

RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Department of Human Services (DHS)

Please note this procedure is mandatory and staff are required to adhere to the content.

Summary

This procedure outlines the complaint resolution processes for the Restrictive Practices Unit (RPU).

Table 1: Document Details

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Procedure Custodian	Trinh Mai, Senior Authorising Officer, Restrictive Practices Unit
Content author	Allison Cook, Principal Policy Officer, Restrictive Practices Unit
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Table 2 – Revision Record

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March 2023	1:00	RPU Complaint Resolution Procedure approved by the Senior Authorising Officer, Trinh Mai
May 2026	1:01	RPU Complaint Resolution Procedure approved by the Senior Authorising Officer, Trinh Mai

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1 Title

Restrictive Practices Complaint Resolution Procedure

2 Purpose

This procedure outlines the complaint resolution processes which support better relationships, ensuring complaints are resolved fairly and respectfully.

3 Scope

This procedure is written for Restrictive Practices Unit (RPU) staff to use when resolving complaints about RPU services. It helps people with disability, their family and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) service providers know what to expect when a complaint is raised.

3.1.1 Exclusions

Reviewable decisions made under part 6A of the Disability Inclusion Act 2018 (the Act) follow the appeal process. Reviewable decisions are:

- restrictive practice authorisation decisions
- decisions about who can be an authorised program officer.

Complaints about supports and services provided by NDIS providers are managed by the relevant NDIS provider or the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

Allegations of staff misconduct and harm of a person with a disability are to be referred to relevant internal and external agencies.

RPU provides a 'no wrong door' response to complainants. Clear and appropriate referral pathways are provided when issues are not within the scope of this procedure.

4 Diversity and Inclusion

DHS strives to celebrate and improve the lives of people of all ages, cultures, disabilities, ethnicities, faiths, gender identities, sex characteristics and sexual orientations. We are committed to making our services and workplaces safe and inclusive for all people and ensuring the full diversity of the communities we serve are represented in the strategies we lead.

5 Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap must be considered in everything that we do at DHS. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap, under Priority Reform Three, commits all governments to being accountable and culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, including through the services they fund.

The RPU considers that the effective use of restrictive practices must be situated within a broader understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An approach grounded in cultural safety and competence recognises the reflect broader needs for an Aboriginal person with disability to be connected to culture, country, and land.

6 Definitions

Table 3 – Definitions

Term	Meaning
SAO	Senior Authorising Officer
RPU	Restrictive Practices Unit
APO	Authorised Program Officer
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme

7 Procedure Detail

7.1 Identify and log complaints

Identify the matter as a complaint if there is an expression of dissatisfaction about RPU services where a response is expected. Be alert to problems and issues that might constitute a complaint even when the word ‘complaint’ is not used.

RPU staff will gather information about the:

- person (complainant)
- issue/s
- outcomes sought

7.1.1 Address any barriers

Address any barriers that impact on a person’s ability and/or willingness to make a complaint and engage in the complaint resolution process.

RPU staff will:

- seek the complainant’s communication and engagement preference and needs. This includes venues for meetings, the people to be present (including cultural support), methods of communication.
- encourage the complainant to engage in the process to the degree which they feel comfortable and able.

7.1.2 Manage expectations

RPU staff will help the complainant to identify the outcomes and options that can be achieved within the complaint resolution process.

7.1.3 Refer on – ‘No wrong door’

RPU staff will offer alternative pathways if the matter is not a complaint, or where the complaint is outside the procedure’s scope. Staff will demonstrate the principle of ‘no wrong door’ and provide supported referrals that reduce the need for complainants to repeat themselves.

7.2 Acknowledge

Acknowledge receipt of the complaint verbally and in writing. Written communication must be accessible to the complainant.

Immediate responses include:

- ‘thank you for making contact and raising the issue’
- ‘complaints help us to improve our service’
- ‘raising a complaint does not affect services received or our working relationship’.

Explain the complaint process as outlined in this procedure.

7.3 Assess and triage

RPU staff will:

- assess information received
- triage the complaint
 - simple
 - complex/sensitive
- determine next steps
- establish timeframes.

Check with the complainant to see if they agree with the triage assessment and adjust if required.

7.4 Response timeframes

In most instances, a simple complaint will be resolved at the first point of contact.

For complex and/or sensitive matters, the RPU will aim to resolve the complaint:

- within 5 working days
- as negotiated with the complainant.

Complex and sensitive matters may require additional time to:

- support the complainant to communicate and contribute to the resolution process in a meaningful way
- make enquiries and seek contributions from affected parties.

