

Yirralka Education Vision: 'Self-determined lives of dignity on ancestral estates'

INTRODUCTION

The care and protection of all people within Yirralka Education is central to our operation. We believe that our schools, our programs, entities and learning communities, must be places where, we strongly demonstrate a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all members of the community.

Purpose

This document sets out how Yirralka Education responds to complaints and resolves conflict. If the *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017* (NT) applies, whistle-blower protection principles can protect the identity of the person making the complaint.

Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to everyone involved in Yirralka Education. It includes, but is not limited to, people who:

- work directly with children including: all school staff, service providers, pre-service teachers and educators
- voluntarily support Yirralka Education, the college, and its students, including: students' family members, YE Board members and Directors, and invited volunteers to the college.
- work indirectly with children to run and maintain the college including: contractors, advisors, ITC support and service providers.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Yirralka Education is committed to providing every student with a safe learning place that is free from harm. Every child is valued and respected for who they are, and they have the right to feel safe and be safe at school. We value and take seriously the voice of every child.

A complaint can be made by anyone including a student, former student, parent/carers, other family member, staff member, volunteer, contractor or member of the wider community.

Context

At Mäpuru Yirralka College we live and work together closely with community, in an isolated and very remote homeland. It is important to maintain good relationships with each other and with community.

Complaints or conflict can arise because of:

- the school not meeting the expectations of the community,
- personal or professional disagreement or misconduct,
- cross-cultural misunderstanding,
- the different ways people communicate with each other.

It is important to address complaints and resolve conflict quickly and to avoid escalation.

Definitions

In this document:

- **Child safety** incorporates protecting children from harm, managing the risk of harm to children and responding to incidents or allegations of harm to children.
- **Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, or service provided, or with the failure to take action, make a decision or provide a service,
- **Conflict** is a disagreement between two or more people,
- **Worker** includes employees, Principal, Community Principal, teachers, co-teachers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements,
- **Mediator** means someone impartial (fair) and not involved with the issue who helps those involved work toward a resolution.

SCOPE

This document applies to:

- child safe complaints
 - a breach of YE's Code of Conduct
 - a breach of YE's Child Safe Code of Conduct
 - other staff misconduct (such as a procedural breach of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy)
 - any complaint about YE's response to or management of a child safety incident or concern, including complaints alleging non-compliance with Mandatory Reporting and Child Safety and Protection.
- complaints about YE, the Board of Directors (the Board), or YE workers including the Principal and Community Principal,

- conflict that arises within YE,
- conflict between YE and community or other stakeholders.

Child focused approach

We take a child-focused approach to handling complaints and conflict. Students are taught about their rights, and how to make a complaint, using the National Office for Child Safety Infographic resource, which is also displayed in each classroom and on key noticeboards. This is a child and EAL/D friendly resource that is revisited by classroom teachers every semester.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the Board

Board Directors must:

- manage complaints or conflict that involve directors and the Principal/s,
- establish timelines for resolution and review,
- remain objective and seek a fair outcome that meets the needs of everyone involved,
- maintain confidentiality which means not sharing with anyone who isn't directly involved

Principal

The Principal must:

- ensure the efficient and effective organisation, management and administration of the YE's complaints handling processes,
- manage complaints about YE, the Board, or YE workers,
- manage conflict within YE and between YE and community,
- establish timelines for resolution and review,
- remain objective and seek a fair outcome that meets the needs of everyone involved,
- maintain confidentiality which means not sharing with anyone who isn't directly involved,
- keep a record of all complaints and conflicts that cannot be dealt with informally,
- oversee the implementation of education for staff, students, families, and school community arounds complaints
- ensure the YE noticeboards (in lieu of website) contain information about how to make a complaint, including a whistle-blower protection statement

Teachers

Registered teachers must:

- teach students about their rights, and how to make a complaint, using the National Office for Child Safety Infographic resource, at least once per semester
- display the “How to Make a Complaint” infographic in each classroom and ensure students know how to implement this information.

