



*Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania  
Policy Statement*

## **Grievance and Complaints Resolution Policy**

### **Policy Purpose**

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT) is committed to creating and maintaining constructive, productive and supportive relationships with all the people and organisations with which it works. This includes ensuring there are appropriate procedures in place to deal with any grievance or complaint about the operations of NHT, its Board of Management, its member organisations, employees or volunteers.

NHT acknowledges that grievances or complaints may arise from time to time and would like to resolve them in a timely, constructive and respectful manner. NHT understands that resolution may prove difficult but policy guidance and due process will offer the best chance for satisfactory outcomes.

The purpose of this policy is to guide NHT, its Board of Management, employees and volunteers in resolving grievances and complaints **raised by people or organisations external to NHT.**

This policy applies to NHT, its Board of Management, and NHT employees and volunteers, whether permanent, part time or casual. The policy also applies to NHT member organisations when a grievance or complaint concerns a possible breach of the NHT membership eligibility criteria.

While this policy can be used to assist in dealing with issues concerning bullying, harassment and discrimination, if such issues arise, refer in the first instance to the *NHT Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy*.

This policy does not apply to alleged criminal activity, suspected corruption, and reportable conduct involving children or young persons less than 18 years of age, which must be reported promptly and directly to Tasmania Police.

### **Policy**

NHT will establish procedures to support timely, fair and effective grievance and complaints resolution.

No person will be intimidated or unfairly treated in any respect if they utilise this policy and procedures to resolve an issue.

NHT will deal with a grievance or complaint about a member organisation when it concerns a possible breach of NHT membership eligibility criteria (refer to the *NHT*

*Membership Policy*). Otherwise, the grievance or complaint will be redirected to the member organisation or other body as appropriate.

In the first instance, NHT will encourage Board Members, member organisations, employees and volunteers and people or organisations with whom they have dealings to resolve grievances or complaints directly with each other at the earliest opportunity, and to their mutual satisfaction.

If an informal resolution between the parties themselves is not acceptable to a person involved, not possible for other reasons, or cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, a formal resolution procedure will be implemented.

A person or organisation requesting formal grievance or complaints resolution must do so in writing in the manner designated in this policy. Independent support to put things in writing, or other recording method with signature, will be offered if required.

All formal grievance or complaints resolution requests will be investigated fully and promptly, and all parties will be kept informed of progress by the Grievance and Complaints Contact Person.

The formal resolution procedures available will be fully documented and provided to those involved at the outset of the process. Then, the wishes and concerns of all parties will be taken into account in determining the procedures appropriate to the circumstances.

NHT will maintain confidentiality as far as is possible. Only the relevant parties will be involved in investigation and resolution procedures.

Parties to the grievance or complaint will be required to observe confidentiality.

A person raising a grievance or complaint may, at any time, withdraw in writing from pursuing the matter.

A clear and accurate written record will be kept of the details of any formal resolution requests and the procedures, actions and outcomes of the resolution process, including dates and signatures of those involved.

Members of the NHT Board, employees and volunteers are obliged to take immediate action in addressing a grievance or complaint if the physical or mental health and safety of any of the parties is perceived to be at risk.

If threats to persons are made, or members of the NHT Board, employees or volunteers perceives a possible danger to someone involved, including the possibility of one party being a danger to themselves, external professional assistance must be sought immediately.

## **Policy Procedure:**

### ***Designate a Grievance and Complaints Contact Person (GCCP)***

The designated Grievance and Complaints Contact Person (GCCP) is the Vice President. Another Board Member will be designated in the case the Vice President is unavailable or is a party to the grievance or complaint.

The GCCP will receive appropriate training.

### ***Informal grievance and complaints resolution***

**Step 1.** Open and honest communication is essential for resolution of grievances or complaints. Encourage those with concerns to raise them with those involved at the first sign of an issue developing.

**Step 2.** In doing this, the aim will be to:

- Accept that the other party's view of the situation may be different. At this stage, simply seek agreement that there is a problem and what the nature of the problem is, not agreement with the other party's view
- Listen actively to each other's point of view, allowing time for each party to have their say. It is very important to stay calm during this process and concentrate on issues.
- Make a commitment to working it out. Agree on a timeframe and a course of action.

**Step 3.** If it helps, write down the issues to assist with separating behaviours and issues from the emotions involved.

**Step 4.** Working with good will:

- Decide on agreed actions, including who will be involved and in what way, the timeframe, how the parties will know that the matter is settled, and any other things that the parties agree are necessary. There may be a benefit in putting all this in writing and signing off on it.
- Organise to meet again informally at some point to check with each other that things are now resolved.

**Step 5.** If the parties feel unable to deal with the issues by themselves, but want to pursue an informal process, an independent person that the parties trust can be invited to sit in on discussions to assist in dealing with the issues.

### ***Formal grievance and complaints resolution***

All people involved in this formal process retain the right to contact an external agency for advice, support or assistance at any stage of the process, including any dissatisfaction with resolution of the grievance or complaint.

**Step 1.** If informal resolution procedures do not reach an outcome to the satisfaction of all parties involved, or the informal process was not appropriate, the person with concerns (the notifier) should be directed to first discuss the situation with the GCCP.

The notifier will also be given a copy of the *Grievance and Complaints Resolution Policy*.

