

# Complaints Management Policy

POLICY

## Policy statement

- (1) The Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (the Department) places a high value on feedback from its clients, customers, staff and the public generally and encourages feedback about how we conduct our business.
- (2) The Department is committed to ensuring that feedback by way of complaints about its actions, decisions, or the conduct of its officers, are dealt with in a responsive, confidential, fair and efficient manner.
- (3) The Department:
  - takes a client focused approach to dealing with complaints about our services
  - accepts complaints about our services orally or in writing
  - uses information from complaints to improve our business processes.
- (4) In support of the Department's commitment to an effective complaints management process, all officers are to ensure that complainants suffer no reprisals or detriment for making a complaint in accordance with this policy.
- (5) Resolution and compromise are to be attempted wherever possible. Any remedies considered should be fair to both the client and the Department. Remedies should, as far as possible, aim to restore a legitimate client to the position they would have been in had the complaint not been necessary. Remedies will be appropriate to the situation/loss suffered and should be consistent across similar situations.

## Scope

- (2.1) This policy applies to all departmental products, services or actions and the conduct of officers or representatives of the Department.
- (2.2) This policy does not replace or interfere with legislation or policy dealing with complaints about Privacy, Right to Information, staff grievances, public interest disclosures, corrupt conduct or maladministration, criminal conduct or illegality, or matters specifically dealt with under legislative or appeal processes.

- (2.3) The following are not classified as complaints:
- enquiries and requests for information
  - service requests
  - input and feedback provided as a result of consultation processes.
- (2.4) This complaints management policy aligns with the whole of Government priority for responsive government and is in compliance with applicable Government policy and legislation.

*Note: Staff to read this policy in conjunction with Complaints Management Procedure D12/110667.*

## Purpose and intended outcomes

### Complaints management model

- (3.1) Complaints are accepted verbally and in writing through a variety of channels including face-to-face, telephone, letter, email and facsimile. Where possible, the department aims to resolve complaints at the frontline (Stage 1).
- (3.2) However, where a complaint is of a more serious nature, it will be referred directly to a senior officer (Stage 2) for action and resolution.
- (3.3) Where action has been taken at the frontline to investigate a complaint and the complaint remains unresolved, it will be referred to another officer for review and action (Stage 2).
- (3.4) The complainant, nature, location, date and outcome of complaints will be recorded in a Departmental system.
- (3.5) If a client remains dissatisfied after a complaint has been dealt with at Stage 2, further avenues of appeal may be available, including the Queensland Ombudsman. These will be advised to the complainant.
- (3.6) Where a review is to be conducted by a person other than the original decision-maker, the reviewer will be of equal classification, or senior to, the original decision-maker.
- (3.7) A complaint about a decision or action of the Department that is received more than one year after the complainant was notified of that decision or action, will be reviewed only if the authorised reviewing officer considers that exceptional circumstances exist.

(3.8) The following table shows the features of the Department’s system of review.

Frontline complaints handling (stage 1)	Complex complaints or internal review of frontline complaints (Stage 2)	External review
Officer at the first point of contact resolves less serious complaints where possible, in consultation with their supervisor if necessary.	A more senior officer or designated complaints review officer will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review complaints unresolved at the frontline (Stage 1)</li> <li>• investigate serious and complex complaints referred directly from the frontline.</li> </ul>	Where the complaint remains unresolved, the Department advises the complainant of review and appeal options such as Queensland Ombudsman and/or other external agency.
Details are logged for later analysis.	Where there is a complaint about investigation outcomes, a more senior officer to the original decision-maker must review the complaint in accordance with the procedure document.	
Unresolved complaints or more complaints are referred to Stage 2.		
Complaints regarding the investigation outcomes, or the process used in handling a Stage 1 complaint are referred to Stage 2.		

## Complaints management principles

In keeping with Government policy and legislation and the Australian Standard ISO10002:2006 Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations, complaints will be managed according to the principles of:

- visibility and access
- responsiveness
- assessment and action
- feedback
- monitoring and effectiveness.

### (3.9) Visibility and access

(3.9.1) Relevant policies and procedures are available on the departmental internet and intranet sites.

(3.9.2) The Department will provide reasonable assistance to any person wishing to make a complaint. Avenues for assistance will also be available to allow any person with special needs, those from non-English speaking backgrounds and those unable to lodge a complaint in writing.

**(3.10) Responsiveness**

- (3.10.1) Complaints are often sensitive and complex. They may require detailed investigation and analysis. Timeframes for the management of complaints are to be reasonable and appropriate. Complainants will be provided with progress reports where appropriate.
- (3.10.2) Departmental employees handling complaints will be provided with information, training and resources through the Departmental intranet (myFocus), induction and learning and development programs.