7.5 Continuity of Service

The complaint should be resolved by the initial responder to ensure continuity of service. This may not be possible where the complaint is complex or sensitive, or when an actual or perceived conflict of interest arises.

Ensure the complainant has the name of the person who will be working with them to resolve their complaint.

7.6 Complaints about RPU staff

Complaints about the conduct of RPU staff are responded to by the Senior Authorising Officer (SAO). Complaints about the SAO are referred to the executive director responsible for the RPU in the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Complaints about RPU staff conduct are managed in a way that is consistent with DHS staff conduct processes.

7.7 Resolve early or make enquiries

7.7.1 Resolve early

The RPU staff may resolve a simple complaint at the first point of contact. Resolving early requires RPU staff to:

- have a clear understanding of key issues and outcomes sought
- have sufficient information and delegation to make a sound decision
- provide a prompt, fair and reasonable response to the complainant.

7.7.2 Enquiries

The nature and scope of those enquiries are dependent on the circumstances of each matter.

RPU Staff will:

- speak with the complainant and impacted parties
- gather information
- consult with senior or specialist professionals
- form and test tentative conclusions with the complainant
- finalise the conclusion and communicate this to the complainant
- resolve the complaint based on agreed actions.

7.7.3 Provide updates

RPU staff will provide progress updates to the complainant if the resolution process takes longer than 5 working days.

7.8 Communicate Outcome

The RPU staff will communicate the outcome to the complainant. This includes providing an explanation of the process undertaken and considerations made to reach the outcome.

RPU staff will provide the following information to the complainant:

- an explanation of the process and outcome
- reasons for decisions made
- any changes made as a result of the complaint
- an acknowledgment thanking the complainant for raising the complaint and participating in the process
- expression of complainant's right to escalate the complaint and available options.

Verbal communication of the outcome is to be followed by written communication. Written communication must be accessible to the complainant.

7.9 Redress – 'putting things right'

When a mistake has occurred, and/or when someone has been harmed or disadvantaged, RPU staff will take steps to 'put things right'. This means RPU staff will take fair and reasonable steps to ensure the situation is corrected and the complainant is restored to their original position.

An offer to 'put things right' occurs at the final stages of the resolution process and occurs with the complainant. Redress may involve:

- listening
- understanding
- acknowledging mistakes
- explanation
- sincere apology is offered
- reconsidering conduct
- restitution
- amending documentation
- changing policy or practice to prevent reoccurrence.

Redress is very important for people who have experienced a loss or injustice, especially if they have had previous life experiences of injustice, exclusion and marginalisation.

RPU staff will consider forms of redress that directly affect the complainant (for example, mistakes acknowledged), as well as other responses that may be indirect but improve systems for others (for example, change in practice).

7.10 Finalise and / or escalate

RPU staff will seek the views of the complainant on the outcome. If satisfied, RPU staff will finalise the complaint resolution process.

If dissatisfied, the RPU will further:

- acknowledge dissatisfaction and clarify the complainant's perspective
- explore and consider further actions which should be taken by the RPU
- provide escalation pathways, including to Ombudsman SA.

7.10.1 Feedback systemic issues

Record systemic issues on relevant log and save on Objective.

The personal information of complainants and people who are the subject of a complaint are to be kept confidential. They are only used for the purposes of addressing the complaint and any follow up actions.

8 Roles and Responsibilities

Table 4 – Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Authority/Accountability
Senior Authorising Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approves and is accountable for this procedure.• Responds to complaints about the conduct of RPU staff.• Ensures complaints are managed fairly, respectfully and in line with DHS staff conduct processes.• Ensures complaints outside scope are appropriately referred.
Executive Director, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responds to complaints about the conduct of the Senior Authorising Officer.• Provides executive oversight where escalation is required.
Restrictive Practices Unit Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receive, acknowledge and record complaints about RPU services.• Resolve complaints early where possible and undertake enquiries where required.• Address barriers to participation and support culturally safe, accessible complaint handling.• Keep complainants informed of progress and outcomes.• Identify, record and report systemic issues arising from complaints.

9 Monitoring, evaluation and review

This procedure will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required, by the Senior Authorising Officer.

10 Reference Documents

10.1 Directive documents

- [Disability Inclusion Act 2018](#)
- [Disability Inclusion \(Restrictive Practices – NDIS\) Regulations 2021 \(SA\)](#)

11 Approval

Content Author: Allison Cook Principal Project Officer Restrictive Practices Unit	Director Trinh Mai Senior Authorising Officer Restrictive Practices Unit 13/5/26	Executive Director Joe Young Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding 13/5/26
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