

Complaints Handling Policy

1. Purpose

This Complaints Handling Policy sets out how Cairns Psychology Group manages complaints, concerns, suspicions, and disclosures relating to child safety, staff conduct, or service delivery. It ensures our processes are child-focused, culturally safe, transparent, and compliant with Queensland law and professional ethical codes.

This policy aligns with:

- Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld)
- QFCC Child Safe Standards (Standard 6 – Complaints Management)
- Universal Principle (Cultural Safety)
- APS Code of Ethics, PACFA Code of Ethics, AASW Code of Ethics
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld) mandatory reporting requirements

2. Scope

Applies to:

- All staff, contractors, students, and volunteers
- Children, young people, families, and community members engaging with our services
- Complaints relating to:
 - Child safety or wellbeing concerns
 - Staff or volunteer conduct
 - Breaches of the Code of Conduct or policies
 - Service delivery issues
 - Cultural safety concerns

Note: Clinicians engaged with Cairns Psychology Group are independent practitioners. They are accountable for their own professional practice and regulatory compliance. While independent, clinicians are expected to align with this policy and the child safety framework of Cairns Psychology Group when providing services under the practice name.

3. Our Commitment

- All complaints will be taken seriously, handled respectfully, and resolved fairly.
- Complaints processes will be accessible to children, families, and communities.
- No person will be disadvantaged for making a complaint in good faith.
- Complaints will be addressed in a timely, transparent, and confidential manner.
- Cultural safety and trauma-informed care will guide our response.

4. Making a Complaint

Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- Verbally to any staff member or manager
- In writing (letter, email, or complaints form)
- Anonymously, if preferred
- Through a child-friendly process (e.g., suggestion box, visual complaints form)
- Online via the Cairns Psychology Group website

Children will be supported to express complaints in age-appropriate ways.

5. Complaints Process

Step 1 – Receipt & Acknowledgement

- Complaints are recorded in the Complaints Register.
- Acknowledgement provided within 5 business days (unless anonymous).

Step 2 – Initial Review

- Complaint assessed by the Practice Manager or delegated senior staff.
- Urgent safety issues are escalated immediately to authorities (Police, Child Safety).

Step 3 – Investigation

- Investigations are impartial, fair, and timely.
- Cultural safety considerations are applied.
- Relevant parties are interviewed, and evidence documented.

Step 4 – Resolution

- Complainant is informed of findings and actions within 20 business days, or provided with updates if more time is required.
- Outcomes may include: mediation, staff training, disciplinary action, referral to regulators, or systemic improvements.

Step 5 – Appeal

- If not satisfied, the complainant may:
 - Request an internal review by the Director
 - Refer externally to professional registration bodies (AHPRA, PACFA, AASW)
 - Contact the Queensland Ombudsman or Queensland Human Rights Commission

Step 6 – Close & Record

- Complaint and outcome documented in the Complaints Register.
- Lessons learned incorporated into policy and training.

6. Child Safety & Mandatory Reporting

- If a complaint involves harm or risk of harm to a child, staff must follow mandatory reporting obligations under the Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld).
- Reports may be made to:
 - Queensland Police
 - Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services
 - Professional registration boards

7. Accessibility & Cultural Safety

- Child-friendly flowcharts and posters explaining the complaints process will be displayed in clinic and on the website.
- Complaints information will be available in plain language, alternative formats, and translations where needed.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols will be respected, and input sought from Elders and community representatives where appropriate.

8. Confidentiality & Privacy

- All complaints are handled confidentially.
- Information is shared only with those directly involved or where legally required.
- Records stored securely in line with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld).

9. Roles & Responsibilities

- **Directors** – Ensure governance, oversight, and resourcing for complaints management.
- **Practice Manager** – Lead complaint investigations and ensure timely resolution.
- **Staff & Contractors** – Respond to concerns respectfully and escalate complaints appropriately.
- **Clinicians (Independent Practitioners)** – Responsible for managing complaints relating to their own professional practice, while expected to align with Cairns Psychology Group's complaints framework and cooperate with practice-level processes.
- **Children & Families** – Encouraged to raise concerns without fear of reprisal.

10. Review

- This policy is reviewed **annually** or earlier if legislative or organisational changes occur.
- Trends from the Complaints Register are reviewed to inform continuous improvement.

11. Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have read, understood, and agree to comply with the Cairns Psychology Group Complaints Handling Policy.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____