



SERVICE USER COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES RESOLUTION

1.0 PURPOSE & SCOPE

To provide guidance to Civic Assist supervisors, team members, and Civic Assist Management and Board members in responding to complaints and disputes from program / service users.

Civic Assist is committed to using the information gained in the complaints and disputes resolution process to improve its programs and services.

Civic Assist workers and volunteers who wish to lodge a grievance or complaint in regard to the work environment, or their supervisor / manager should follow the steps laid out in the CA Grievance Policy.

2.0 REFERENCES

Community Services Act

Privacy Act

CA Grievance Policy

CA Child Protection Policy

CA Service Users Complaint Form

3.0 DEFINITIONS

A complaint:	dissatisfaction with a service or team members response / interaction
Initial response:	the immediate process followed to acknowledge and resolve the complaint and / or complete a formal record of the complaint
Response time:	the complainant to be updated in 5-7 days of complaint submitted
Resolution:	the process followed by Civic Assist – Early Resolution directly with the complainant; escalation to Operations Manager / CEO; if not resolved involving external support e.g., an ombudsman or consumer affairs.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Workers and Volunteers are responsible to:

- Receive complaints and other feedback and respond appropriately;
- Clarify whether the person is making a complaint or providing constructive criticism;
- Escalate serious or complex complaints immediately to the Supervisor; and

- Contribute to reaching a resolution.

Supervisors (may include Team Leaders & Program Coordinators) shall:

- Receive complaints and other feedback and respond appropriately;
- Maintain a record of complaints or other feedback;
- Act as facilitator to resolve complaints and disputes when possible; and
- Escalate serious or complex complaints to the Operations Manager; and
- Contribute to reaching a resolution.

Civic Assist Operations Manager and Civic Assist CEO shall:

- Respond to higher level or escalated complaints and disputes;
- Attempt to resolve complaints informally in the first instance;
- Contribute to reaching a resolution; and
- Maintain a record of action taken to reach a resolution.

Civic Assist CEO shall:

- Respond to complaints that involve the Civic Assist Operations Manager, Assistant Operations Manager and Civic Assist CEO, or the person is not satisfied with the response from these positions; and
- Respond to complaints where the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

5.0 PROCEDURE

Civic Assist welcomes feedback about its services from service users, or any person or organisation involved with Civic Assist, and fosters a culture in which complaints and feedback are taken seriously and acted upon.

Any person or organisation involved with Civic Assist, or those affected by its operations, have the right to:

- give feedback or make a complaint without fear of retribution or recrimination;
- be provided with a process to lodge a complaint and / or give feedback;
- have their concerns handled in a fair and timely manner; and
- have the information provided managed equitably, transparently, with respect, and confidentiality.

The Civic Assist Service Users Complaints and Disputes Resolution process involves:

1. Receipt of a complaint / feedback and initial response;
2. Reporting and recording the complaint / feedback;
3. Investigation and taking required action to resolve;
4. Reporting action to complainant; and
5. Follow up with complainant, and if required;
6. Mediation.

5.1 Receiving a Complaint or Feedback

When a complaint or feedback is received, workers and volunteers shall:

- respond with respect, in a positive, non-defensive manner;
- courteously thank the person;
- acknowledge the impact of the issue on the person;
- recognise reasonable expectations of the person;
- clarify whether the matter is an observation, suggestion for improvement, compliment or a complaint;
- record details of 'non-complaint' feedback;
- if a complaint, make every attempt to resolve; and
- If the matter cannot be resolved immediately, refer to the Supervisor.

To clarify the exact nature of the persons' feedback, questions may be asked of the person such as: *"Is this an issue we should consider a complaint?"* or *"would you like me to arrange for you to speak to the Operations Manager about this?"*

Any complaint that appears to indicate physical or sexual abuse, or other criminal activity, shall be reported immediately to the Civic Assist CEO who will manage in strict accordance with Civic Assist guidelines, including reporting to external parties such as the Queensland Police.

If the complaint involves the Civic Assist Operations Manager or Civic Assist CEO, or the person is not satisfied with the response from these positions, they must be informed of their right to speak to the CEO and give them the relevant contact details.

