



Welcome to the anniversary edition of the DSC newsletter. 12 months ago we first produced the newsletter to provide you with updates of our office, resources and information in the area of quality service and complaints.

Looking back on 12 months, my program of visiting providers across the state continues to reveal situations where there are good practice approaches to responding to complaints by providers.

Encouragingly, we continue to be engaged by providers to work with them to ensure they have a relationship with their service users where they feel that it is OK to complain. The development of the guide and self audit tool was an important impetus to this work.

The recent development of the culture questionnaire further facilitates this work. I would encourage you to complete the attached questionnaire to provide yourself with a quick indication of how well your organisation responds to complaints. You will see that the questionnaire is usefully linked to the relevant sections of the [Good practice guide and audit tool](#) so that you can identify specific areas of achievement and action based upon your initial assessment to the questionnaire.

It is particularly pleasing to see that people with a disability are increasingly represented amongst those bringing complaints to the office. This reflects a growing awareness of the office through the work of providers, advocates and indeed the office. I have been interviewed by people with a disability from a range of groups including SARU, Yackety Yak and Raising our voices (3CR). Each of these has provided an important opportunity to talk with people with a disability about the role of the office.

We are also encouraged to have had people with a disability support us in raising awareness of the office through such activities as the Antz Pants performance. We are now using the DVD of the Antz Pants performance (at Having a Say conference earlier in the year) in our information sessions with service users. This DVD is available from the office as a resource providers and others may wish to use to help spread the word that it is OK to complain. It will also be available on our website.

Laurie Harkin, Commissioner

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Artist: H B Berry
Title: Still Life 2
Medium: Acrylic

Uniting Care Harrison

Feet,
why do I need them
if I have wings to fly?

Frida Kahlo

Is it really OK to complain about your organisation?

Following the launch of the good practice guide and self audit tool, earlier this year, the Capacity Development (CD) team has worked with a growing number of services who are keen to make sure the answer to this question is a resounding yes!!

The nature of this work varies based upon the specific needs of the organisation. The work commences with a conversation around the current systems and approaches to complaints to identify both areas of strength as well as development opportunities. This enables us to develop an understanding of the existing culture of the organisation and how to approach our work in a way that is respectful of this culture.

Our experience to date would suggest that those organisations that take a more comprehensive approach are more likely to achieve a culture where it is OK to complain and be complained about.

An example of this tailored approach is work we have done with organisations providing a range of services including disability to assist them in having a consistent approach to complaints across their organisation.

This work has highlighted some examples of good practice including:

- Providers involving service users in the review and change process

Continued on Page 3

We recently developed a culture questionnaire that is based on some of the initial questions we would potentially ask service providers in this conversation.

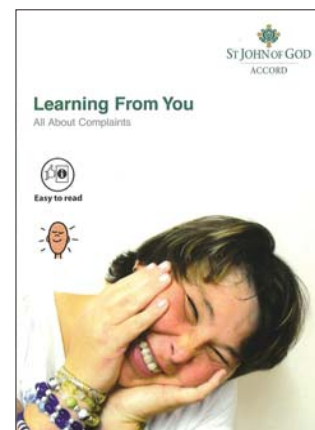
From this initial conversation, we may do a variety of tasks including:

- Assist the organisation to review its policies and procedures in relation to complaints;
- Review the ways service users are made aware of their right to complain;
- Provide person centred training and education for staff on the importance of complaints and effective approaches to responding to complaints;
- Discussing with service users and their families the importance of complaining and how to do this effectively.

The Capacity development team within the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) promotes awareness of the right to complain and the DSC, through: publications, newsletter and education sessions. Part of this work includes working with disability services to ensure they have an environment where it's OK to complain.

The good practice guide provides an important foundation for this work as a resource to assist services to develop an effective person centred complaints management culture and system. We continue to receive positive feedback about the usefulness of the guide from both here and overseas.

