



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Effective Date: 27 February 2026

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Approval: WAAHEC Chairperson

Signature:

Purpose

This policy sets out the framework for receiving, managing, and reviewing compliments, suggestions, and complaints relating to research reviewed by the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee (WAAHEC) and to WAAHEC's own processes and operations.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure feedback is managed in a fair, respectful, and proportionate manner; and
- support continual quality improvement in WAAHEC's ethical review and governance functions.

Scope

This policy applies to all compliments, suggestions, and complaints relating to:

- research reviewed by WAAHEC; and
- WAAHEC's processes, procedures, decision-making, and conduct of its operations.

This policy applies to all researchers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, community members, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), and other stakeholders who wish to provide feedback.

All stakeholders have the right to be heard respectfully. Feedback is valued and contributes to WAAHEC's commitment to culturally safe, ethical research oversight and continuous improvement.

Objective

WAAHEC is committed to providing a fair, culturally safe, and transparent approach to managing compliments, suggestions, and complaints relating to research reviewed by WAAHEC, and to its own processes and operations.



The objective of this policy is to ensure that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, researchers, and other stakeholders are able to provide feedback in a respectful and culturally safe manner;
- complaints are considered impartially and in accordance with principles of procedural fairness;
- feedback is addressed proportionately, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the matter raised;
- confidentiality and privacy are maintained where appropriate; and
- feedback informs continuous improvement in WAAHEC's ethical review processes, governance, and operations.

Principles

WAAHEC manages compliments, suggestions, and complaints in accordance with the following principles:

- Procedural fairness in the consideration of complaints;
- Respect and cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and all stakeholders;
- Confidentiality and privacy, where appropriate;
- Transparency and accountability in decision-making; and
- Proportionality, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the matter raised.

Evidence Base

This policy is informed by, and consistent with, the following legislation, standards, and guidance:

- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) — general protections framework, including protection of workplace rights such as complaints and inquiries;
- ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Systems;
- ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management;
- Australian Standard AS 8000–2003 Good Governance Principles; and
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2025).

Related Documents

- Doc 0644 WAAHEC Complaints and Suggestion Form
- WAAHEC Feedback Register
- Doc 087 Record Keeping Policy and Procedure



- Doc 1148 Whistleblowing Policy

Procedures

Receiving Feedback

Feedback may be provided as a compliment, suggestion, or complaint.

Where a person wishes to provide feedback:

- staff must listen respectfully and without judgment;
- individuals may be invited to submit feedback using the WAAHEC Complaint and Suggestion Form; and
- reasonable assistance may be provided to support access to the feedback process.

Feedback may be provided anonymously.

Receiving Verbal Feedback

Where feedback is provided verbally:

- the individual should be asked whether they wish to submit formal feedback;
- where requested, the Complaint and Suggestion Form should be provided; and
- verbal feedback must be recorded in the WAAHEC Feedback Register by the Secretariat.

Staff are not required to engage with abusive, offensive, or threatening behaviour and may terminate interactions where safety or wellbeing is compromised.

Submission of the Complaint and Suggestion Form

Completed forms may be submitted to the WAAHEC Secretariat or Chair via:

- **Email:** ethics@ahcwa.org
- **Post:** PO Box 8493, Stirling Street, Perth WA 6849
- **In person:** 450 Beaufort Street, Highgate WA 6003

Assessment and Action

All feedback must be recorded in the WAAHEC Feedback Register by the Secretariat.

- Urgent matters will be referred promptly to the Chair for consideration and action.
- Non-urgent matters will be referred to WAAHEC for consideration at the next scheduled meeting.

Compliments and suggestions may be managed administratively where appropriate and do not necessarily require committee-level consideration.



Decisions taken and actions implemented will be documented in the Feedback Register.

Follow-up

- Acknowledgement of receipt will be provided within 14 days, where contact details are available.
- Outcomes of urgent matters will be communicated within 28 days, where possible.
- Outcomes of non-urgent matters will be communicated following consideration by WAAHEC.

Information provided in follow-up will be limited to what is appropriate and consistent with privacy and confidentiality requirements.

Records Management

Records relating to feedback are maintained in accordance with the Record Keeping Policy and Procedure (Doc 087) and relevant legislative requirements.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every **two (2) years**, or earlier if required.