

Complaint Handling Policy

Introduction

The Conflict Management Academy (CMA) is committed to obtaining and addressing feedback and complaints regarding our services, personnel, systems, practices, procedures, products, and complaint handling.

Purpose

This policy aims to ensure that CMA staff and contractors manage complaints fairly, efficiently, and effectively. It serves as a guide for those who receive and handle complaints in accordance with Section 66 of the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS), which mandates that all Recognised Providers maintain an approved complaints-handling policy.

Principles and standards

CMA complaints handling policy and procedures are modelled on fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into organisational culture. They are also consistent with the AMDRAS requirements. This policy can be read alongside AS/NZ 10002 Guidelines for Complaints Management in Organisations, which provides detailed guidance on managing customer complaints within organisations and covers guiding principles, complaints management framework, planning and design, operation, and maintenance and improvement.

Expectations

CMA expects all our staff and contractors at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

Appendix 1 outlines the nature of the commitment expected from our people and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Terms and Definitions

See Appendix 1 for definitions of terms used in this policy.



Sharing our complaints policy and process

Our complaint management policy and process is available from:

- our website <https://conflictmanagementacademy.com/complaints>
- in leaflets, newsletters and other relevant media generated by CMA.

We provide information about:

- where complaints can be made
- how complaints can be made
- when complaints can be made
- when acknowledgement of complaints can be expected
- what information should be provided by the complainant
- our process for handling complaints
- time periods associated with the various stages in the process
- where appropriate, possible options for redress
- the complainant's options for review, both internally and externally and
- how the complainant can obtain feedback on the status of their complaint

We ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

Where complaints can be made

Complaints can be submitted using the form on the CMA website (<https://conflictmanagementacademy.com/complaints>) or by email (office@conflictmanagementacademy.com) or by telephone: 0407 140 860.

Complaints can also be sent to our external complaints handling body, The Resolution Network, by email help@resolutionnetwork.com.au or telephone: 1300 392 312.

Complaints can also be directed to AMDRAS by email info@amdras.au.

Accessibility and support

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if they give us permission to do so.

Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g., advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation). In certain circumstances (e.g. mediation and arbitration), this may require the person or organisation representing a complainant to agree to keep their involvement and details of the complaint and process confidential.

No charge

A complainant will not be charged a fee to complain. Costs of any investigation or dispute resolution process will not be charged to complainants.

What complainants can expect from us

That we will:

- provide them with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it;
- listen to and treat them with respect;
- actively involve them in the complaint process where possible and appropriate; and
- provide them with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

No detriment to people making complaints

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anonymous complaints

We prefer complainants to identify themselves so that we may address their concerns personally, and also because the principles of due process and natural justice ordinarily require transparency to those against whom a complaint has been made.

We may accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so, and we will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where enough information is provided.

Where a complainant wishes to remain anonymous and/or asks that certain information remains confidential, we will do our best to carry out a complete and fair investigation and will consult with the complainant if this prevents us from effectively doing so.

When complaints can be made

To enable early resolution of any issues raised, complaints should be made as soon as possible. Delays in reporting complaints may make it resolution more challenging.

The Conflict Management Academy generally accepts complaints relating to people and services within 12 months from the completion of service.



Complaint information requirements

The CMA will ask complainants to provide the following details:

- Their full name and contact information.
- A brief description of the issues including what happened, when it happened, who it involved and any witnesses.
- The outcome that the complainant hopes to achieve;
- How the complainant wishes to be contacted about the complaint (e.g. email or telephone); and
- Any additional support the person making a complaint requires to support them to engage in the complaints handling process.

Keeping complainants informed

The CMA will acknowledge receipt of the complaint promptly, usually within 3 working days and will inform them as soon as possible of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- the possible necessity of employing an impartial person or organisation to assist in investigating and/or processing of the complaint;
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- as soon as it is determined, the outcome of their complaint.

Updates of the status of the complaint will be made available to the complainant upon request and at regular intervals (at least once a month).

We will advise complainants as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise complainants as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

Timeliness

Complaints will be resolved by the CMA at the earliest opportunity in the most informal manner. In some circumstances, complaints may need further assessment and steps to be taken.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.



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STAGE 1: Initial assessment

An initial assessment will be conducted within 14 days of receipt of the complaint.

An initial assessment will involve assessing whether the concerns raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is;
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety;
- Impact on the individual, the general public or our organization;
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed;
- Who should and should not be involved in managing the complaint; and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

STAGE 2: Complaints handling plan

After the initial assessment, and within 28 days of receipt of the initial complaint, our complaints handler will notify the complainant of CMA's intended next steps, including time frames and reasons.

Next steps may include:

- Working directly with the complainant to see if the concerns can be appropriately addressed in this way;
- Providing the complainant with additional information, an explanation, and/or an apology;
- Gathering further information about the issue, person or area that the complaint is about;
- Referral to mediation or other service; or
- A formal investigation of the complaint.

