



Client Complaints Policy

Policy statement

Coast to Country Hearing strives to provide exceptional hearing services to our local community. We value client feedback – positive or negative – as it assists us to review, refine and improve our services, products, customer service and overall client experience.

We are committed to being responsive to the needs and concerns of our clients and potential clients. We are also committed to resolving any complaints as efficiently and effectively as possible.

This policy has been formulated to provide guidance to both our clients and team members on the processes and protocols for complaint management. We are committed to being confidential, consistent, fair and impartial when handling complaints.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that:

- You are aware of and understand our complaint lodgement and handling processes;
- Complaints are investigated impartially with a balanced view of all information or evidence;
- Personal information is strictly protected, and matters are considered confidentially; and
- Complaints are considered on their merits taking into account individual circumstances and needs.

Definition of a complaint

In this policy a complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction by a customer relating to a hearing service provided by, or interaction with, any of the team members of our clinic.

How complaints can be made

In the first instance, clients or potential clients that are dissatisfied with a service or interaction with our clinic, should consider speaking directly with the team member/s you have been dealing with. If clients / prospective clients are uncomfortable with this, or believe that the relevant staff member is unable to address their concerns, complaint can be lodged with us in the following ways:

- By completing a feedback form through the 'Contact Us' link on our website www.coasttocountryhearing.com;
- By telephoning us on 07 4723 6610;
- By writing to us 75 Thuringowa Drive, Kirwan QLD 4817;
- By emailing us coasttocountryhearing@hotmail.com; or
- By speaking to any of our customer service staff in person.

If we receive your complaint verbally, we may ask the complainant to put their complaint in writing to ensure efficient complaint management and accurate documentation / record keeping.

Information required with complaints

When investigating complaints, we rely on information provided by complainants and relevant information we may already be holding. We may need to contact complainants to clarify details or request additional information where necessary.

When all relevant information and details are provided with complaints, it helps us understand relevant issues and work towards resolution more efficiently. Therefore, we ask that the following information is provided with complaints:

- Complainant's name and contact details;
- The name of the person / people the complainant has been dealing with (if known);
- The date and time that the action / matter which prompted the complaint occurred;
- The nature of the complaint;
- Details of any steps the complainant has already taken to resolve the complaint;
- Details of conversations the complainant has had with our team members that is relevant to the complaint; and
- Copies of any documentation which supports the complaint.

Help when making a complaint

If required, Coast to Country Hearing team members will provide assistance and information on how to make a complaint.

Once a complaint is received, complainants are notified that their complaint has been received and the name of the Coast to Country Hearing team member that has been assigned to manage the complaint. Complainants should contact the assigned team member if they have any questions on how their complaint is being processed.

If further clarification or assistance is required, please contact:

Marguerite Rushworth
Director and Principal Audiometrist, Coast to Country Hearing
E-mail - coasttocountryhearing@hotmail.com
Phone - 0427 516 866

Recording complaints

When receiving a complaint, we record all details relevant to the complaint, all actions taken to investigate and resolve the complaint, communications between parties and the final resolution / outcome reached. Records associated with complaints are stored securely and kept strictly confidential.

As part of our commitment to continual improvement, complaints are monitored by management to identify trends and rectification/remedial action may be taken to mitigate identified issues.

Once complaints are resolved, we remove personal information attached to complaints in order to maintain confidentiality for the complainants.

Where a third-party service provider, such as a hearing aid manufacturer, was involved with a matter prompting a complaint, we may be required to speak with them to fully investigate your complaint.

Feedback to Our Clients

Coast to Country Hearing aims to resolve issues at the first point of contact, however, we understand that this will not be possible in all circumstances. In these instances, a more formal complaints process will be followed.

Once a complaint is received, we make contact with complainants within three (3) business days to acknowledge receipt of their complaint and advise which team member has been assigned to manage their complaint.

