

CHF Policy Primer

Healthcare Complaints



Australia's health system is generally regarded as one of the best in the world at providing high quality and safe care. However, things can go wrong and it can be useful to know what avenues are available to you if there is a problem with your care and need to make a complaint to resolve it.

Step 0 - Have a clear record of what went wrong

Before making a complaint, it is a good idea to clearly lay out the nature of your complaint e.g. by writing it down.

Make sure you cover off key information such as:

- Who was involved
- When and where it happened
- What happened
- Why you believe this was unacceptable
- What you think should have happened
- What outcome or resolution you are looking for

Step 1 - Make your complaint locally at the place you received your care

Speaking directly to the facility where you received care can often be the fastest way to resolve a complaint. Additionally, later steps may require you to have tried this before the higher level body will get involved.

If you aren't comfortable speaking directly to the person you are complaining about e.g. the health provider, the receptionist; you should ask another staff member about the facility's official complaints process. This can vary depending on the facility but they should have one. For example, an accredited General Practice should have a staff member designated to be responsible for resolving complaints, while a hospital might have specific 'Patient Liaison Officers' whose specific role includes resolving complaints.

Step 2 - Make a formal complaint to the relevant state based authority

If you are unable to resolve the complaint locally, the next step is to involve a regulatory body. The specific body will depend on where in Australia the care occurred.

Each State and Territory has an independent authority set up to look into health care issues such as around negligence, misconduct, systemic issues, and care access problems.

CHF Policy Primer: Healthcare Complaints

State/ Territory	Authority	Website	Phone
NSW	Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC)	hccc.nsw.gov.au/	1800 043 159
VIC	Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC)	hcc.vic.gov.au/	1300 582 113
QLD	Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO)	oho.qld.gov.au/	133 646
WA	Health and Disability Services Complaints Commissioner (HadSCO)	hadsco.wa.gov.au/	1800 813 583
SA	Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner	hcscc.sa.gov.au/	1800 232 007
TAS	Health Complaints Commissioner	healthcomplaints.tas.gov.au/	1800 001 170
ACT	Human Rights Commission (Health Services section)	hrc.act.gov.au/	02 6205 2222
NT	Health and Community Services Complaints Commission	hcscc.nt.gov.au/	1800 004 474

Step 3- Make a formal complaint to a specialised authority

In addition to the State-based Authorities, depending on the nature of your complaint there are other government bodies you can complain to. You can do this either after the State based body or at the same time. Additionally, the following Authorities provide specialised oversight and regulation of specific areas within the healthcare system and may be able to help you depending on the nature of your complaint.

Matter	Example	Authority	Website	Phone
Individual practitioner conduct	GP, Nurse, Dentist, Midwife	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra)	ahpra.gov.au	1300 419 495
Medicare Billing	Billing and fees, potential fraud	Services Australia	servicesaustralia.gov.au/	1800 132 468
Private Health Insurance	Unexpected costs, denied claims, gap fee disputes	Private Health Insurance Ombudsman	ombudsman.gov.au/complaints/private-health-insurance-complaints	1300 362 072
Federal service	Medicare, My Health Record, Veterans Healthcare	Commonwealth Ombudsman	ombudsman.gov.au/	1300 362 072
Disabilities	-	NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission	ndiscommission.gov.au/	1800 035 544
Aged Care	-	Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission	agedcarequality.gov.au/	1800 951 822

Finally, if your complaint includes potential medical malpractice claims you should speak with a qualified legal professional. If your complaint involves a death, you can speak with the State or Territory Coroners Court.