The nature and scope of any enquiry or investigation will depend on the circumstances of each case, the specific concerns raised, the people involved and potential outcomes.

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including to the AMDRAS Board under clause 83 of the AMDRAS Standards).



STAGE 3: Management of complaint

Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any personnel whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Responding flexibly

We will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

Confidentiality

We will seek permission before disclosing confidential information provided by or on behalf of a complainant.

Personal and confidential information, including that which may identify individuals, will only be disclosed or used by us as required or permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

Complaints involving multiple agencies

Where a complaint involves multiple organisations or individuals, we will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure that communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

Subject to privacy, confidentiality, safety and mandatory reporting considerations, communication and information sharing will also be organised to facilitate a timely response to the complaint.

If another organisation or person is charged with investigating and handling a complaint, this will be made clear to the person making the complaint and/or their representative.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas within our organisation, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will also be coordinated.

Where our services are contracted out, we expect contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. We take complaints not only about the actions of our personnel but also the actions of our service providers.

STAGE 4: Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the complainant and advise them:

- What actions were taken in response to the complaint
- The outcome(s) of the complaint
- The reason/s for our decision
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- Information about any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review or appeal (including to the AMDRAS Board pursuant to clause 83 of the AMDRAS Standards).

If any adverse findings are made about any of our people, we will consider whether privacy obligations impact on what information can be disclosed to the complainant.

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to senior management and, where appropriate, the AMDRAS Board.

We seek to identify possible systemic issues or breaches and when identified staff should report systemic issues or breaches internally and to the AMDRAS board when needed.

Record keeping

Each complaint received will be given a unique identifier, and a confidential file opened containing all correspondence, records of conversations, and any other documents or information relating to the complaint.

At the time of closing the complaint we will record the following:

- The nature and details of the complaint
- Steps taken to address the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying

or root causes

This will assist in responding to any further reviews or appeals as well as supporting quality improvements.

We will maintain a record of complaints for the purpose of:

- identifying trends and opportunities to improve our people, services and complaints handling processes; and
- meeting our reporting obligations to the AMDRAS Board (including pursuant to clauses 66.2(c), 69(c)(iii) and 80 of the AMDRAS Standards).

Staff training and development

We will ensure that all staff are aware of the policies for identifying, gathering, classifying, maintaining, storing, securing and disposing of complaint related records, including:

- The steps involved in recording the handling of each complaint and appropriately maintaining these records;
- How to maintain records of the type of training and instruction that individuals involved in the complaint management system have received;
- Specifying our criteria for responding to requests for records made by a complainant or their agent including what kind of information will be provided, to whom and in what format;
- Specifying how and when de-identified complaint data may be disclosed to the public or other organizations to whom the complaint refers such as the AMDRAS board in accordance with the AMDRAS.

Analysis and evaluation of complaints

Responding to and learning from complaints is an essential part of our commitment to quality improvement for our organization.

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by our people and where required the AMDRAS Board.

We will run regular reports on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided to our senior management and to the AMDRAS Board (where required) for review, at least annually (see sections 55, 66.2, and 80 of the AMDRAS Standards).

Monitoring of the complaint management system

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to:
ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints
identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

Monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

Continuous improvement

We are committed to improving the way our organisation operates, including the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:

- support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- implement best practices in complaint handling
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by our people
- regularly review our complaint management system and complaint data, and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of our system.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW DETAILS

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Director
Responsible Person	Dr Samantha Hardy
Original Approval Date	5 February 2025
Scheduled Review Date	February 2026
Version	1

Appendix 1 – Terms and definitions

Term	Meaning
AMDRAS (or “The AMDRAS”)	The Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards. Note: AMDRAS is a national accreditation scheme for dispute resolution practitioners and specialists. Among other things, it specifies minimum standards of training, assessment, and practice as expressed in these Standards.
AMDRAS Board	The Board of AMDRAS. Note: Formerly the board of the Mediator Standards Board Ltd. In that capacity it established the National Mediator Accreditation Standards (NMA), now superseded by AMDRAS.
AMDRAS Standards	The Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards (AMDRAS) “Standards”.
Complainant	A person who has made a complaint to or about CMA.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, our staff, contractors, trainers or coach/mentors, or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Complaint handling / management system	All policies, procedures, practices, personnel, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.
Dispute	An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.
Feedback	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system.
Policy	A statement of instruction that sets out how we should meet our obligations.
Procedure	A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.



Appendix 2 - Responsibilities

Who	Commitment	How
Director	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide adequate support and direction to those responsible for handling complaints.• Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.• Encourage all our people to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.• Encourage our people to make recommendations for system improvements.• Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint• Report to the AMDRAS Board on our complaint handling in accordance with the AMDRAS data.
CMA staff	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.• Assist people to make a complaint, if needed.• Comply with our policy and associated procedures.• Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints.• Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve our complaints management system.• Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.
Our trainers, coaches, mentors and contractors	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.• Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures.• Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process.• Be alert to complaints and assist people handling complaints to resolve matters promptly.