

OLD
ways



NEW
ways

CHILD FRIENDLY COMPLAINTS POLICY



SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This Child Friendly Complaints Policy (**Policy**) has been prepared for and applies to the Old Ways New Ways program (**OWNW**). The OOWNW is made up of a consortium of strong and culturally secure organisations, being:

- Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia Limited (**ALSWA**);
- Wadjak Northside Aboriginal Community (Aboriginal Corporation);
- Stephen Michael Foundation Ltd; and
- Hope Community Services Ltd.

(collectively, the **Consortium**)

ALSWA is the lead agency in the Consortium.

ALSWA will be responsible for the day to day application of this Policy. However, all members of the Consortium must still comply with this Policy in relation to their participation in the OOWNW and a reference to the Consortium is also a reference to each Consortium member.



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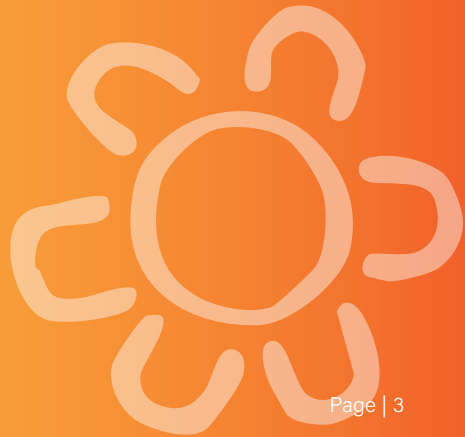
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IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN SPEAKING UP

Children and young people face barriers accessing complaints systems. This is a serious issue where that child has concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

At the Consortium we believe every person has the right to speak up about any issue they are facing, and **no complaint is too small.**

Every complaint will be listened to and taken seriously. You will be treated with respect and your complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

The Consortium commits to showing empathy and respect to anyone making a complaint, especially children and young people. We will support you as best we can both during and after the complaint process.

In relation to every part of this policy and how a complaint is treated, we invite your thoughts and suggestions. If you know how you want your complaint handled you should tell us.



WHEN YOU CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT

There are no restrictions about when you can make a complaint.

Examples of situations where we recommend you make a complaint include:

- When you feel threatened;
- When you feel unsafe;
- When you are unhappy with the way you are being treated;
- When you think somebody else is being threatened or mistreated;
- When someone is making, or trying to make, you do something you are not comfortable doing; and
- When you think somebody is not listening to you or ignoring your wishes.

(this list just includes some examples and there are many more situations where you should make a complaint)



HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

You can make a complaint in any way you feel most comfortable. This can include:

- Verbally to an employee or volunteer of the Consortium;
- In writing to an employee or volunteer of the Consortium;
- In writing to ownw@als.org.au; or
- Completing the complaint form on the ALSWA website (<https://www.als.org.au/home/feedback-and-complaints/>).

Your complaint should include as much detail as you feel comfortable sharing. The more information we have, the easier it will be to help you.

If you are comfortable, please tell us:

- Your details and contact information;
- Who you are complaining about;
- Details about the issue; and
- Any steps taken to deal with the issue so far.



If you would like, you can have someone else with you when you make your complaint (called a support person). Your support person could be a friend, a family member, or a trusted adult that you know and feel comfortable with. They can help you make your complaint, explain the complaint process to you, and help you ask any questions you may have.

If you would like to know more about the complaints process before you make a complaint, we are very happy for you to ask any questions. You can contact a member of the Consortium, the Senior Program Manager (Liam Anthony **LAnthony@als.org.au**) or the Complaints Officer at ALSWA (Kylee Clune **KClune@als.org.au**) to talk about any questions or concerns you may have.

If you make a complaint to an employee or volunteer, they will likely need to discuss this with another person at the Consortium to make sure it is properly dealt with. This may include the designated complaints officer at ALSWA who will have the experience to handle your complaint seriously.

If you have any concerns about who your complaint will be shared with, you should raise this with the person you make the complaint to. They will do their best to respect your wishes.

