

## LIFELINE NORTHERN BEACHES

### COMPLAINTS POLICY

|                                 |                                                          |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Approved by Board               | 31 October 2025                                          |
| Next review date                | 31 October 2027                                          |
| Responsibility                  | CEO                                                      |
| Application                     | All staff & volunteers ( <b>Workplace Participants</b> ) |
| <b>THIS POLICY ACTIVE FROM:</b> | <b>1 November 2025</b>                                   |

## Table of Contents

|                                            |   |
|--------------------------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>About this Policy</i> .....          | 3 |
| 2. <i>Scope of this Policy</i> .....       | 3 |
| 3. <i>Definitions</i> .....                | 3 |
| 4. <i>Guiding Principles</i> .....         | 3 |
| 5. <i>Policy Statement</i> .....           | 4 |
| 6. <i>Complaint Handling Process</i> ..... | 5 |
| 7. <i>Roles and Responsibilities</i> ..... | 5 |
| 8. <i>Record Keeping</i> .....             | 6 |
| 9. <i>Continuous Improvement</i> .....     | 6 |
| 10. <i>Accessibility of Policy</i> .....   | 6 |
| 11. <i>References</i> .....                | 6 |
| 12. <i>Version Control</i> .....           | 6 |

|                                             |                         |                |                         |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Lifeline Northern Beaches Complaints Policy |                         | Board approval | 31/10/2025              |
| Owner                                       | Chief Executive Officer | Version: 1.0   | Next Review: 31/10/2027 |

## 1. About this Policy

Lifeline Northern Beaches Limited (**LLNB**) (ABN 205 250 079 849) recognizes the importance of an effective complaint handling process in providing consistently high quality, trauma-informed, and person-centred services and operations.

Feedback and complaints provide valuable information and give us opportunities to learn and improve, supporting accountability and continuous improvement across all LLNB services and operations. We are committed to reflecting on feedback and handling complaints from external stakeholders in a fair, responsive, respectful, and safe manner.

## 2. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all Workplace Participants receiving or handling feedback or complaints regarding our services, systems, practices, procedures, operations, staff and volunteers, and our handling of complaints, that are received from external stakeholders, including clients of LLNB services, members of the general public, donors and funding partners, community organisations and collaborators.

It does not replace internal grievance procedures for Workplace Participants.

## 3. Definitions

**Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction made to us or about us, our services, our operations, our staff and volunteers, or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or required.

**Feedback:** Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, about our services, operations, or complaint handling process, where a response or resolution is not explicitly or implicitly expected or required.

**Complainant:** The person or entity making the complaint.

**Workplace Participants** include LLNB staff, volunteers, volunteer applicants (including Crisis Support students), contractors and suppliers. This includes, but is not limited to, officers, staff (paid), volunteers, consultants, contractors, sub-contractors, an employee of a contractor or sub-contractor, an employee of a labour hire company, an apprentice or trainee, a student gaining work experience or completing community service or Duke of Edinburgh requirements, and employees of external organisations engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility activities at a LLNB site. It specifically includes individual Board members, being volunteers.

## 4. Guiding Principles

Our complaint handling process is modelled on the following principles:

**Accessibility:** Complaints can be made easily via multiple channels.

**Responsiveness:** Complaints are acknowledged and resolved in as timely a manner as possible.

**Fairness:** Complaints are handled impartially, respectfully, and consistently.

**Accountability:** Clear roles and responsibilities are defined for complaint handling.

|                                             |                         |                |                         |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Lifeline Northern Beaches Complaints Policy |                         | Board approval | 31/10/2025              |
| Owner                                       | Chief Executive Officer | Version: 1.0   | Next Review: 31/10/2027 |

## 5. Policy Statement

LLNB welcomes feedback and complaints about our services and operations. We are committed to reflecting on feedback and handling complaints from external stakeholders in a fair, responsive, and safe manner. We will be helpful, respectful and culturally aware in how we respond.

Our complaint handling process provides valuable information and gives us opportunities to learn and improve, supporting accountability and continuous improvement. It is modelled on the principles of accessibility, responsiveness, fairness, and accountability and is integrated into our organizational culture.

This enables us to:

- deliver support services to those in need;
- deliver counselling services and programmes;
- deliver commercial operations, philanthropic and fundraising activities and events that support our services and programmes;
- retain the confidence and trust of those who use our services and access our programmes; and
- meet legal / regulatory and government funding obligations.

