

# Customer complaints procedure

## Purpose

The Department of State Development (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, and objective manner, ensuring no detriment to the complainant. This procedure is to 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 the purpose of 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 replace, modify or revoke any legislative requirements or appeal processes that apply to the management of particular types of complaints (e.g. privacy complaints, right to information, criminal conduct, corrupt conduct, public interest disclosures, complaints about the conduct and performance of councillors and complaints under the *Industrial Relations Act 2016*).

## Definitions

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

## Procedure

### Making a complaint

Complaints are accepted verbally and in writing through a variety of channels, including face to face, telephone, letter, email, 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 their 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>

## 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 may be referred to the appropriate external agency with the consent of the complainant. Anonymous complaints will be treated on merit.

## 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 the 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 organizations

## Related documents

- Complaints management policy

## Document control

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2.0	28/08/2017	Gwen Rose, Senior Complaints Officer, Ethics and Governance	Amanda White, A/Executive Director, Corporate
	7/09/2017		Michael McKee, Deputy Director- General, Business Solutions and Partnerships

## Appendix A – Definitions

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

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
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 a 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>
Public consultation	A formal process where the department has invited comment.
Public interest disclosure (PID)	An appropriate disclosure of public interest information (such as a report of corrupt conduct, reprisal, maladministration that affects a person's interests in a substantial and specific way, substantial misuse of public resources, substantial and specific: danger to public health and safety the environment) made to a proper authority.