You can also raise complaints anonymously. If you do make an anonymous complaint, we will not be able to update you on our progress or the complaint outcome, but we will still take it seriously.

If you wish to make an anonymous complaint please use the online form on ALSWA's website see **<https://www.als.org.au/home/feedback-and-complaints/>** or send a letter to Old Ways New Ways Senior Program Manager at ALSWA, 7 Aberdeen Street Perth.



HOW WILL YOUR COMPLAINT BE HANDLED?

Every complaint is different and every process will need to be handled according to the individual circumstances. If the complaint can be informally or quickly resolved, this is what we will do.

If the complaint cannot be informally or quickly resolved, the usual process will be:

1. A complaint is received by someone at the Consortium which will be referred to the appropriate person at ALSWA (we call this person the Complaints Officer);
2. The Complaints Officer will review the complaint and if they need more information they will come back to you with their questions;
3. The Complaints Officer will, depending on the seriousness of the complaint, investigate the complaint. This may include:
 - a. Interviewing witnesses (including the person/s who the complaint is about); and
 - b. Putting formal allegations to the person/s who the complaint is about and allowing them to respond;
4. The Complaints Officer will make a finding about the complaint and make recommendations about how to resolve it or move forward. This may include disciplinary action against a person or systemic changes in the organisation; and
5. The Consortium will try to implement the recommendations.

The Complaints Officer may defer their responsibilities to another person (including to an external body, such as lawyers or an investigation company) where it is appropriate. This may be where the complaint is large or complicated, or if the Complaints Officer is the subject of the complaint.



We will complete this process as quickly as possible. However, there are various things which may extend the process (such as witnesses not cooperating and the size or complexity of the complaint).

If you want a specific step to be taken you should let us know and we will see what we can do.

If you are unhappy with the way that your complaint has been handled, or you are unhappy with the outcome of the complaint process, please let us know. You can take your complaint to a person above the Complaints Officer to review the outcome or how it was handled (the **Senior Reviewer**). The Senior Reviewer will usually be the Director, Policy and Programs at ALSWA. You may have to repeat some of the steps above, such as:

1. The Senior Reviewer will review the complaint and if they need more information they will come back to you with their questions;
2. The Senior Reviewer may investigate the complaint, which could include interviewing witnesses again if needed;
3. The Senior Reviewer will make a finding about the complaint and whether it was handled correctly by the Complaints Officer; and
4. The Senior Reviewer will contact you to explain their finding about the complaint, the reasons why it was handled correctly or incorrectly, and what other options you may have.

Remember that you can ask questions at any time, and you can have a support person with you during this process to help you have your complaint reviewed.



WHAT WE WILL SHARE WITH YOU

This process can be daunting and we understand you want to be kept informed of what is going on. We will do our best to do this, but we will also need to protect the privacy of other people involved.

You will be given a point of contact at the Consortium who will share information with you. We will determine who this is after discussing it with you and we will make sure you feel comfortable talking with them.

Your point of contact, and the Consortium generally, will try our best to communicate with you in the way you're most comfortable. This could be, for example, in person, over the phone, via email, text or social media direct messages.

Your point of contact will:

- Let you know we have received your complaint as soon as possible;
- Provide regular updates and check in with you to make sure you are doing OK;
- Answer questions you have to the best of our ability;
- Update you about the expected timeframe of the complaint process and if there have been any delays;
- Let you know the outcome of your complaint (this may be limited based on other people's privacy).

Depending on your age and the details of the complaint, or at your request, we may share details with your legal guardian or family. If you have any concerns with this, you should let us know when you make your complaint, or at any stage in the process.

If you want specific information, you should let us know. If we can, we will share it with you.



OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

If your complaint raises immediate risks to health or safety, we will take all steps we can to reduce that risk.

We have reporting obligations to government bodies regarding child safety. We may be legally required to report your complaint and details of your complaint, but we will always do this in a way which protects you and your interests.

If your complaint is not something we can help with (for example it is about someone that is not part of our organisation), we will do our best to help you find someone who can help. If possible, we will refer you to another organisation we trust that can help you.

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