We commit to:

- providing opportunities for external stakeholders to provide feedback, for example through evaluations, surveys, and newsletters.
- ensuring a culture that respects people's right to make a complaint about any aspect of our services or operations;
- ensuring those who provide feedback or make complaints are heard and treated with empathy, discretion, dignity and respect, and protected from retaliation;
- assisting people to provide feedback or make a complaint, especially vulnerable individuals, and allowing those lodging complaints to have a support person involved in the complaint handling process;
- encouraging staff and volunteers to be alert to feedback and complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly;
- supporting staff and volunteers to feel comfortable handling complaints at the first point of contact or assisting in escalation of complaints;
- addressing each complaint with integrity and in an equitable and objective manner;
- developing resolutions that are clear, fair, proportionate, appropriate and timely;
- using feedback and complaint information to improve service safety, quality, performance, and effectiveness; and
- identifying systemic causes and action learnings from complaint investigations.

We monitor our complaint handling process to ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints and identifying and correcting deficiencies in how it operates.

This policy statement is accessible to all service users, our staff and volunteers, and our funding partners, and is available for public viewing on the LLNB website.

|                                             |                         |                |                         |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Lifeline Northern Beaches Complaints Policy |                         | Board approval | 31/10/2025              |
| Owner                                       | Chief Executive Officer | Version: 1.0   | Next Review: 31/10/2027 |

## 6. Complaint Handling Process

People making complaints will be provided with information about the complaint handling process:

**Receiving Complaints:** Complaints may be submitted via email, phone, in-person, or online form. Anonymous complaints are accepted where there is a compelling reason to do so, and a confidential investigation of the issues is carried out where sufficient information has been provided.

**Acknowledgment:** Complaints are acknowledged within three (3) business days.

**Assessment:** Complaints are assessed for severity and urgency, identifying the nature and degree of any investigation required. Responsibility for dealing with the complaint is allocated to appropriate staff. **Note:** Where the complaint involves the Chief Operating Officer, then the breach or disclosure must be reported to the Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**). Where the complaint involves the CEO, then it must be reported to the Board Chair and the investigation allocated by the Board Chair to appropriate staff and/or Board Representative.

**Timeframes:** Clear timeframes are set to investigate and resolve each complaint.

**Investigation:** Relevant facts are gathered and reviewed. The complainant may be contacted for further information.

**Resolution:** Outcomes are communicated to the complainant. Remedies may be offered if applicable.

**Review:** Complainants may request an internal review if they are not satisfied with the outcome. Any requests for review will be considered and a review conducted, other than by the original staff / Board member handling the complaint, where CEO, delegate and/or Board representative deem appropriate.

**Early Resolution:** Where possible, complaints are resolved at first contact with us.

**Privacy:** Complainant identity and sensitive information are protected. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by LLNB as permitted under relevant Privacy laws and consistent with LLNB Privacy Policy. Where potentially unlawful conduct has occurred, LLNB may need to notify the appropriate authorities.

**Continuous Improvement:** Feedback and complaints are used to improve the effectiveness and quality of services and operations.

**Reporting:** Complaint trends are reported quarterly to the CEO and annually to the Board.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

**Chief Executive Officer:** Promotes a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution.

**Chief Operations Officer:** Oversees complaint handling and ensures compliance.

**Workplace Participants:** Responsible for receiving, recording, and escalating complaints appropriately.

|                                             |                         |                |                         |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Lifeline Northern Beaches Complaints Policy |                         | Board approval | 31/10/2025              |
| Owner                                       | Chief Executive Officer | Version: 1.0   | Next Review: 31/10/2027 |

## 8. Record Keeping

All complaints must be logged into the LLNB Complaints Register, including:

- Date received
- Nature of the complaint
- Actions taken
- Resolution status.

## 9. Continuous Improvement

Complaint data is reviewed periodically to identify service gaps, training needs, and opportunities to improve systems and processes.

## 10. Accessibility of Policy

This policy is available publicly on the LLNB website and may be provided in alternative formats upon request.

## 11. References

- LLNB Complaints Register
- LLNB Code of Conduct
- LLNB Privacy Policy
- LLNB Grievance Policy
- Lifeline Australia Service Complaints Policy Statement
- Volunteering Australia Fact Sheet: Complaint Handling by Charities and Not-For-Profits (2021)
- Checklist for practitioners handling feedback and complaints: Ahpra and Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
- Better Practice Complaint Handling Guide: Commonwealth Ombudsman

## 12. Version Control

| Version No. | Description                    | Effective Date | Reviewer |
|-------------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------|
|             |                                |                |          |
|             |                                |                |          |
| v 1.0       | Development of original policy | 31/10/2025     | COO      |

|                                             |                         |                |                         |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Lifeline Northern Beaches Complaints Policy |                         | Board approval | 31/10/2025              |
| Owner                                       | Chief Executive Officer | Version: 1.0   | Next Review: 31/10/2027 |