



MS Queensland

Customer Services Handbook

July 2016

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This booklet is available in large print format on request and at www.msqld.org.au, or by calling our **InfoLine on 1800 177 591**.

Welcome from the CEO

MS Queensland's vision is a world free from MS and its devastating impact. We exist to help people living with MS to get the best out of life; to advocate for change and to search for a cure. Our mission is to be the first choice for MS information, education, treatment, care and support across Queensland.

The work performed by the organisation and its staff is underpinned by a set of values. These are:

- **Respect** – people really matter to us and so we show respect in all our relationships and interactions with others.
- **Hope** – we never give up offering real hope, no matter how long it takes or how challenging the situation.
- **Commitment** – we always do our best for our customers, our organisation and for each other.
- **Collaboration** – we believe the way to achieve great results is by working together.

Our staff work in partnership with the family, friends and carers of customers at all stages of the disease, to ensure the highest level of care is provided.

This handbook sets out the responsibilities of the organisation in relation to our interaction with customers and people living with MS. It also outlines the rights of customers and the various policies and procedures that apply to the provision of care and other services.

Introduction by the Director of Services

Welcome to the services of MS Queensland. Our goal is to provide customers, family members and carers with support, information and access to quality services as and when required.

Staff in our Services Department have expertise in understanding MS and its impact on those living with MS. This is one of the unique qualities that will undoubtedly make MS Queensland an important resource for you.

We pride ourselves on our professionalism and focus on providing the appropriate advice and support to people living with MS. To enable us to continue to improve, your feedback is important – please let us know how we're doing and what we can do to enhance our services.

Rights and Responsibilities

As a funded non-government provider of services, MS Queensland strives to uphold the objectives of the *Disability Services Act 2006*, which are:

- To acknowledge the rights of people with a disability, including promoting their inclusion in the life of the community generally.
- To ensure the disability services funded by the department and MS Queensland are safe, accountable and respond to the needs of people with a disability.

MS Queensland is committed to operating in a quality environment and with an emphasis on continuous improvement. All policies and procedures are in compliance with the six standards within the Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF) on this website www.communitydoor.org.au/quality/policy

MS Queensland affirms its commitment to the Declaration of the Rights of the Disabled Person as adopted by HREOC, (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission). It states that persons living with a disability have:

- The inherent right to respect for their human dignity.
- The same fundamental human rights as their fellow citizens.
- The right to a decent life, as normal and as full as possible.
- The right to legal safeguards against abuse, or any limitations of rights made necessary by the severity of a person's handicap, including regular review and the right of appeal.
- The right to any necessary treatment, rehabilitation, education, training and other services to develop their skills and capabilities to the maximum.
- The right to economic and social security.
- The right to productive employment.
- The right to have their needs considered in economic and social planning.

- The right to a full family life.
- The right to participate in all social activities.
- The right not to be subjected to more restrictive conditions of residence than necessary.
- The right to qualified legal assistance to protect their rights.
- The right to protection against exploitation or discriminatory abusive or degrading treatment.

Customers' rights and responsibilities are underpinned by the operational procedures in place in the Services Department. Information on these procedures can be found by contacting your Regional Service Coordinator or the Director of Services.

Rights and Responsibilities are available in other languages on this website. www.health.qld.gov.au/hacc/publications/righttoherlang.asp

Our Services

Our mission is to be the first choice for MS information, education, treatment, care and support across Queensland. To achieve this we offer the following services to the MS community.

InfoLine – 1800 177 591

MS Queensland operates a free phone service providing information about MS and related issues. This service is available to all people living with MS - customers, their families and carers, health professionals and the public.

Information Resource Centre

Evidence based information is available on a variety of significant MS issues. Among the many resources is information for health professionals, family members and children of people with MS. On request, journal articles and other information are provided. Email is our preferred method of delivering resources, or information can be posted. A monthly e-newsletter is available for those who register to provide up to date information for people living with MS. Our website www.msqld.org.au is frequently updated with current news items and contains links to our YouTube, Twitter and Facebook sites.

