Transcript: TAC TALK SHORTS

**Complaints and what to do about them**

Welcome to TAC Talks Shorts. My name is Mel Hartley from the Training Accreditation Council or TAC and today we are going to have a short talk about complaints.

Before we do, I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are recording on, the Whadjuk people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Today’s short talk is about dealing with complaints you may receive in your RTO. Nobody likes complaints and for many RTOs, receiving a complaint from a learner or other stakeholder may be confronting. However responding to complaints can be a useful and important process.

Under Standard 6 of the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, training providers must implement a transparent complaints policy. This policy needs to cover the conduct of the RTO, its trainers, assessors and other staff as well as any other third party which may be providing services on behalf of the RTO. Importantly the RTO’s complaint policy must also cover allegations involving the conduct of the learners which attend the RTO.

Complaints are a window into the workings of your RTO and provide an understanding of your clients’ expectations and experiences. They can contribute to the continuous improvement of the services you provide, to the reputation of your RTO, and to the reputation of VET.

The best remedy for complaints is prevention. This can be achieved by making sure that learners are fully informed of the services you offer or don’t offer and that they understand their rights and their responsibilities.

The next best remedy for dealing with complaints is early intervention. It is important to encourage discussion and resolution when a grievance is felt. In many cases the problem can be quickly resolved to the satisfaction of both parties before the formal complaints process needs to be invoked.

Another way to prevent complaints is through continuous monitoring of your RTO’s activities, learner responses and by showing a willingness to listen and act where appropriate.

But no RTO is perfect and complaints may still happen. There is no set complaints or appeals process for an RTO to follow, but RTOs must have a policy that is publically available that complies with Standard 6 of the Standards for RTOs. This includes ensuring that the complaint policy reflects natural justice principles and is supportive, fair and responsive, that it is publicly available and clearly outlines the procedures for making the complaint.

If you believe that more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint, you will need to let the complainant know in writing that this is the case and why the additional time is required. You must also make sure that the complainant is given regular updates.

Even after going through the formal complaint process some complaints may persist and in these circumstances you may need to advise the complainant to take their complaint to a party independent of the RTO, which could be TAC.

Once the complaint is settled, it's important to reflect upon the complaint and its outcomes as part of your RTO's quality assurance process so that the likelihood of the complaint arising again is reduced. This is further outlined in Clauses 2.2b and 6.5 of the Standards.

I strongly recommend that you review the Standards for RTOs for further information specifically Standard 6. However a number of additional resources are available on the TAC website tac.wa.gov.au including the Fact Sheet on Complaints and Appeals and the Users’ Guide to the Standards for RTOs. Thank you for listening to this TAC Talk Short on complaints and what to do about them.