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**Complaints Policy – EXTERNAL**

Blind Citizens Australia (BCA) is the national representative organisation of people who are blind or vision impaired. BCA works to inform, connect and empower Australians who are blind or vision impaired and the broader community. BCA is committed to a positive and inclusive environment where all are treated with dignity and respect. BCA requires that everyone involved with the organisation engages in a lawful, ethical and appropriate manner that prioritises fair treatment and safety.

BCA acknowledges it has a duty to be proactive and that it is important for people to be able to access established processes to raise concerns and make complaints. BCA encourages a culture of open communication which is both responsive and accountable in relation to any concern or complaint that relates to employment, volunteering, membership or the provision of goods and services. BCA is committed to addressing all concerns and complaints raised by members, service users and external parties involved with the organisation.

This Policy details how members, service users and external parties involved with the organisation can raise concerns and make complaints about:

* communications, events and projects;
* advocacy, programs and services; and
* unacceptable behaviour.

With reference to the specific circumstances and the nature of the matter raised, privacy will be respected and protected in relation to the recording, management and resolution of concerns and complaints. All matters will be progressed in line with relevant federal and / or state legislative frameworks.

**COMMUNICATIONS, EVENTS AND PROJECTS – Contact BCA**

If members, service users or others associated with BCA wish to raise concerns or make complaints about communications, events, projects, or similar matters of an administrative nature, they should contact BCA staff by email, phone, mail or via the feedback option on the BCA website. BCA will acknowledge all concerns and complaints promptly upon receipt, usually within two business days, ensuring that the most appropriate person is assigned to work with the complainant towards resolution.

Email - [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au)

Phone - 1800 033 660

Website - www.bca.org.au/feedback

Mail - Blind Citizens Australia,

Level 3, 247 – 251 Flinders Lane Melbourne Victoria 3000

**ADVOCACY, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES – Contact BCA**

If members, service users or others associated with BCA wish to raise concerns or make complaints about advocacy, programs, or BCA services, they should contact BCA management by email, phone, mail or via the feedback option on the website. BCA will acknowledge all concerns and complaints promptly upon receipt, usually within two business days, ensuring that the most appropriate person is assigned to work with the complainant towards resolution.

Email - [bca@bca.org.au](mailto:bca@bca.org.au)

Phone - 1800 033 660

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Mail - Blind Citizens Australia,

Level 3, 247 – 251 Flinders Lane Melbourne Victoria 3000

**UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR – Independent Complaint Process**

Members, service users and external parties involved with BCA should be aware of their rights and responsibilities, and experience an environment free of unacceptable behaviour. BCA has adopted a zero-tolerance policy in relation to abuse, threatening behaviour and violence, discrimination and harassment related to legally protected attributes, sexual harassment and sexual abuse, victimisation, bullying, cyber-bullying, stalking and vilification.

Irrespective of the venue, the type of BCA event or meeting, or whether it is an online, phone or face-to-face interaction, all contact should be constructive and respectful of boundaries, where people engage with civil and sound regard for each other.

It is important to speak up about unacceptable behaviour that you personally experience, as well as conduct that compromises the rights and safety of others. Members, service users and external parties involved with BCA can use the Independent Complaint Process to raise concerns and make complaints about unacceptable behaviour.

The Independent Complaint Process can review matters that relate to individual experiences and group experiences, as well as potential harm that could impact others about which you have knowledge. Matters of concern can be raised on behalf of another adult or on behalf of a minor.

Current, recent and historic matters can be raised under the Independent Complaint Process. To raise a concern or to make a complaint the unacceptable behaviour needs to have been experienced due to BCA involvement or interactions with persons connecting with you through BCA. External practitioner, Susan Halliday AM, has been engaged by BCA to undertake Independent Complaint Process work.

Email: hallidays@icloud.com Phone: 0417 663 396

All matters raised under the auspice of the Independent Complaint Process will be reviewed and assessed. Available options to move forward will be identified and these options will be discussed and mapped with the complainant and other relevant parties if required. Options can include, but are not limited to, conciliation to address misunderstandings, mediation and formal investigation.

Members, service users or others associated with BCA who wish to use the Independent Complaint Process to address unacceptable behaviour can be accompanied by a support person. Complainants can also submit the names of witnesses, and provide other evidence deemed relevant to the matters raised.

The Independent Complaint Process adheres to the principles of natural justice. All necessary steps will be taken to ensure fair, reasonable and accessible process prioritising confidentiality of all parties to the fullest extent possible.

If a matter is reviewed and deemed out of scope, the person raising the concern or complaint will be directed to the appropriate BCA manager or external agency.

If it becomes evident that there is a need for the complainant to contact external agencies such as police, government authorities or professional regulators, the Independent Complaint Process is positioned to extend support by identifying agency contact details and transferring complaint information if requested by the complainant.

**SUPPORT SERVICES**

The following support services can provide information, counselling and referral:

* Lifeline on 13 11 14
* 1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 732
* Men’s Helpline on 1300 78 99 78
* Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380 or Counselling & Referral on 1800 421 468

**EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

VIC Disability Services Commission

P - 1800 677 342

NSW Ageing & Disability Commission

P - 1800 628 221

ACT Human Rights Commission

P - 02 6205 2222

NT Health & Community Services Complaints Commission

P - 1800 004 474

SA Health & Community Services Complaints Commission

P - 08 8226 8666

WA Health & Disability Services Complaints Office

P - 1800 813 583

QLD Disability Services Complaints

P - 1800 491 467

TAS Advocacy Tasmania

P - 1800 005 131

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Responsibility for review: GM Operations