MS Nurse Support

Our staff can provide relevant information to individuals and families living with MS. Our nurses can answer questions about relapses, symptoms and medication options. We are available over the phone or whenever possible face to face. We offer independent support, education and individual training in the use of the Immunotherapy medications in direct consultation with your neurologist.

Regional Service Coordination

The Regional Service Coordinator (RSC) is the first point of contact for all newly registered customers. The RSC is a professional with specialist knowledge of MS and health or community services available to assist people to adjust and cope in living with MS. The RSC meets with customers to assess their information and support needs and then works with them to provide appropriate information and/or access to the appropriate supports.

Regional Service Coordinators are based throughout the state covering six broad regions including Brisbane North, Brisbane South, Sunshine Coast/Central Queensland, Gold Coast/Logan, South-Western Queensland and Far North Queensland. As a customer you are linked to the RSC in your local region.

Physiotherapy

Organisations promoting the needs of people living with the impacts of MS advocate the benefits of consultation with a specialist neurological physiotherapist, whose knowledge, skills and experience are appropriate to meeting the needs of people diagnosed with MS. For any stage of MS, a consultation with a MS specialist physiotherapist will provide you with advice and strategies to minimise current and future impacts of MS on day to day living.

At MS Queensland we aim to deliver quality programs guided by the latest research and evidence to keep people active. Although MS can be progressive, improvements in quality of life and independence can be made by having a physiotherapy consultation. With your consent, if needed, we refer, collaborate and liaise with other healthcare providers to support your goals.

Specialist neurological physiotherapy and exercise services are provided to the customers of the Society via a referral provided by their RSC. MS Queensland has physiotherapy clinics operating at Dutton Park, Brisbane North (Chermside), the Peninsula (Redcliffe), and the Gold Coast (Robina). We have formed and are continuing to develop, partnerships with *physiotherapy* and *exercise* service providers in various locations across Queensland to assist in meeting the needs of people living with MS across Queensland (see our website for more details www.msqld.org.au/how-we-help-2/our-services).

Clinical Psychology

Psychology support is available to customers of MS Queensland. Options include specialist support available through a part time consultant psychologist and referral to external psychology services where a close partnership has been developed with MS Queensland. Prioritisation criteria apply for customers seeking specialist support which is offered through both phone consultations and face to face where possible. All referrals are managed through liaison with the Regional Service Coordinator.

Financial support services – interest free loans and small grants

Financial support can be provided on a means-tested basis and only after community resources are unavailable (government or community). Customers may use interest free loans to help purchase air-conditioners, essential home equipment, home modifications, wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Small grants may be provided to customers who have no other means to pay for necessary equipment or services and who are in extreme hardship.

Advocacy

This is an important component of the work of MS Queensland. Advocacy can occur at either an individual level with staff advocating for better service outcomes alongside customers or at a systemic level where change on a broader level is the focus of our work.

The National Advocates Program is one aspect of systemic advocacy. This program is part of MS Australia's Policy and Advocacy Program. It aims to engage volunteer advocates who are people living with MS. These advocates take part in policy development, network and campaign activity across all levels of government to help ensure that public policies are supportive of the needs of the people with MS and their families.

Community Education

Provided throughout the state to various groups. These include carers, GPs, people with MS, health professionals, community workers and service providers. Information sessions to newly diagnosed customers may be provided by Regional Service Coordinators or the Community Educator. Workshops to promote living well with MS and to manage the symptoms of MS are provided. Check our website for more details by visiting our website at <http://msqld.org.au/how-we-help-you/ms-events-near-me>.

Volunteer Program

We actively recruit and support volunteers, who provide a wide range of assistance to MS Queensland and people with MS.

Residential & Respite Support

MS Queensland has a limited range of residential options which are not intended or able to meet the needs of each and every person with MS, but that provide some opportunities for different styles of accommodation.

At present, residential service options include:

- Supported accommodation - Granston Lodge/Annerley Apartments
- Transitional accommodation - Annerley Apartments
- Respite accommodation – Granston Lodge

Service Access and Eligibility

General

We provide a range of information, therapy, referral and supported accommodation services but must, in an environment of limited resources, prioritise access to these services. The following describes the principles of eligibility of access to MS Queensland's services.