5.2 Initial Response to a Complainant

In responding to complaints Supervisors should:

- Acknowledge the complaint, the concerns, and experiences of the person making a complaint, particularly if the issue has caused distress or considerable inconvenience;
- Attempt to resolve the complaint directly with the person; clarify the specific issue and their desired outcomes;
- Make a written record of the complaint being careful to only record factual information that can be supported by evidence or note that the information is not yet substantiated;
- Note the persons' phone and address details, so that you can provide written feedback or ask for more information;
- Provide details of how the complaint will be investigated and who will be contacting them to discuss a resolution; and
- Assure them the information will be handled sensitively and their privacy maintained.

5.3 Recording the Complaint

The Civic Assist worker or volunteer should inform the person making the complaint that a written record needs to be made, so that we can ensure their complaint is addressed appropriately.

Record the complaint using the Civic Assist Service Users Complaint / Feedback form in as much detail as possible together with their contact details. List immediate action taken. The confidentiality of individuals is of the utmost importance and must be maintained at all times throughout the process.

If the person is providing feedback or making suggestions for improvement, the Civic Assist worker or volunteer should advise the person they will record the information and if they are agreeable, record their phone number so that they can be kept informed of any action taken and / or reasons for not progressing their suggestion.

The Civic Assist Service Users Complaint form must be given to the Operations Manager within 24 hours of receipt of the complaint.

5.4 Taking Action on the Complaint

The Operations Manager should, depending on the nature of the complaint, carry out one or more of the following actions as appropriate:

- Record the information in the Civic Assist Service Users Complaints form if verbal communication only received;
- Commence an investigation;
- Identify action that should be taken, when it should be carried out, and by whom;
- Make operational changes if required;
- Appraise the Civic Assist Team Leaders of the complaint and action required; and
- Provide regular updates to the Civic Assist CEO, who will update the Civic Assist Board as required.

5.5 Keeping the Complainant Informed

Written communication shall be sent to the person who lodged the complaint within 5 – 7 working days of the complaint being received. The response will detail what is being done to investigate and resolve the complaint.

The complainant will be informed of the progress of their complaint at all stages of the process.

5.6 Complaint Resolution, Support and Follow Up

Following resolution of a complaint, the Civic Assist CEO or delegate will contact the complainant for their opinion on the actions taken by Civic Assist.

If the matter is not resolved to their satisfaction they must be informed they can take the matter to:

- The Civic Assist CEO;
- The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; or
- The Queensland Ombudsman or other complaints agency (e.g., as listed on the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy website).

The Civic Assist CEO, or their delegate, must update the Civic Assist Service Users Complaint form and when the matter has been resolved, sign the close out section of the form.

5.7 Mediation

If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and they choose to take the matter to a complaints' agency, then the Civic Assist Operations Manager and the Civic Assist CEO should:

- move to have a mediator to be appointed to assist both parties to resolve the complaint;
- take advice on whether a lawyer or agent should be engaged to represent Civic Assist at a mediation conference;
- appoint the appropriate persons to attend the mediation;
- provide support during the mediation process; and
- ensure the mediation agreement is signed by both parties when resolution is reached.

5.8 Training

The Civic Assist Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring all workers, volunteers and management are aware of the Civic Assist Service Users Disputes and Complaints Resolution Procedure and how to:

- Receive complaints / feedback;
- Report and record complaints / feedback;
- Support the person making a complaint;
- Manage resolution of the complaint.

VERSION CONTROL

Ver.	Amendment Summary	Released	Authorised By	Review Due
1.0	First Release	July 2016	Managing Director	July 2017
2.0	Update organisation and position names throughout	Nov 2018	Operations Manager	Mar 2020
2.1	Remove references to MD and add GM; update web links	Feb 2021	Operations Manager	Mar 2022
2.2	No changes required	March 2023	Operations Manager	March 2024
2.3	No changes required	March 2024	Operations Manager	Sep2025
2.4	Moved version control to end of document; updated General Manager to CEO	September 2025	Operations Manager	Sep 2026