Workers

Workers must:

- inform the YE Board Co-chairs of any complaint made about YE, the Board, the Principals or YE workers, even if the issue is resolved informally,
- maintain confidentiality which means not sharing with anyone who isn’t directly involved.

Complaints and conflict are handled in a way that reflects traditional values, which place a high value on respecting people’s privacy, their differences and learning to live together peacefully.

POLICY

For everyone involved, this means:

- staying calm and respectful of others,
- not judging others too quickly,
- accepting that other people may see things differently,
- being open to talking through issues,
- being prepared to compromise,
- working together to find a solution,
- allowing a reasonable amount of time for a resolution,
- acting on agreements made to resolve complaints and conflict.

Having a complaint or being involved in a conflict is no excuse for:

- aggressive or offensive behaviour,
- willfully damaging property,
- making negative statements about a person or about YE.

When handling a complaint or conflict, any behaviour that is aggressive or offensive will be treated seriously and could delay resolution of the issue.

Defamatory remarks about YE or YE workers will be treated seriously and the Board will take appropriate measures to uphold the good name and reputation of YE and/or the persons affected.

PROCEDURE

1. Explain the concern or issue

When making a complaint or dealing with conflict it is important to explain the concern or issue and to give specific examples.

Students

1. Talk to the person directly if you feel comfortable.
2. If not, talk to someone else you trust and feel comfortable with, such as a teacher, parent, family member or the Community Principal.
3. Add in other ways to make a complaint – e.g. email, phone.

Parents/carers

1. Talk to the person directly if you feel comfortable.
2. If not, talk to someone else you trust and feel comfortable with, such as the Community Principal or Principal.
3. For anything related to teaching and learning talk to the Community Principal or Principal.
4. For anything related to the Community Principal or Principal, talk to a member of the Board, or the Board Co-Chairs.

Workers

1. Talk to the person directly if you feel comfortable.
2. If not, talk to someone else you trust and feel comfortable with, such as a colleague, the Community Principal or Principal.
3. For anything related to the Community Principal or Principal, talk to a member of the Board, or the Board Co-Chairs.

2. Resolving complaints and conflicts

Where possible, complaints and conflict are handled informally – refer to the flowchart at the end of this document. Where a mediator is used, the person must be agreed upon by everyone involved. This could be:

- the Principal
- a Board Co-Chair

Where complaints or conflicts involve Yolŋu, an appropriate Yolŋu mediator or interpreter will be used, the person must be agreed upon by everyone involved. This could be:

- the Community Principal
- a Board Co-Chair

If a complaint or conflict cannot be handled informally, it will be handled formally. Both:

- formal complaints, and
- requests to handle a conflict formally;

must be made in writing to the Principal, or to the Board Co-chair.

Where necessary, an external mediator will be involved.

A written response will be provided for all formal complaints. A written outcome will be provided where formal conflict resolution occurs.