1. 'Eligible people' are those whose MS diagnosis has been validated by a neurologist or medical practitioner.
2. Services are available to customers with a confirmed diagnosis of MS.
3. Should, at a later date, a customer be found not to have MS, then MS Queensland reserves the right to discontinue services.

Information provision is seen as a service applicable to anyone affected by MS - customers, families, members of the public and health providers - and does not require membership or registration.

Accommodation services

The service agreement between MS Queensland and Disability Services offers the following definitions:

The primary target group of the service are adults who have MS and who can benefit from the services provided by MS Queensland.

The needs of the target group include:

- A variety of specialised supports and therapies.
- Specialised support to live in accommodation of own choice.
- Assistance with personal self-care with trained assistance.
- 24 hour supported accommodation with specialised care.

The goal of the service is to achieve the highest possible level of each customers' physical, emotional, social and intellectual functioning.

The objectives of services are to support individuals to achieve their identified goals and meet their assessed needs.

In pursuing these objectives, the organisation will facilitate:

- Detailed personal plans for each person receiving services.
- Accommodation support to meet individual needs of each customer.
- Specialist therapeutic support to meet needs of individuals.

Agreed services listed in this document, and contracted for in the Service Agreement, have to meet published Human Services Quality Standards which cover the following in detail:

1. Governance and Management – sound governance and management systems that maximise outcomes for stakeholders.
2. Service Access - sound eligibility, entry and exit processes facilitate access to services on the basis of relative need and available resources.
3. Responding to Individual need – the assessed needs of the individual are being appropriately addressed and responded to within resource capability.
4. Safety, Wellbeing and Rights – the safety, well-being and human and legal rights of people using services are protected and promoted.
5. Feedback, Complaints and Appeals – effective feedback, complaints and appeals processes that lead to improvements in service delivery.
6. Human Resources – effective human resource management systems, including recruitment, induction and supervisory processes, result in quality service provision.

Personal Plan

The Personal Plan (PP) is a plan developed as an outcome of an assessment process used by MS Queensland. The Regional Service Co-ordinator works with you through this assessment process to assist you to identify MS-related needs, set personal goals and identify follow up to be actioned to assist in addressing these needs. MS is a complex disease which can affect many areas of an individual's life in a unique and personal way. This requires the PP assessment process to cover a wide range of areas of an individual's life. The PP is a tool which remains flexible and open to review as circumstances change.

The purpose of the Personal Plan is to:

- Identify customer needs.
- Establish priorities.
- Set agreed goals and actions.
- Identify opportunities and services in the community to assist customers.

The Regional Service Coordinator then works with you to coordinate services to meet identified needs and evaluate services/program outcomes.

Policies and Procedures

This section of the handbook summarises the processes to be followed in applying for access to services, the criteria that MS Queensland shall use and any relevant termination procedures.

From a customer's perspective this section should cover:

- How does a customer have their MS related needs assessed?
- Who reviews the application and makes the decision?
- What criteria are there for accepting an application?
- Are there any limits to services?
- When does service delivery stop, or when does customer render themselves ineligible?
- How a customer may access services in regional areas – or different access criteria.

Customers may at any time request access to and/or full copies of any MS Queensland policy or procedure including, but not limited to, those summarised below.

Customer records and privacy

Customer records are maintained securely and the personal privacy and right to dignity of the individual are respected. More information can be found in the Customer Records and Privacy policy, summarised below.

Privacy summary

MS Queensland respects your privacy and complies with the Australian Privacy Principles under the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 (as amended) (the Act).

We take seriously how we collect, use, protect and exchange or disclose your personal information (including sensitive and health information).

MS Queensland has developed this Privacy Policy (approved at Board level) as well as detailed procedures that outline how we manage personal information.

The primary purpose for collecting personal information may be one (or more) of the following activities/functions:

- Providing care and services to customers;
- Fundraising and events;
- Promotional activities and information/education services.

Your personal information may also be used for purposes directly related to those listed above, or for another specific purpose for which it was requested and which was advised to you in the collection process.

Personal information will not be disclosed to a third party without your consent except where permitted and required under the Act. All personal information held by MS Queensland will be stored securely and protected from unauthorised access and use.

