



Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre Inc

Information Sheet for Clients Steps for Making a Complaint

Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre (Shoalcoast) Client Complaints policy is based on the approach that informal conciliation is the best method for resolving a dispute, with formal measures being a last resort. However, if you feel uncomfortable about speaking to anyone in the following complaints process, you are welcome to skip that step and try the next one.

You may have someone accompany you when making a complaint to act as a support person/advocate, such as a family member or a friend. If you require assistance with arranging such support, you may wish to contact a relevant advocacy service.

Step One - Speaking to the staff member you have a complaint about

Make an appointment to speak to the staff member you have the problem with. If this does not assist to resolve the issue, you need to contact the Centre Manager on (02) 4422 9529 or 1800 229 529. Alternatively, you can write to the Centre Manager at PO Box 1496, Nowra, NSW, 2541 – mark your letter ‘Confidential’.

If you do not wish to speak to the staff member

If you feel uncomfortable speaking with the staff member about your complaint, telephone Shoalcoast and speak to the Centre Manager. If he/she is not available leave a message and the Centre Manager will return your call. The Centre Manager will respect your concerns and the staff member involved will not deal with your complaint.

Step Two - Making a formal complaint through the Centre Manager

The Shoalcoast Centre Manager will telephone you to discuss your complaint. They will make a suitable time to meet with you. Alternatively you may decide it can be dealt with over the telephone.

The Centre Manager is responsible for the following:

1. Ensuring you are able to confidentially make the complaint – this may mean meeting with you in an alternative setting to the Legal Centre. The Centre Manager will also ensure that your request is facilitated if you need assistance to make the complaint, for example involving another organisation as a support.

2. Making a commitment to you that Shoalcoast is committed to early resolution of the complaint and informing you that you will be kept up-to-date on how the complaint is progressing.
3. Taking details of the complaint in writing using the appropriate form and discussing strategies and timelines for resolution of the complaint.
4. Creating a confidential complaints file, which will contain all records of conversations with you, the staff member involved, subsequent actions and resolutions.

If this step does not assist to resolve the issue, the Centre Manager will refer the matter to the Centre Management Committee.

Step Three - Complaint dealt with by the Centre Management Committee

After receiving written notification of the complaint, the Management Committee will form a complaints sub-committee to investigate the complaint.

Complaints Sub Committee

1. A Complaints Sub Committee will be formed by the Management Committee with three non-staff members, one being the President.
2. The Complaints Sub Committee will receive written submissions relating to your complaint from the Centre Manager, assess the nature of the complaint, investigate the complaint further and make decisions regarding resolution of the complaint.
3. The Complaints Sub Committee will report back to the Management Committee regarding any recommendations and actions to be taken in accordance with centre policies.
4. You will then be advised in writing of the outcome of the investigation within one month of the Management Committee being advised of the complaint. The letter will also inform of the next step you can take if still not satisfied.

Step Four - Complaining to an external agency

If you are not satisfied with the outcomes of an internal investigation by the Centre Management Committee, you can complain to the following organisations:

Complaints about solicitors may be made to:

- Office of the Legal Services Commissioner 1800 242 958

Complaints about Shoalcoast to the funding body:

- Program Manager, Community Legal Centre Funding
Legal Aid Commission of NSW (02) 9219 5000

Your Privacy

Shoalcoast Client Privacy Information Handout is publicly available on our website. Our privacy policy aims to ensure that client personal records are kept confidential and that all information is correct and up to date. Clients can access their personal information, upon request, in the company of an appropriate staff member.