AOTEAROA CHARITABLE TRUST

'Pou Manaaki Taiohi o Aotearoa'

Advancing quality youth development practice in Aotearoa

Pou Manaaki Taiohi o Aotearoa | Scope Aotearoa Charitable Trust Complaints Policy

Purpose and Scope

This complaints policy provides a fair, accessible, and culturally responsive process for addressing concerns raised about our organisation. Our purpose is to supporting youth organisations to collectively amplify youth development so young people thrive. We are committed to accountability, continuous learning, and maintaining the trust of those we serve.

This policy applies to complaints from:

- Youth organisations we support
- Rangatahi and their whānau
- Staff, volunteers, and contractors
- Partners, funders, and stakeholders
- Members of the community

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about our services, actions, decisions, or the conduct of our people that requires a response. This policy distinguishes complaints from general feedback, service requests, or suggestions for improvement, which we welcome through other channels.

Our Values in Practice

Our complaints process is guided by our core values:

- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi and He Whakaputanga**: We honour our Treaty commitments by ensuring our complaints process respects tikanga, is accessible to iwi, hapū and whānau, and recognises Māori as tangata whenua.
- **Generousity**: We approach complaints with generosity of spirit, viewing them as opportunities for growth and transformation rather than criticism to be defended against.
- **Hononga**: We maintain connections throughout the complaints process, recognising that resolution strengthens rather than breaks relationships.
- **Whai wāhitanga**: We invite those with concerns to sit at the table with us, working together in kotahitanga to find solutions.

- **Haerenga**: We embrace complaints as part of our journey of learning, using reflection and mātauranga to develop wisdom.
- **Transformation**: We seek value and positive change from every complaint, recognising the potential for organisational and sector-wide improvement.
- **Rangatahi tu Rangatira**: The wellbeing and thriving of young people remains central. We prioritise complaints that impact rangatahi and ensure young people can raise concerns safely.
- **Pāuaua**: We build resilient, sustainable responses that strengthen our capability to serve better.
- **Pumanawa atawhai**: We take a potential orientation, seeking to understand concerns as opportunities to nurture growth and discover possibility.

Guiding Principles

Our complaints process is built on:

- **Natural justice and fairness**: All parties are heard, treated respectfully, and given opportunity to respond
- **Accessibility**: Multiple pathways exist to raise concerns, including culturally appropriate options
- **Timeliness**: We respond promptly and keep people informed
- **Confidentiality**: Information is shared only with those who need to know
- **Transparency**: Our process is clear and we explain decisions
- **No retaliation**: People can raise concerns without fear of negative consequences
- **Cultural responsiveness**: We adapt our approach to meet diverse cultural needs
- **Learning orientation**: Complaints inform continuous improvement
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How to Make a Complaint

We want to make it easy for you to raise concerns. You can make a complaint:

- **In writing**:
    - Email: co-chair@scopeaotearoa.org.nz
    - Online form: www.scopeaotearoa.org.nz
- **By phone**: [insert phone number]
- **In person**: Speak with any staff member or board member, or arrange a meeting
- **Through an advocate or support person**: You may ask someone to make a complaint on your behalf or support you through the process
- **Kanohi ki te kanohi**: We welcome face-to-face conversations and can arrange hui if preferred
- For complaints requiring cultural support or te reo Māori, please contact [insert culturally appropriate contact].

You don't need to use formal language or specific forms. Tell us:

- What happened
- When it happened
- Who was involved
- What impact it had
- What outcome you're seeking

If you're unsure whether to make a formal complaint, you can discuss your concerns informally with the Manager first.

Our Complaints Process

Step 1: Acknowledgment (within 5 working days)

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and:

- Confirm we understand the concern
- Explain the process and expected timeframes
- Identify who will handle your complaint
- Discuss any support you need
- Clarify the outcome you're seeking

Step 2: Assessment (within 5 working days)

We assess the complaint to determine:

- Appropriate level of response (informal resolution, formal investigation, immediate escalation)
- Whether external expertise is needed
- Cultural considerations and appropriate tikanga
- Urgency, particularly if rangatahi wellbeing is at stake
- Any conflicts of interest

Step 3: Resolution Pathway

Informal Resolution Where appropriate, we may facilitate:

- Direct conversation between parties
- Mediation or restorative approaches
- Hui whakatika (healing hui)
- Immediate remedial action

Formal Investigation For more serious complaints:

- An appropriate person conducts an objective review
- All relevant parties are interviewed
- Evidence and documentation are gathered
- Findings are documented with reasoning
- Recommendations are made

Timeframe: Most complaints will be resolved within 20 working days. Complex matters may take longer—we'll keep you informed of progress and any delays.

