, or by a staff member, related to service provision or the manner in which a volunteer or member of staff has dealt with an individual.

Appeals should be in writing and directed to either:

- PO Box 55, Toukley NSW 226
- admin@tnc.org.au.

The Executive Officer will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.

Reports / Appeal Resolution Responsibility

If the report / appeal relates to ...	The responsibility for resolution is with ...	And dealt in accordance with ...
Association members, including BoM members	Chairperson (or Deputy Chair if the Chair is conflicted)	• TNC Constitution
Chairperson	Deputy Chairperson (with one additional BoM member sighted)	• Code of conduct • Board Charter • TNC Constitution
EO	Chairperson (or Deputy Chair if the Chair is conflicted)	• People management policy • Code of Conduct
Social enterprises (Op Shop)	EO	• People management policy

If the report / appeal relates to ...	The responsibility for resolution is with ...	And dealt in accordance with ...
		- Facilities management policy - Code of Conduct
Staff member	EO	- People management policy - Code of Conduct
TNC generally, including services	EO	Facilities management policy
Volunteer	EO	- People management policy - Code of Conduct

Support for Children & Young People

When a child or young person raises a concern, TNC will:

- Ensure they are safe, believed, and not blamed
- Explain what will happen next in language they understand
- Allow them to have a support person with them
- Give them choices about how they want to be involved in the process
- Check in with them regularly and explain outcomes.

Where appropriate, TNC will provide age-appropriate feedback to children and young people about the outcome of their report, including what actions were taken and why.

Safeguards for Reporters and Whistleblowers

TNC is committed to ensuring that people feel safe and supported when raising concerns, complaints, or disclosures — including those involving staff or the organisation itself. This includes offering protection to whistleblowers.

Anyone making a report in good faith will be:

- **Protected from retaliation or adverse consequences**, including dismissal, demotion, harassment, or discrimination
- **Treated respectfully and fairly**, regardless of the outcome of the report
- **Kept informed** about the process, where appropriate
- **Given the option to remain anonymous**, where practical and lawful
- **Provided with appropriate support**, including referral to external services if needed.

TNC does not tolerate victimisation of any person for making a complaint or report. Allegations of retaliation will be treated as a serious breach of the Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action.

Anonymous reports will be considered and responded to, although TNC's ability to investigate and respond may be limited in such cases.

Responding to a Report / Disclosure / Appeal

The person responsible for resolution of a report / disclosure / appeal will:

1. Process the report or appeal:
 - a. Register the report or appeal in the Incidents Register
 - b. Inform the reporter that their report has been received and providing them with information about the process and timeframe.
 - c. Interim directions & supports: Consider and document any **no-contact** direction, adjustments to rosters/duties, temporary stand-down if required, and supports (e.g., access to EAP; option for a support person in interviews).
2. Investigate the report or appeal:
 - a. Examine the report within one week of the report being received
 - b. Investigate the report and deciding how to respond
 - c. Inform the reporter by letter within two weeks of the report being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected timeframe for resolution

- d. As far as possible, reports or appeals will be investigated and resolved within one month of being received. If this timeframe cannot be met, the reporter will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative timeframe for resolution.
 - e. Conflicts and delegations: Where the EO, Chair or a BoM member is a party to, or closely connected with, the matter, appoint an alternate manager to lead the process (e.g., Deputy Chair or an independent reviewer). Record the delegation and notify parties.
3. Resolve the report:
- a. Make a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within three months of the report being received
 - b. Inform the reporter of the outcome:
 - i. Upheld (and if so, what will be done to resolve it)
 - ii. Resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
 - iii. If no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
 - c. Inform the reporter of any options for further action if required
4. Review the report:
- If the reporter is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their report or appeal, they can seek a further review of the matter by the BoM within the next month.
5. Refer to external procedure:
- A formal external escalation procedure may follow Step 4 if the reporter is still not satisfied with the outcome. The reporter will be referred to the relevant funding body of the service / program.

Communications & Confidentiality — new short subsection (before “Record Keeping”)

Communications and confidentiality (active matters): TNC provides de-identified updates to the Board as needed. Parties and witnesses must not discuss the matter outside the process, on social media, or with third parties. All media or public statements (including social posts) about the matter are made only by the EO/Chair (or delegate).

Record Keeping

A register of reports / disclosures is kept in the Incidents Register (currently managed on Smartsheet within the Risk Framework). The Incident Register is maintained by the Executive Officer and Risk Committee, and will record the following for each report or appeal:

- Details of the report / disclosure
- Date lodged
- Action taken
- Date of resolution and reason for decision
- Indication of reporter being notified of outcome
- Response and any further action
- Correspondence relating to each report / disclosure.

The Incidents Register is confidential, and access is restricted to the EO and BoM.

The Incidents Register will identify reports made by or on behalf of children and young people, and these will be analysed separately to ensure systemic issues relating to child safety are visible. This is accomplished through use of a flag identify reports and incidents as pertinent to Child Safe.

EO will be responsible for reporting details of any reports / appeals received at each BoM meeting.

Results from this report will be reviewed by Board of Management and used to:

- Inform service planning by including a review of reports and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- Inform decision making by including a report on reports and appeals as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas

Actions arising from complaints are tracked in TNC's OurCatHerder (action owner and due date). Operational requests needed to implement outcomes are raised via the Smartsheet Job Request form to ensure visibility and timely completion.