St John of God
complaints brochure



“When people talk,
listen completely”

Ernest Hemingway



- Follow up on how the complaint's process worked for the person making the complaint
- Keeping complainants informed at all stages of the process of the progress of their complaint
- Clarified the outcome the complainant was seeking up front
- Recognising that complaints and feedback are an important part of the continuous improvement process

If you have some examples of some good approaches to handling complaints we would love to hear from you.

To give you a sense of how well your organisation approaches complaints you may wish to complete the attached culture questionnaire. If you would like to discuss how we can work with your organisation to ensure that it is a place where it's OK to complain contact either:

Sandra Myerscough
(sandra.myerscough@odsc.vic.gov.au) on 8608 5769 or

David Sykes (david.sykes@odsc.vic.gov.au)
on 8608 5764

What does the Disability Services Commissioner do? (Italian)

Quali sono le funzioni del 'Disability Services Commissioner'?

Il 'Disability Services Commissioner' (*Commissario dei Servizi per i Disabili*) è stato istituito per collaborare con le persone disabili e i prestatori dei servizi ai disabili. Il 'Disability Services Commissioner' promuove e sostiene la risoluzione dei reclami in vari modi, inclusi discussioni informali, procedimenti di conciliazione, o in certe circostanze, indagini ufficiali.

Il 'Disability Services Commissioner' ha iniziato ad operare il 1° luglio 2007, ai sensi della "Disability Act 2006" (legge in materia di disabilità del 2006), per migliorare i servizi destinati alle persone disabili in Victoria.

Il 'Disability Services Commissioner' è un ente autonomo, indipendente dal governo, dal Department of Human Services (Ministero dei Servizi alla Persona) e dai prestatori dei servizi ai disabili.

“We monitor particularly closely those clients who for whatever reason are unlikely to complain”

Kerryn Leonard, General Manager, PNR, Wodonga.

Tell us how we can do better..

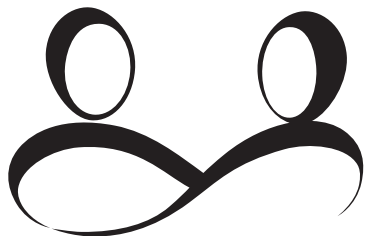
Able Australia reviewed its approach to handling complaints after they identified a pattern of complaints returning following resolution.

They subsequently introduced a process of follow up both at the conclusion of the complaint and also about a month later to make sure the person was still satisfied with the resolution.

This has significantly reduced the number of complaints that return unresolved. Interestingly they have chosen to title their complaints policy: Tell us how we can do better.

Thank you to Able Australia for allowing us to use this example.

It's
OK
to complain



Respect

Disability Services Commissioner takes complaints seriously and treat all parties to a complaint with dignity, sensitivity and courtesy. Informations is not shared with any other person or agency without the person's permission.

Commissioner Visits Disability Services Providers

The Commissioner's visits to service providers have continued throughout the July to September period. The Regions visited by the Commissioner during this time included Gippsland, Southern, North Western and Hume regions. Over the last three months the Commissioner has travelled approximately 1500 kilometres to meet with 28 disability service providers and over 116 staff. Some comments that our office has received from some service providers about the value of these visits included;



Photos taken during Laurie's visit to disability services - Moonya in Wonthaggi (left) and PNR in Wodonga.



"We felt it was a useful and informative visit to exchange ideas and we look forward to receiving your email updates"

"Thank you for your support and encouragement. It was a pleasure to host the Commissioner".

If you have a complaint relating to public transport and taxi services...

Contact the transport operator via Metlink in the first instance:

- V/Line: 1800 800 120
- Yarra Trams: 1800 800 166
- Connex: 1800 800 705
- Bus: 131 638
- Taxi: 9320 4300
- TTY: 9619 2727 6am-10pm 7 days
- Email: feedback@metlinkmelbourne.com.au

If you are still dissatisfied, you can complain to the Public Transport Ombudsman:

- Ph: 8623 2111 or 1800 466 865
- TTY: 1800 809 623 9am-5pm Monday-Friday
- Email: enquiries@ptovic.com.au

For any matters relating to the newsletter you can contact Dina Theodoropoulos at dina.theodoropoulos@odsc.vic.gov.au or call on 1300 728 187

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