Policy Statement
The purpose of this policy is to recognise that clients are the core reason that Northcott Disability Services exists and therefore have a significant role to play in the planning and review of our services. Northcott, as a person centered organisation, strives to ensure that people with a disability, their carers and families access services and support that respects their individual goals, strengths and needs. We aim to review continually our systems, processes and technologies in joint consultation with clients to ensure they reflect and support person centred approaches.

Overview and Description of the Procedure
Northcott will provide clients, carers and families an opportunity to provide feedback in a variety of ways, formally and informally, about a broad range of topics including:

- Individual issues that affect them
- The program or services they receive
- Broad issues surrounding Northcott’s planning, development, policy and procedures development and broad issues of interest.

Northcott recognises that our clients have different cultural considerations, learning styles and varied access requirements. We are committed to ensuring service users have the opportunity to participate in our consultation processes by making it as accessible as possible through:

1. Presenting information in plain English
2. Ensuring access to information is via a diverse range of methods, e.g. DVDs, CDs, audio methods, using story books, comics or other assistive technologies or social networking processes as appropriate.
3. Providing a range of consultation methods, e.g. face-to-face, telephone, Northcott website, Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites as appropriate.

4. Ensuring access to interpreters and translated materials for clients from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds including people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

5. Engaging Auslan interpreters as required.

Responsibility
The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the final review and approval of this policy and procedure and associated documents and for ensuring client feedback is incorporated into Northcott’s Strategic Planning processes.

Level 4 Managers are responsible for reviewing this policy and procedure and developing all related documentation, i.e. procedures and forms for their respective services. Level 4 Managers are also responsible for ensuring there is regular monthly reporting on client consultation processes that have occurred.

All employees are responsible for complying with this policy and procedure.

Definitions:
Client: Person with a Disability, their family, carers or significant others.

Person Centred Approach: The rights of people with a disability, and their families and carers, to direct their lives are respected. A person with a disability and their families and carers are heard and supported to exercise choice and to direct supports and service arrangements.

Procedure Details
The process for consulting clients, their carers and families is demonstrated through, although not limited to, the following methods:

Northcott Wide Consultation Processes include:
- Organisational Client Satisfaction Survey (Voice Survey)
- Northcott Website
- Northcott Facebook page
- Northcott’s formal Complaints and Feedback Process
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- Client Ambassadors
- Person Centred Client Champions who are involved in the development of person centred approaches throughout Northcott
- Client involvement in Northcott staff recruitment process
- Individual Service or Program Evaluations
- CEO Strategic briefings for clients
- Informal opportunities to approach any Northcott staff member and offer feedback
- Formal client participation in Northcott’s strategic planning

Client Programs Consultation Planning for the Year

All Northcott services or offices (whichever is more appropriate) should develop annual client consultation plans using the Annual Client Consultation Plan Template, which reflect the mechanisms they will use to gather client feedback. In addition to the organisational feedback processes listed prior, the following are further examples of ways client feedback may be sought:

- **Client Consultative Committee** – All Northcott offices should seek to establish a Client Consultative Committee which looks at Northcott strategic processes and addresses issues broadly rather than program specific. Committees may meet on a negotiated basis to consult about future plans and services, policies and procedure development and/or any other issues as identified by clients and staff. Where these are run, formal Terms of Reference should be established using the Terms of Reference Template.

- **Client Consultation Forum** – This may involve inviting clients to a once a year meeting for example to consult about something specific and/or to invite general feedback.

- **Client representation on staff interview panels** – this is encouraged for all positions in which the role will require working directly with clients. Representation on other interview panels at the discretion of the relevant manager. Managers are to ensure that the interview process and expectations of the client are clearly communicated to them and written material is available in an accessible format. Please refer to section on Compensation for Client Participation for further detail regarding remuneration.

- **Client Newsletters** – These can be useful for offering information to clients and requesting feedback.