MS Queensland will take all reasonable steps to ensure information is accurate and up-to-date and encourages volunteers, employees, customers, donors, participants, customers, enquirers, business partners, suppliers and online users to update information by calling MS Qld on (07) 3840 0888 or by emailing MS Qld on mssociety@msqld.org.au.

Customers can update their details by contacting their RSC or the MS Queensland staff member providing the service to them. A request to access your personal information held by MS Queensland can be arranged in the same way.

For more information about our Privacy Policy please visit our website <http://msqld.org.au/about-us/about-our-organisation/our-privacy-policy>.

Advocacy

A customer of MS Queensland may ask someone to be their advocate, or nominated support person, and to act on their behalf or to assist them to best represent their interests. This person may be a family member or friend of the person, or a member of an advocacy service. Advocacy is concerned with genuine major needs, and aims to protect the interests and promote the welfare of the customer.

Responsibilities of an advocate

Being an advocate may mean:

- The advocate's attendance or involvement during assessments and reviews of the customer's PP;
- Communicating or negotiating with MS Queensland on the customer's behalf regarding access to their personal information;
- Lodging a complaint and/or assisting the customer in the resolution process; or
- Any issue related to MS Queensland services

MS Queensland requires customers to complete a "Notification of Support Person/Advocate Form" when appointing or changing their advocate. When a customer changes their advocate, a new nomination form is to be completed.

Any staff member who is asked to be an advocate needs to be aware of the policies and procedures regarding Personal and Professional boundaries (Ch 5.22) and Conflict of Interest Policy (Ch 1.5 Society Manual).

External advocacy agencies are available to customers. RSCs have a list of external advocacy agencies they may recommend depending on the situation e.g. SUFY, QADA, QPPD, Welfare Rights Centre, Caxton Legal Service. These contact details can be found by accessing Disability Services Information Line 1800 177 120 or 137 468 or The National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1800 880 052 or www.fahcsia.gov.au/

Abuse, assault and neglect

It is the policy of MS Queensland to develop, implement and regularly review abuse, assault and neglect prevention and response policies, procedures and strategies. These policies and procedures will recognise and be sensitive to the relevance of gender and culture.

The safety and best interests of the person subjected to abuse, assault or neglect must be a paramount consideration in any response to a report, allegation or suspicion of abuse, assault or neglect, without discrimination of any kind. This will include seeking immediate medical assistance where appropriate and taking all reasonable steps to avoid contact between the person and the alleged offender.

MS Queensland, in line with its duty of care, will respond promptly, appropriately and in accordance with clearly documented procedures when an allegation or report of abuse, assault or neglect has been made.

MS Queensland recognises that it has a responsibility to train management, staff and volunteers in their responsibilities and obligations in preventing, detecting, reporting and responding to allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse, assault or neglect of consumers of services provided by MS Queensland.

All management, staff and volunteers have a duty of care to report all alleged or suspected instances of abuse, assault and neglect in accordance with MS Queensland's documented procedures.

Any concerned person, including but not limited to, the person, another customer, relative, friend or person from the community is able to make a report or an allegation, without fear of retaliation or retribution. MS Queensland will ensure appropriate support is provided to the person making the report.

MS Queensland recognises its responsibility for ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken by management, staff and volunteers to prevent the abuse, assault and neglect of customers of its services.

Critical incident reporting

It is a policy of MS Queensland to ensure that all critical incidents are managed appropriately and securely, and MS Queensland shall:

- Ensure accurate and timely reporting of relevant incidents to senior management of MS Queensland and, where necessary, to Disability Services Queensland (DSQ).
- Enable an effective response to critical incidents and to facilitate ongoing monitoring of such incidents.

The policy describes reporting protocols for critical incidents that may occur within MS Queensland. These protocols are for use in all areas of MS Queensland including incidents relating to customers and staff.

Complaints process

MS Queensland shall ensure that complaints are managed in a timely way, observing procedural fairness and natural justice. MS Queensland shall offer all reasonable support and assistance to the complainant through the process, and maintain records to demonstrate that policy and procedures have been followed. In addition, MS Queensland's complaint mechanism is underpinned by principles of no-blame complaints management and continuous improvement.