**Step 2.** If the person with concerns wishes to proceed, they will be asked to complete, sign and date the *Grievance and Complaints Notification Form (attached)*, with supporting documentation if appropriate, detailing their view of the situation, and submit it to the GCCP. Independent support to put things in writing, or other recording method with signature, will be made available if required.

**Step 3.** The GCCP will offer assistance to the person with concerns, talk about the problem or grievance and how they would like to see the complaint resolved, and explain the formal resolution procedures that are available. In consultation with the notifier, the Notification Form may be amended if the notifier requires and/or agrees to the revision, for example to make sure the issues are clear or that abusive language or put-downs are not included.

**Step 4.** Parties involved will reasonably expect to know if their behaviour or their decision is a problem for another person or group. Therefore, once finalised and signed, a copy of the Notification Form will be provided to them. All parties must be provided with a copy of the *Grievance and Complaints Resolution Policy* at the same time as they are provided with the Notification Form.

**Step 5.** The GCCP will check that all documents which define how the NHT should operate, such as NHT policies and procedures, Codes of Conduct, the Constitution, the Strategic Framework and the Funding Agreement, are being properly followed and applied. In some cases, these will provide the basis for resolution of the grievance or complaint. During this time, the advice of the Department may be sought.

**Step 6.** If Step 5 does not lead to a resolution or requires further action, the GCCP will investigate the circumstances and details of the notification and consult with all relevant parties. Meetings held to investigate or resolve a complaint will only be open to the parties and the GCCP, though the parties may have an advocate or supporter present. Meetings may be with the parties individually, together or both. To encourage openness, no legal representation will be permitted. For the same reason, minutes or written records of what is said during meetings will not be taken, but agreed outcomes of the meetings or any resulting agreement will be documented and signed and dated by all the parties.

**Step 7.** If a clear resolution, agreed to by all parties, does not arise in Step 6, the GCCP will prepare a draft written report on the investigation within ten working days of receiving the Notification Form.

**Step 8.** The GCCP will forward a copy of the confidential draft report to all the parties involved, requesting a written response to any factual errors and comment on any recommendations contained with the report within ten working days.

**Step 9.** Once the GCCP has checked and confirmed any changes to the draft report, the grievance and complaints contact person will meet with all the parties together to discuss and finalise a resolution to the conflict or grievance. In some circumstances, this may be the final step and the end of the matter. If so, the GCCP will implement Step 12 of these Procedures.

**Step 10.** If deemed necessary by the GCCP, or if requested by any party to the grievance or complaint, an independent mediator may be appointed to assist in

resolution of the matter and help the parties restore positive relationships. The mediator should be trained or otherwise have the necessary skills to support the parties reach a mutually agreed resolution.

**Step 11.** If a mediated approach fails to resolve the matter, an arbitrated approach can be undertaken. The arbitrator will investigate the matter and make a decision or determination of what should be done and what the consequences for the parties should be. The arbitrator may be an external person brought in by NHT or, depending on circumstances, the Board of Management, or the NHT Executive Officer. If the resolution directed by the independent arbitrator necessitates it, arrange or apply whatever sanctions are required under the Constitution, Policies and Procedures, or Funding Agreement. In writing, describe clearly the expectations about future decisions or behaviour and outline the consequences of not meeting these expectations.

**Step 12.** Once a resolution has been agreed or mediated, or there is an arbitrated resolution, fully document the details of the resolution in writing. In the case of an agreed or mediated resolution, have it signed and dated by all parties. The complete file, including the Notification Form with any supporting documentation, documentation of relevant factual information, analysis of the information, the conclusion, and the signed and dated resolution will then be held for a minimum of two years in confidential storage.

**Step 13.** When a grievance or complaint cannot be resolved by this NHT policy and procedures, the parties and/or NHT should seek resolution through the relevant industrial or legal processes available.

**This policy was approved at the NHT Board Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018**

Date Approved: 23/03/2018

Date for Review: 23/03/2021



# Grievance or Complaint Notification Form

*Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc..*

## REQUIREMENTS

You must complete this Notification Form and provide it to the grievance and complaints contact person if you want a formal procedure for resolution of a grievance or complaint. Advice or help to complete the Form is available. Discuss this with the grievance and complaints contact person.

The grievance and complaints contact person will review the Form and clarify any details with you, including revising the Form if you require and/or agree to the revision. Once finalised and signed, a copy of the Notification Form will be provided to the other parties identified below as being involved in the grievance or complaint. All parties must be provided with a copy of the Grievance and Complaints Resolution Policy at the same time as they are provided with the Notification Form.

Other than the parties involved and the grievance and complaints contact person, the Notification Form must be kept in confidence.

## DETAILS

**Notifier's Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone Number:**

**Mobile Number:**

**Email:**

Provide a brief description of the grievance or complaint, including dates where these apply (add more pages if you wish). This will help identify the appropriate procedures for dealing with the complaint.

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# Grievance or Complaint Notification Form

*Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania Inc..*

**Name of other person(s)  
or group involved in the  
grievance or complaint  
(the respondent):**

**Contact details  
of the respondent(s)  
[if known]**

What steps have you already taken to try to resolve this grievance or complaint with the respondent(s)?

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Is your grievance or complaint, or any matter related to it, already being dealt with or has it been dealt with elsewhere? If so, please describe briefly.

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Do you have any special needs that require consideration? For example, wheel chair access, interpreter, child care (indicate times), visual/hearing disability, help to put things in writing etc.

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**Signed:**

**Dated:**

**Received by:**

**Signed:**

**Dated:**