- **Annual Review/Planning session** – Where possible and relevant a program may invite clients to an annual review/planning session with staff. Delivery methods can be flexible and may include Information Nights or Open Days.
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- **Service Reviews** – These may happen annually or every few years to gather feedback about progress. Examples of this may be through survey mail outs and/or phone surveys to a sample group of clients. It is important to consider that the person gathering the information should ideally be someone who does not provide direct service to the client in order to enable unbiased feedback. They should also have expertise in survey design and analysis. Where possible, Reply Paid envelopes may be used. Please note that any service that undertakes a review should develop a report, which is then forwarded to the Quality Review Committee and then archived via the Northcott librarian.

- **Individual Planning Process** – an ongoing opportunity for clients to offer feedback about their programs and Northcott in general.

- **Exit Surveys** – These are encouraged for clients who leave the service and are useful in gathering feedback about what did and did not work well.

**Corporate Services**

Northcott non-client programs will seek feedback from clients, their carers and families in relation to all relevant matters. This may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Policies and procedures
- Client events
- Media/communication
- Selection and renovation of buildings which will house client programs

Feedback may be sought in a variety of ways, including those outlined in the client programs section as well as representation on Northcott internal committees. Feedback should be incorporated into the monthly Board Report as required.

**Compensation for Client Participation on Northcott Committees**

Northcott can support clients by:

- Providing an allowance for expenses of $100 for each meeting; this covers meeting attendance, any reading related to meeting, time spent on actions arising from meeting, phone consultations, travelling time.
- Providing Cab charges, transport fares, or an allocated parking spot.
- Providing or arranging for personal care support during the time required to travel and attend the committee meeting.
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- Providing or arranging for personal care support for people who are cared for by the committee member for the duration of travel and attendance at the meeting.
- Ensuring that all written material is available in an accessible format.

Compensation for Clients who assist with Interview Panels, Working Groups and run Staff Training

Northcott can support clients by:

- Providing an allowance for expenses of $50 for half a day and $100 for a full day.
- Providing Cab charges, transport fares or an allocated parking spot.
- Ensuring that all written material is available in an accessible format.

Managers are encouraged to factor in anticipated client consultation expenses when developing service budgets each year under the line item “Volunteer Expense Reimbursement”.

Reporting of Client Feedback

- All managers are responsible for ensuring client feedback is taken seriously and recorded appropriately.
- Where feedback is deemed to be a complaint, staff are to follow the Complaints Rights and Suggestions Policy and Procedure.
- Where required, staff must follow Northcott’s Incident Management process and the Feedback and Complaints Handling process.
- Other important issues identified should be fed back to the relevant Level 3 Manager within two working days who will communicate further as appropriate.
- Level 4 Managers are required to complete the Client Consultation Report each month S:\Client Programs\Client consultation. The Quality Review Committee will reference this information throughout the year.
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Legislation & Standards Compliance
National Disability Standards
NSW Disability Services Act 1993
NSW Disability Service Standards
ACT Human Rights Act 2004
Ethnic Affairs Policy Directions, Service Delivery to People from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds

Review and Evaluation of Procedures
This policy and procedure will be reviewed within the framework of Northcott’s quality assurance and continuous improvement process. Process performance and procedure effectiveness will be measured against Northcott’s standards, objectives, and practices as part of a scheduled review of the policy and procedure and related documents based on the level of risk to clients and the organisation.

Policies and Procedures and related documentation will be evaluated based on whether they are meeting the overarching standards of the organisation in regards to quality, best practice, consistency, efficiency and effectiveness affecting service provision and organisational capacity.

If current forms of consultation are indicating a poor response, the service must then look at alternate ways to engage clients.

Related References
www.northcott.com.au
http://ogden.basic-english.org/
http://www.online-utility.org/english/simple_basic_helper.jsp

Authorised by: ............................................
Kerry Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer
Document Details and History

Add new version details at each change, review or rewrite of this document.

## Document History

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