

## COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

### STATEMENT

Laurel House is committed to ensuring that compliments and complaints are welcomed, handled respectfully, and used to strengthen safety, quality, accountability and trust. We recognise that feedback is an important way for people to share their experiences, raise concerns, and contribute to continuous improvement.

Laurel House aims to ensure complaints are easy to make, safe to raise, fair, transparent, and trauma-informed, and that people are supported throughout the process.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear, accessible and consistent processes for receiving, managing and responding to compliments and complaints. The policy supports:

- timely, fair and respectful responses to feedback;
- accountability and learning across the organisation;
- safe pathways for raising concerns, including where there may be vulnerability or power imbalance; and
- compliance with relevant standards, legislation and funding obligations.

This policy aligns with ISO 10002:2018 – Complaint Management.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to compliments and complaints made by, or on behalf of clients, former clients, program participants, families, carers, partners, stakeholders and members of the public.

At times, Laurel House may proactively seek feedback through surveys, evaluation forms or other mechanisms. Where feedback provided through these processes falls within the scope of this policy, it may be managed under this policy.

Worker grievances are managed in accordance with the Worker Grievance Policy and other relevant Human Resources policies.

Complaints raising child safety concerns are managed in accordance with the Child and Youth Safety, Wellbeing and Reportable Conduct Policy.

### DEFINITIONS

Compliment – Positive feedback acknowledging good practice or service quality.

Complaint – Any expression of dissatisfaction about Laurel House services or conduct.

Ethical or professional conduct concern – Conduct that may breach the Code of Conduct or professional standards.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

Workers are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy and related Laurel House policies and procedures;
- Treating compliments and complaints respectfully and seriously;

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- Cooperating with complaint handling processes; and
- Escalating complaints and concerns in accordance with this policy.

The following positions have additional responsibilities:

The Board is responsible for:

- Approving this policy and any substantive amendments;
- Providing oversight of complaints and compliments systems;
- Receiving de-identified reporting on complaints and compliments; and
- Monitoring themes and trends to support accountability and continuous improvement.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for:

- Ensuring effective implementation of this policy;
- Ensuring compliance with reporting, notification and funding obligations;
- Notifying insurers where a complaint or incident may give rise to an actual or potential claim; and
- Escalating matters to the Board or relevant Board subcommittee where appropriate.

Operations Manager is responsible for:

- Overseeing Laurel House's compliments and complaints systems to ensure they are consistent with this policy and ISO 10002:2018.
- Monitoring and recording, tracking and timely progression of compliments and complaints, and supporting managers with procedural guidance where required.
- Identifying themes, risks and improvement opportunities arising from complaints and compliments, and reporting de-identified information to the CEO and Board.
- Reviewing this policy on a scheduled basis and recommending updates to the CEO.

Managers are responsible for:

- Managing complaints appropriately and in a timely manner.
- Supporting complainants and workers involved in complaints.
- Considering mediation or facilitated discussion where suitable.
- Ensuring complaints are recorded and progressed in accordance with this policy.

### POLICY DETAILS

#### Guiding Principles

Laurel House's approach to compliments and complaints is:

- Visible – information about how to give feedback is clear and easy to find.
- Accessible and inclusive – feedback can be provided in multiple ways, with support available.
- Responsive – complaints are acknowledged and progressed within clear timeframes.
- Objective and fair – matters are handled impartially and consistently.
- Confidential and respectful – information is handled sensitively and appropriately.
- Safe to raise – no person will be disadvantaged for providing feedback.
- Focused on learning and improvement – feedback is used to strengthen practice and systems.

These principles are applied in a trauma-informed and power-aware way.

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### Compliments

Laurel House welcomes compliments as an important way to recognise good practice and understand what is working well.

Compliments may be provided:

- in person;
- by phone;
- by email;
- in writing;
- via an online form; or
- through feedback or evaluation processes associated with specific programs or activities.

Where possible, Laurel House will acknowledge compliments, share them with relevant workers or teams (with consent where appropriate), record them for quality and governance purposes, and use them to inform learning and recognition.

### Complaints – how to make a complaint

Complaints may be made:

- in person;
- by phone;
- by email;
- in writing;
- via an online form; or
- with the support of an advocate or support person.

Complaints may be made anonymously or by a known complainant.

- Where contact details are provided, Laurel House will acknowledge the complaint within five (5) business days and keep the complainant informed of progress and outcomes.
- Where a complaint is anonymous, Laurel House will assess and record the issues raised and take reasonable steps to address any identified risks or concerns. The absence of contact details may limit the ability to provide feedback or outcomes.

Complaints are free to make, and people will not be treated unfairly for raising concerns.

### How we handle complaints

When someone makes a complaint, Laurel House will:

- Acknowledge it;
- Record it;
- Work to understand what happened;
- Look into the issues;
- Decide what needs to change;
- Explain the outcome; and
- Offer next steps (including review, mediation or external escalation options).

Information about how to provide compliments or make complaints is available via a dedicated webpage with a direct form for compliments and complaints, separate from Laurel House's general enquiry processes.

### Staged complaint handling process

#### *Stage 1 – Early resolution*

Where appropriate, complaints will be addressed promptly and informally by the relevant worker or manager. Facilitated discussion or mediation may be offered where suitable and agreed.

#### *Stage 2 – Formal internal review*

Where early resolution is not appropriate or the complainant is dissatisfied, a senior manager not previously involved will conduct a formal review and provide a written outcome within 30 business days (or advise if more time is required).

#### *Stage 3 – Board and external review*

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request review by the Board Chair or a relevant Board subcommittee.

Laurel House will also provide information about appropriate external pathways, which may include:

- the Health Complaints Commissioner (Tasmania);
- professional regulators (e.g. AHPRA); or
- the relevant program funder, where the complaint relates to a funded program or service.

### Child safety and reportable incidents

If a complaint raises concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a person, including a child or young person, or indicates a consumer-related reportable incident, Laurel House will respond immediately and manage the matter in accordance with its Child Safety, Wellbeing and Reportable Conduct Policy and the Consumer Related Reportable Incident Policy and Procedure for Tasmania's DHHS-Funded Community Sector.

### Privacy complaints

If a complaint relates specifically to the handling of personal information or an alleged breach of privacy, Laurel House will manage the matter in accordance with its Privacy Management Plan and Privacy and Client Confidentiality Policy and relevant privacy legislation.

Privacy complaints will be assessed promptly and handled in a confidential and transparent manner. Where appropriate, individuals will be informed of their right to seek external review through the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) or other relevant oversight bodies.

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### Governance, financial and regulatory concerns

If Laurel House receives complaints and concerns about governance, financial management, ethical conduct or regulatory compliance, including the use of charitable funds, these matters will be escalated to the CEO or Board Chair and may also be raised under Laurel House's Whistleblower Policy, which provides protections for disclosures made in good faith.

### Confidentiality and record keeping

All compliments and complaints are recorded securely. Personal information is handled in accordance with Laurel House's Privacy Management Plan. Information may be disclosed where required by law or funding obligations.

De-identified information about compliments and complaints is reported to the Board or relevant Board subcommittees for oversight and continuous improvement.

### **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- Health Complaints Act 1995 (Tas)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Governance Standards
- Relevant funding agreement requirements

### **RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**

All adopted and approved Laurel House policies can be located on the Pulse software.

- Child Safety, Wellbeing and Reportable Conduct Policy
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Privacy Management Plan
- Privacy and Client Confidentiality Policy
- Clinical Governance Framework
- Whistleblower Policy