

# Customer complaints procedure

## Purpose

The Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (the department) is committed to ensuring complaints made about its actions, decisions or the conduct of its officers are dealt with in a responsive, confidential, and objective manner, ensuring no detriment to the complainant.

This procedure describes the processes for customer complaints and should be read in conjunction with the department's Complaints management policy.

## Scope

This procedure applies to:

- all departmental products, services, decisions or actions
- the conduct of departmental officers and representatives of the department.

For this procedure, the following are not classified as complaints:

- questions, enquiries and requests for information or action
- feedback obtained during public consultation processes
- feedback received about matters outside the direct responsibility of the department
- feedback received about another agency or organisation
- complaints that are primarily contractual disputes.

This procedure does not modify or revoke any legislative requirements or appeal processes that apply to managing particular types of complaints, such as:

- privacy complaints,
- complaints about right to information (for example, dissatisfaction with an access or amendment application made under the *Right to Information Act 2009* or *Information Privacy Act 2009*),
- complaints alleging criminal conduct, corrupt conduct,
- public interest disclosures,
- complaints about the conduct and performance of councillors, or
- complaints made under the *Industrial Relations Act 2016*.

## Definitions

See **Appendix A** for definitions of key terms referred to in this procedure.

# Procedure

## Making a complaint

Customer complaints are accepted both verbally and in writing through a variety of channels, including face to face, telephone, letter, email, facsimile or internet via the online form).

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. Refer to the following table for further information.

Complaint stage	Process
<b>Stage 1 (Frontline complaints)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Officers at the first point of contact resolve less serious complaints, where possible, in consultation with their supervisor.</li><li>• Details of complaints are to be sent to the Ethics and Governance unit for future analysis.</li><li>• If a complaint is unresolved, or assessed as more complex, it will be referred to Stage 2.</li><li>• If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may request an internal review. If an internal review is requested, it is to be referred to Stage 2.</li><li>• Complaints received about a customer complaint outcome or the process used in dealing with a Stage 1 complaint, will be referred to Stage 2.</li></ul>
<b>Stage 2 (Complex complaints and/or Internal Review)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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) upon request by the complainant for an internal review, or</li><li>◦ investigate serious and complex complaints referred directly from the frontline</li></ul></li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Where a review is to be conducted by a person other than the original decision-maker, the reviewer must be of equivalent or more senior classification to the original decision-maker.</li></ul> <p><i>Note: A complaint about a stage 1 decision or action of the department, received more than one year after the complainant was notified of the decision or action, is reviewed only if the authorised reviewing officer considers that exceptional circumstances exist.</i></p>
<b>External review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where the complaint remains unresolved after stage 2, the department will advise the complainant of relevant review and appeal options such as Queensland Ombudsman and/or other external agencies.</li></ul>

## 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 will be sought if necessary and possible.

Complaints are assessed, managed and responded to 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 relevant supervisor/manager.

The department maintains a register of the following information (which is managed by the Ethics and Governance unit):

- complainant's name,
- the nature of the complaint, where and when it occurred, and
- the complaint outcome is recorded by the department
- time taken to resolve the complaint.

All documents associated with complaints are to be provided to the Ethics and Governance Unit for recording and reporting purposes.

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.

Review officers may re-make decisions or provide remedies to complainants within the scope of the officers' delegated authority.

If the department is unable or cannot address the complaint, where possible, it may be referred to the appropriate external agency (such as the Queensland Ombudsman) with the consent of the complainant.

Anonymous complaints are treated on merit.

## Feedback

Complainants are to be advised of the outcomes of their complaints as soon as possible and provided with reasons for decisions.

Complainants are to be advised of any available internal review options, and any statutory or external appeal options, where applicable.

If the result of a complaint presents an opportunity for the department to improve processes or operations it will be referred to the relevant area and a senior officer will have responsibility for the implementation of necessary actions.

## Monitoring effectiveness

The department's 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 department complaints are provided on a quarterly basis to the relevant committee within the department's governance framework.

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

## Reference documents

- [Public Service Act 2008](#)
- Standards Australia: AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations

## Related documents

- [Complaints management policy](#)

## Document control

<b>Document owner</b>		Director, Ethics and Governance Corporate Services, Business Solutions and Partnerships	
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2.0	28/08/2017	Senior Complaints Officer, Ethics and Governance	A/Executive Director Corporate Services, DILGP
	7/09/2017		Deputy Director-General Business Solutions and Partnerships, DSDMIP
2.1	30/08/2018	Principal Governance Officer, Ethics and Governance	Executive Director Corporate Services, DSDMIP

## Appendix A – Definitions

The key terms referred to in this procedure are as follows:

Term	Definition
Complaint	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.
Complainant	The person who makes the complaint.
Customer complaint	A complaint about a product, service or action (or inaction) of the department, or its staff. Customer complaints include complaints about any of the following— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a decision made, or a failure to make a decision, by an employee</li> <li>• an act, or failure to act, of the department</li> <li>• the formulation of a proposal or intention by the department</li> <li>• the making of a recommendation by the department</li> <li>• the customer service provided by an employee of the department.</li> </ul>
Privacy complaint	A complaint made by a person about the department's handling of their personal information in a manner that has breached the department's obligations under the <i>Information Privacy Act 2009</i> (IP Act) to comply with the privacy principles and/or conditions attached to a public interest approval granted under section 157 of the IP Act.
Public consultation	A formal process where the department has invited comment.
Public interest disclosure (PID)	A public interest disclosure is a disclosure about wrongdoing in the public sector that serves the public interest. For an allegation to be considered a public interest disclosure under the <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010</i> (the PID Act) it must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public interest information about serious wrongdoing or danger</li> <li>• an appropriate disclosure</li> <li>• made to a proper authority.</li> </ul>