Complaints may be:

- Simple – in which the facts are not disputed, and involve problems of a relatively minor nature. These should be actioned immediately or no later than 48 hours.
- General – urgent but more complicated or involve some dispute. These should be actioned immediately or no later than 48 hours and completed within a month.
- Serious – may involve physical or emotional harm, theft or other crime. These should be actioned immediately and maintain priority attention and necessary resources until resolved.

Where a complaint is about an allegation of abuse, assault or neglect customers are referred to Ch 7.8 of the Manual of Standards and Abuse, Assault and Neglect.

No complaint management action will be taken on:

- Matters currently being dealt with by an external agency, court or tribunal.
- Matters previously dealt with by an external agency, court or tribunal.
- Matters that are assessed to be frivolous and/or vexatious or to have been previously closed by MS Queensland or an external agency.
- Matters involving misconduct, non-compliance or a breach of the Act which may be referred to the Misconduct Prevention Unit and/or Compliance Investigation Unit for action.

MS Queensland believes that everyone has the right to access MS Queensland's complaint resolution process and acknowledges that complaints must only be lodged in a responsible manner. ***That is, a complaint must not be vexatious, frivolous or unfounded.***

Customers are encouraged to make complaints, where warranted, and to make disclosures about behaviour and incidents to assist to remedy any complaint. Anonymous complaints shall be accepted by MS Queensland, however complainants are encouraged to identify themselves, to ensure effective resolution.

If the matter raised is a genuine concern the customer who raises it will be protected: MS Queensland will not tolerate any victimisation or harassment of anyone raising a genuine concern. A complaint shall be able to be pursued by a customer without the fear of services being discontinued or any other form of recrimination from MS Queensland.

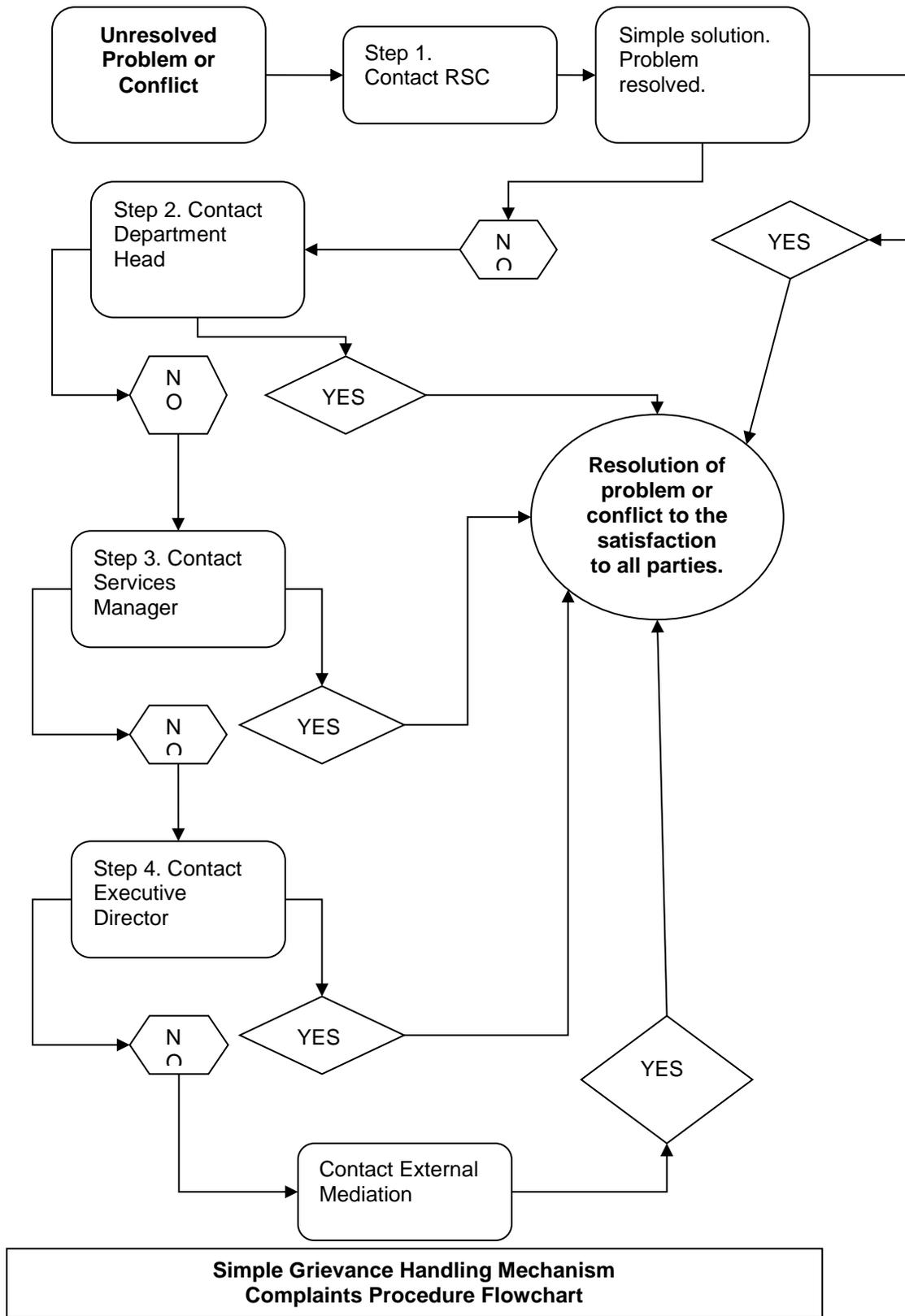
To the best of MS Queensland's ability, a customer's identity shall be kept confidential, however it may not be practical to do so. The customer raising the issue will be advised



