

# Self-Advocacy Information Sheet

If you choose to resolve your complaint yourself, the process is called self-advocacy. You can choose to have the support of an advocate through the life of your complaint, or you can choose to resolve your complaint without our support. Based on the information you provide an advocate will advise you on which process will work best for you so that you can manage your own complaint process. Each of these processes is described below:

## There are four steps to follow when raising concerns yourself to achieve resolution:

1. Compose a brief background/summary of your experience, try to keep this as objective as you can without using emotive language. This summary should look a bit like the back of a book when the author gives a synopsis of the story.
2. Detail your key issues in a clear succinct way so that the provider can understand your experience easily and respond appropriately. This is when you can be a bit more specific, for example you might say, “I am concerned that no one came to help me go to the toilet after my operation, so I had to do this myself which was painful and I was afraid I would fall over”. If you are describing someone’s behaviour you need to give an example so that this can be properly responded to, but remember to be objective and describe the behaviour not your feelings about the person. Keep your language respectful.
3. Ask yourself, “What can be done to put it right?” Be clear about what you want to see happen, but be mindful that these requests must be reasonable and achievable. The best way to think about this is to ask for explanations or information about your experience, that way the provider will be able to respond and give you more clarity about the things that concern you.
4. Communicate your concerns and what you want to happen, remember the organisation or person may have no idea that there is a problem and may need time to look into your concerns before responding. When you are ready to contact the organisation or person, you have three options:
  - **Contact the provider in writing, by letter or email:** Tell them your questions, concerns, and problems. Include what would improve and/or fix the problems for you (letter template example on next page)
  - **Telephone:** Ask to discuss your concerns with someone from the service over the phone.
  - **Request a face-to-face meeting:** (you can bring a support person) this can be a good way to maintain your relationship with your health/disability professional. In the meeting you can:
    - Tell your story
    - Listen to their explanation
    - Agree on what will put matters right. This may include discussing changes to the service so that what happened does not happen again to you or to someone else
    - Accept the person’s or organisation’s apologies if this is appropriate
    - Agree on whether your concerns are resolved



# Self-Advocacy Information Sheet

## Letter Template...

Date:

*(The organization that provided the service)*

Name

Address

Dear / To Whom It May Concern / Complaints Officer

### **BACKGROUND**

The details leading up to the complaint, what, where, when who etc

When I came to your...

### **MAIN ISSUES**

What were the main issues for you, written in a question form i.e.

What is your usual practice for giving...?

Was this process ....?

Why did the....?

### **RESOLUTION OUTCOME**

What is it that you would like to achieve as an outcome of making the complaint?

For example, this could be an acknowledgement of the distress caused, apology for your experience, explanation on what happened, confirmation of process / policies for future ...

I would like to see...

I would like to know....

I would like to receive an explanation about....

### **OPTIONS TO RESOLVE**

You can ask for a written response; you can request to meet with the organisation / person (remember meetings are a voluntary process)

I would appreciate a written response / and or to meet with you to address my concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Your name,

Your address

Phone or mobile number to assist with setting up meetings

Email address to facilitate with acknowledgment and response