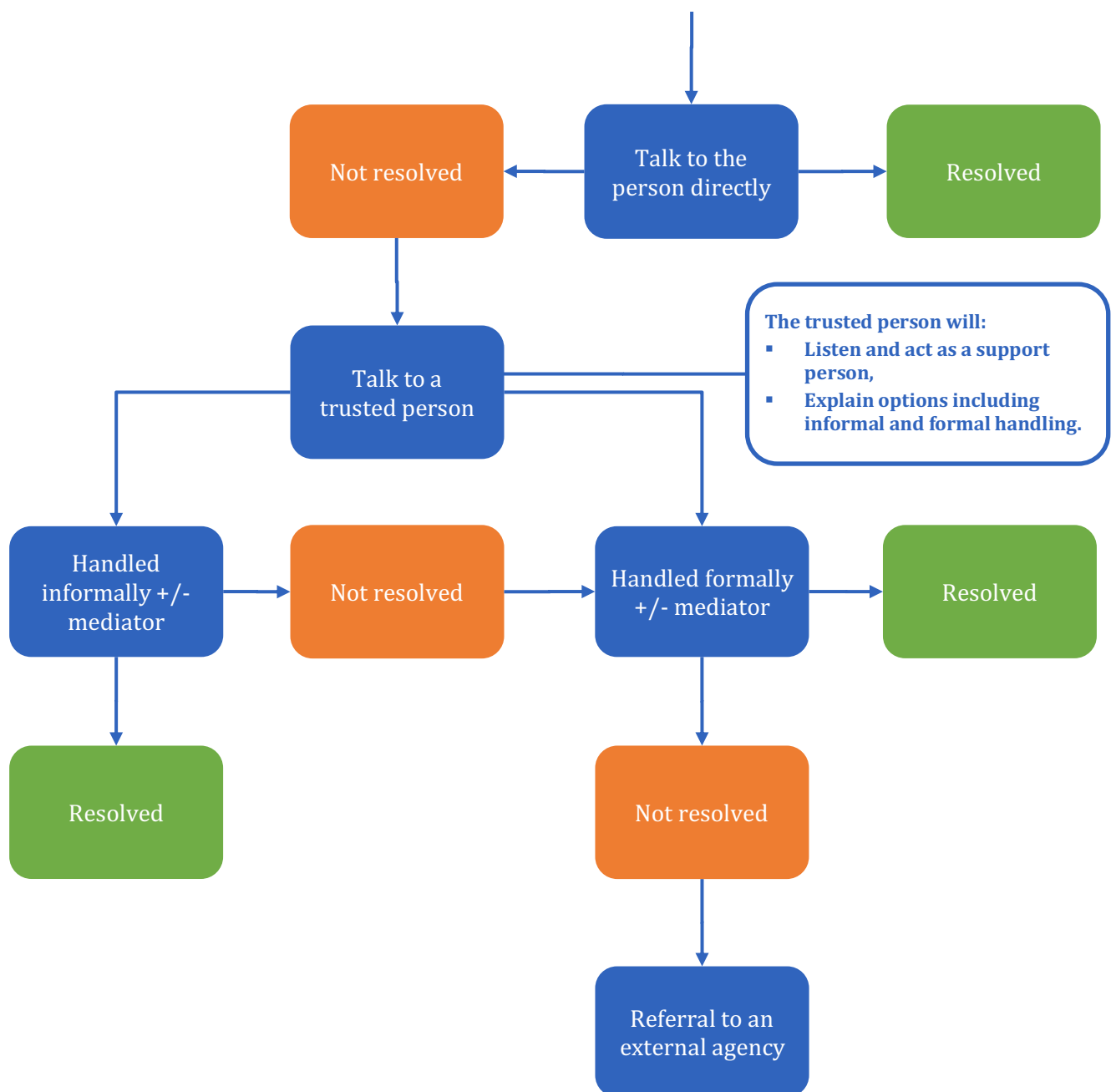
3. Unresolved complaints and conflicts

If a complaint or conflict cannot be resolved by the processes described, it may be referred to an external agency.

4. Register and Documentation

The Complaints Register and supporting documentation for all formal complaints are treated and stored confidentially.

5. Flowchart for responding to complaints and resolving conflicts



SOURCES INFORMING THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Care and Protection of Children Act (2007) NT

National Office for Child Safety: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian.

RELATED POLICIES

Yirralka Education Child Safety and Protection Policy

Yirralka Education Schools Mandatory Reporting Policy

Yirralka Education Code of Conduct

Yirralka Education Schools Guidelines for Staff-Student Interaction

Yirralka Education Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy

Yirralka Education Cultural Safety Policy

Yirralka Education Recruitment and Selection of Staff Policy

Yirralka Education Work Health and Safety Policy

Yirralka Education Conflict Resolution Policy

Yirralka Education Student Wellbeing and Behaviour Policy

POLICY REVIEW

VERSION	DATE EFFECTIVE	VERSION DESCRIPTION	PREPARED	CHANGES	APPROVED	REVIEW DATE
0	11.05.2025	Initial Approved	L. Miller	First Complaints Policy to comply with National Principles for Child Safety	YEL	10.05.2028
1						
2						
3						
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Yirralka Education may make changes to this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any Yirralka Education member or staff member who wishes to make any comment about this policy may forward their suggestions to the Principal.