**(3.11) Assessment and action**

- (3.11.1) Upon receiving a complaint, reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that the complaint is properly understood and clarification or further information has been sought where required and possible.
- (3.11.2) Complaints are assessed, recorded and reported by the business area responsible for the policy, product or service relevant to the complaint. Where a complaint is about the service provided by an employee, the complaint is assessed and investigated by the appropriate supervisor/manager.
- (3.11.3) Review officers have the authority to re-make decisions or provide alternate remedies within the policy.
- (3.11.4) In any instance where the Department is unable or cannot address the complaint, where possible, the complaint will be referred to the appropriate external agency with the consent of the complainant.
- (3.11.5) Anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits.

**(3.12) Feedback**

- (3.12.1) Clients will be advised of outcomes as soon as possible after a decision is made and will be provided with reasons for this decision.
- (3.12.2) Clients will be advised of any available internal review options and any statutory external appeal options, where applicable.
- (3.12.3) Opportunities for business improvement resulting from a complaint will be referred to the responsible area and a senior officer will have responsibility for any action.

**(3.13) Monitoring effectiveness**

- (3.13.1) The complaints management system:
- must meet all statutory, policy and reporting requirements
  - will identify complaint trends
  - will monitor the time taken to resolve complaints.
- (3.13.2) Reports on the volume, trends and issues associated with complaints made to the Department are provided on a quarterly basis to the relevant committee within the Departmental governance framework.

## Responsibilities

- (4.1) The Manager, Ethics, Integrity and Risk, Department of State Development is responsible for the management and administration of this policy. The Department has a Service Level Agreement with the Department of State Development under which this service is provided.

## Delegations

(5.1) Refer to the Department's People and Performance Delegations Manual.

## Review

(6.1) This policy will be reviewed annually for continuing accuracy and currency or where there is material change in a relevant Government Policy or other instrument.

## Definitions

Term	Definition
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction, orally or in writing, about the products, policies, services or actions of the Department and the associated conduct of officers, or representatives of the Department.
Complainant	The person who makes a complaint.
Input and feedback provided as a result of consultation processes	Feedback received in response to a formal process where the Department has invited comment.
Public interest disclosures	Has the same meaning as in the <a href="#">Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010</a> .
Corrupt conduct	As per the <a href="#">Crime and Corruption Act 2001</a> . Corrupt conduct means conduct of a person, regardless of whether the person holds or held an appointment, that- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) adversely affects, or could adversely affect, directly or indirectly, the performance of functions or the exercise of powers of-               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. a unit of public administration; or</li> <li>ii. a person holding an appointment; and</li> </ol> </li> <li>b) results, or could result, directly or indirectly, in the performance of functions or the exercise of powers mentioned in paragraph (a) in a way that –               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. is not honest or is not impartial; or</li> <li>ii. involves a breach of the trust placed in a person holding an appointment, either knowingly or recklessly; or</li> <li>iii. involves a misuse of information or material acquired in or in connection with the performance of functions or the exercise of powers of a person holding an appointment; and</li> </ol> </li> <li>c) is engaged in for the purpose of providing a benefit to the person or another person or causing a detriment to another person; and</li> <li>d) would, if proved, be-               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. a criminal offence; or</li> <li>ii. a disciplinary breach providing reasonable grounds for terminating the person's services, if the person is or were the holder of an appointment.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## Additional information

### Related policies and reference documents

- Complaints Management Procedure D12/110667
- [Crime and Corruption Act 2001](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010](#)
- [Public Service Act 2008](#)
- [Public Sector Ethics Act 1994](#)
- Australian Standard ISO10002-2006 Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations
- [Guide to Developing Effective Complaints Management Policies and Procedures – Queensland Ombudsman, 2006](#)
- [Complaints Matter – A Review of the Complaints Management Systems of Queensland Government agencies, Queensland Ombudsman, February 2010](#)

## Version control

Version number	Date of issue	Amendment details	Amended by
1.1	01/11/2012	Updated department name and template	Carly Alder
1.2	01/07/2014	Updated to clarify coverage of Department of Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience under Service Level Agreement with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, departmental template, methods of complaint submission and references to the updated <i>Crime and Corruption Act 2001</i> .	Vanessa Franks
1.3	28/04/2015	Updated to reflect new departmental name and update title and contact details for Manager Ethics, Integrity (formerly Manager Governance) and Risk and People and Performance (formerly Human Resources).	Jim Meyers

This document is uncontrolled when printed.