An initial review of complaints is undertaken in the days after lodgement. The initial review of complaints can reveal that clarification on certain aspects or additional information / documentation is required to carry out a full review. In these instances, the team member assigned to manage the complaint will contact the complainant to outline the additional information required, and explain the reason/s why it is required. Our team member may also provide the complainant with an update of status of the complaint management process at this time.

We aim to resolve complaints within 10 business days (two weeks) of lodgement, however, this may not always be possible on every occasion. Where we have been unable to resolve complaints within 10 business days, we contact complainants to:

- explain / discuss the reason/s for the delay; and
- indicate a way forward and, if possible, a timeframe we are confident that the complaint can be resolved.

If we have sought clarification or additional documentation from complainants, we may not be able to meet our 10-business day complaint resolution goal if the additional information is not provided in a timely manner. In such circumstances, we advise complainants when we expect to be able to resolve their complaint upon receipt of the additional information.

Once we have finalised complaints, we advise complainants of our findings and any action we have taken. We will do this in writing, unless it has been mutually agreed that we can provide this information verbally.

Complainants have the right to make enquiries about the status their complaint at any time by contacting us.

Our six-point complaint process

1. We *acknowledge* complaints within three business days of receiving them.
2. We undertake an *initial review* of complaints and determine if any additional information or documentation is required to carry out a full review / investigation. We may contact complainants to request additional information as part of this process.
3. We undertake a *full review / investigation* of complaints objectively and impartially, by considering the information provided to us, our actions in dealings with the complainant, and any other relevant and available information.
4. Following our full review / investigation, we *respond* to complainants to explain our findings and any actions we have taken / will take in relation to the complaint. We aim to respond to complainants within 10 business days (two weeks) of receiving the complaint.
5. Where appropriate, we review our clinic policies and practices and *take action* to improve our service.
6. We record matters raised in complaints to *monitor* issues and trends over time. Once complaints are resolved, personal information is removed from complaint records to maintain complainant confidentiality.

When you complain about one of our team members

When complaints are made about a member of our staff, we treat complaints confidentially, impartially, consistently, and fairly (giving equal treatment to all people). We investigate complaints thoroughly by obtaining relevant facts, speaking with relevant parties, and verifying explanations where possible.

Where a team member is mentioned in a complaint, we communicate with the team member to:

- Inform them that a complaint mentioning them has been received, and the nature and details of the complaint;
- Provide them with an opportunity to explain the circumstances;
- Provide them with appropriate support; and
- Update them on the complaint investigation and the resolution / outcome.

Complaints under investigation by a regulator or law enforcement agency

If a complaint is also being investigated by a relevant federal, state or territory consumer protection regulator or law enforcement agency we may cease to take further action in relation to complaints also received by our clinic, until the matter is resolved by such agencies.

We will provide reasonable assistance to any such agency with their investigations.

Our complaint escalation process

Where possible, we aim to resolve complaints at the first point of contact. If we are unable to resolve complaints at the first point of contact, we encourage clients / potential clients to lodge a formal complaint as outlined in this policy.

If complainants are dissatisfied with our management and resolution of their complaint, complainants can escalate the matter to:

- The ERC- Ethics Review Committee- Ethics officer at ethics@auderc.org.au or 03 9940 3911;
- Hearing Aid Audiometrists Society of Australia – the professional body for Audiometrists; and / or
- the Commonwealth Department of Health for matters specifically relating to services provided under the government's Hearing Services Program

Your rights under consumer law

Any clients of our hearing clinic reserve the right to refer complaints about our service to relevant federal, state or territory consumer protection agency at any time.

Changes to this privacy document

Coast to Country Hearing is constantly monitoring regulations, policies and procedures to ensure that the our clinic is up-to-date with changes in the law and market practices. As a result, we may change this policy from time to time in order to ensure its accuracy and currency. As a minimum, we aim to review this policy every two (2) years.

Date policy introduced: 21 December 2017
Current version number: 2.0
Date current version introduced: 8 May 2020
Date of next planned review: May 2022