

# Complaints Management Policy

## Policy statement

The Department of State Development (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.

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.

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.

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.

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

This policy applies to all departmental products, services or actions and the conduct of officers or representatives of the department.

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 other legislative or appeal processes.

The following are not classified as complaints:

- enquiries and requests for information
- service requests
- input and feedback provided as a result of consultation processes.

This complaints management policy is in compliance with section 219A of the *Public Service Act 2008* and the Australian Standard ISO10002:2006 *Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations*.

## Purpose and intended outcomes

### Complaints management model

Complaints are accepted verbally and in writing through a variety of channels, including face-to-face, telephone, letter, e-mail, facsimile or internet. Where possible, the department aims to resolve complaints at the frontline (Stage 1).

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.

The complainant, nature, location, date and outcome of complaints will be recorded in a departmental system.

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, and these will be advised to the complainant.

Where a review is to be conducted by a person other than the original decision-maker, the reviewer will be of equivalent classification, or senior to, the original decision-maker.

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.

The following table shows the features of the department's system of review:

<b>Frontline complaints handling (Stage 1)</b>	<b>Complex complaints or internal review of frontline complaints (Stage 2)</b>	<b>External review</b>
<p>Officer at the first point of contact resolves less serious complaints where possible, in consultation with the officer's supervisor if necessary.</p> <p>Details are logged for later analysis.</p> <p>Unresolved complaints or more complex complaints are referred to Stage 2.</p> <p>Complaints regarding the investigation outcomes, or the process used in handling a Stage 1 complaint are referred to Stage 2.</p>	<p>A more senior officer or designated complaints review officer will:</p> <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> <p>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.</p>	<p>Where the complaint remains unresolved, the department advises the complainant of review and appeal options such as Queensland Ombudsman and/or other external agency.</p>

# Complaints management principles

Complaints are managed according to the principles of:

- **Visibility**—relevant policies and procedures are available on the departmental internet and intranet sites.
- **Access**—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.
- **Responsiveness**—complaints will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt and a response will generally be provided within 15 working days. A response to urgent matters will generally be provided within five working days. For more complex matters requiring detailed investigation and analysis, complainants will be provided with progress reports where appropriate.

## Assessment and action

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.

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.

Review officers have the authority to re-make decisions or provide alternate remedies within the policy.

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.

Anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits.

## Feedback

Clients will be advised of outcomes as soon as possible after a decision is made, and will be provided with reasons for this decision.

Clients will be advised of any available internal review options and any statutory external appeal options, where applicable.

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.

## Monitoring effectiveness

The complaints management system must:

- meet all statutory, policy and reporting requirements
- identify complaint trends
- monitor the time taken to resolve complaints.

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.

In accordance with section 219A (3) of the *Public Service Act 2008*, the department will publish information about customer complaints for the previous financial period on its website by 30 September after the financial year.

## Definitions

<b>Complaint</b>	An expression of dissatisfaction, orally or in writing, about the products, policies, services or actions of the department and/or the associated conduct of officers, or representatives of the department.
<b>Complainant</b>	The person who makes a complaint.
<b>Input and feedback provided as a result of consultation processes</b>	Feedback received in response to a formal process where the department has invited comment.
<b>Public interest disclosures</b>	As defined under the <a href="#">Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010</a> .

## Additional information

- [Crime and Corruption Act 2001](#)
- [Public Service Act 2008](#)
- [Public Sector Ethics Act 1994](#)
- [Queensland Ombudsman's website](#)

## Responsibilities

The Director, Ethics, Integrity and Risk is responsible for the management and administration of this policy.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.