Step 4: Response

We will provide you with:

- Our findings and the reasoning behind them
- Actions we will take (if complaint upheld)
- Explanation (if complaint not upheld)
- Learning and improvements we'll make
- Options if you're unsatisfied with the outcome

Step 5: Review and Escalation

If you're not satisfied with our response, you can request a review by:

- Our Manager (within 10 working days of receiving our response)
- Our Board of Trustees (within 10 working days of Management response)

The review will consider whether:

- Proper process was followed
- The decision was reasonable
- All relevant information was considered
- Cultural considerations were addressed appropriately

Special Considerations

Complaints Involving Rangatahi

When young people make complaints:

- We provide age-appropriate information and support
- We ensure they can have a support person present
- We prioritise their safety and wellbeing
- We respond in youth-friendly ways
- We protect their confidentiality while ensuring appropriate safeguarding

Complaints Requiring Tikanga-based Response

We recognise some complaints are best addressed through tikanga Māori processes:

- Hui whakatika (resolution hui)
- Involvement of kaumātua or cultural advisors
- Whakawhanaungatanga approaches
- Restorative practices grounded in te ao Māori

We will discuss culturally appropriate pathways with complainants.

Serious Complaints

Some complaints require immediate escalation to our Board, including:

- Allegations of harm to rangatahi
- Serious misconduct by senior leadership
- Breaches of legal or regulatory requirements
- Significant financial irregularities
- Matters that could seriously damage our reputation or mission

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff, Contractors and Volunteers: Receive complaints respectfully, provide information about the process, and report complaints to the Manager.

Manager: Manages the complaints process, conducts or oversees investigations, ensures timeliness, maintains records. Reviews serious complaints, makes final operational decisions, reports to the Board, ensures organisational learning.

Board of Trustees: Handles complaints about the Manager, reviews escalated complaints, oversees policy effectiveness, ensures governance accountability.

Kaumatua/Cultural Advisors: Provide guidance on culturally appropriate responses and tikanga-based processes.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

We maintain confidential records of:

- All complaints received and their nature
- Steps taken to investigate and resolve
- Outcomes and recommendations
- Actions taken for improvement

Information is shared only with those directly involved in addressing the complaint, unless:

- We have your permission to share more widely
- We have legal obligations to report (such as safeguarding concerns)
- Disclosure is necessary to ensure fairness to all parties

Records are stored securely in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020 and retained for [7 years].

Reporting and Learning

We view complaints as taonga—gifts that help us grow. We:

- Report bimonthly to our Board on complaint trends, themes, and learning
- Analyse patterns to identify systemic issues
- Share learning across the sector (with confidentiality protected)
- Review and update our policies and practices based on complaints

- Celebrate improvements that result from complaints
- Acknowledge when we get things wrong and commit to doing better

Support and Protection

No Retaliation: Making a complaint will not negatively affect your relationship with us, your access to our services, or your standing in any way. We take any retaliation seriously.

Support for Complainants: You can have a support person with you at any stage. We can help connect you with independent advocacy services if needed.

Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints: While we welcome all genuine concerns, we reserve the right to manage complaints that are demonstrably false, malicious, or pursued in an unreasonable manner.

External Options

If you're not satisfied after exhausting our internal process, or prefer external assistance, you can contact:

~~**Office of the Ombudsman**: Investigates complaints about government-funded organisations~~
- ~~Phone: 0800 802 602~~
- ~~Website: ombudsman.parliament.nz~~

Human Rights Commission: For complaints involving discrimination
- Phone: 0800 496 877
- Website: hrc.co.nz

Privacy Commissioner: For privacy-related concerns
- Phone: 0800 803 909
- Website: privacy.org.nz

Charities Services: For concerns about our charitable status or governance
- Website: charities.govt.nz

Relevant professional bodies: For complaints about professional conduct
Korowai Tupu - https://arataiohi.org.nz/korowai-tupu/info-for-members/feedback-and-complaints/ email: youthwork@arataiohi.org.nz

Police: For matters involving potential criminal activity

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed every two years or sooner if required. We welcome feedback on how to improve our complaints process.

Policy approved: 20th of October 2025 **Next review date**: October 2027 **Policy owner**: Board of Trustees/Manager