that the matter has been resolved, but will not be informed of the outcome if such a disclosure breaches another person's rights to confidentiality.

A complaint is considered finalised when it is reasonably demonstrated that the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice have been applied.

External Mediation services may be accessed through the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1800 880 052.



Code of Conduct

Customers and visitors

Customers, including residents of MS Queensland's facilities, share their (home) environment with other customers, staff/volunteers and visitors. It is imperative that everybody holds the same high levels of respect and upholds the same standards of interpersonal behaviour to maintain a harmonious environment. Staff/volunteers, customers and visitors all have a right to be safe and able to enjoy an agreeable working and living environment.

Staff are directed to perform their duties to the highest possible standards under the HSQF guidelines. This includes managing disputes and grievances under MS Queensland's established complaints and grievances policies and procedures. Staff is also trained to not put themselves, customers and visitors in danger, under general principles of workplace health and safety.

MS Queensland expects customers and visitors to behave appropriately.

Where a visitor is abusive, staff has the authority to require them to behave appropriately, according to this code of conduct, or to leave the premises. Where visitors become violent the staff is required to contact police. All incidents are to be reported internally, using the relevant MS Queensland mechanism.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour

The following are examples of unacceptable behaviour by customers or visitors on MS Queensland premises, or shown towards staff of MS Queensland in any location:

- Excessive noise, e.g. loud or intrusive conversation, music or shouting.
- Threatening or abusive language (this may involve excessive swearing or offensive remarks).
- Harassment or bullying.
- Derogatory, discriminatory or demeaning remarks (this may include racial or sexual comments).
- Malicious allegations relating to members of staff, other customers or visitors.
- Offensive sexual gestures or behaviours.
- Abusing alcohol or drugs on the premises or with staff whilst working.
- Wilful damage to property.
- Threats or threatening behaviour.
- Encouragement or incitement of others to exhibit these behaviours.

Any unlawful or criminal behaviour (including theft, violence, drug dealing etc) will not be tolerated and will be reported immediately and the police called to investigate and take action as applicable.

Our Staff Values

Our staff live by the values of respect, hope, commitment and collaboration. This rings true in all that we do.

RESPECT – People really matter to us and so we show respect in all our relationships and interactions with others.

HOPE – We never give up offering real hope, no matter how long it takes or how challenging the situation.

COMMITMENT - We always do our best for our Customers, our organisation and for each other.

COLLABORATION – We believe the way to achieve great results is by working together.

MS is an unpredictable and frustrating disease – but with knowledge and support it can be managed. We hope you will think of us first when you need that information.

Welcome to MS Queensland's services!

MS Queensland

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