



Customer complaints procedure

Purpose

The Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs (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.

Services in relation to customer complaints are provided to the department by the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (DSDMIP) under a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Scope

This procedure applies to:

- all departmental products, services, decisions or actions
- all employees of the department and non-employees including contractors, consultants and volunteers whose actions represent 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.

Complaints about the conduct of a local government councillor are not managed under this procedure and should be directed to the [Office of the Independent Assessor](#).

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 made under the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#)
- 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 or corrupt conduct
- public interest disclosures as made under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010](#)
- 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
Stage 1 (Frontline complaints)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers at the first point of contact resolve less serious complaints, where possible, in consultation with their supervisor. Details of complaints are to be sent to the Ethics unit for future analysis. If a complaint is unresolved, or assessed as more complex, it will be referred to Stage 2. 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. Complaints received about a customer complaint outcome or the process used in dealing with a Stage 1 complaint, will be referred to Stage 2.
Stage 2 (Complex complaints and/or Internal Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A more senior officer or designated complaints review officer will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review complaints unresolved at the frontline (stage 1) upon request by the complainant for an internal review, or investigate serious and complex complaints referred directly from the frontline. 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. 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. <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>
Stage 3 (External Review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.

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.



*Note: The department has a zero tolerance of all forms of domestic and family violence, as well as all forms of harassment and discrimination. Any complaint that alleges any form of physical assault, sexual assault or other criminal behaviour is to be referred to the **Ethics** unit. Following consideration by the delegate, such complaints may be referred to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) for investigation or other necessary action. The department takes these matters seriously and will facilitate any resulting disciplinary investigations in consultation with the QPS.*

With the exception of the above, 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 unit):

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

All documents associated with complaints are to be provided to the **Ethics** 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 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 departmental complaints are provided on a monthly basis to the Director-General in accordance with 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 each financial year.

Reference documents

- [*Crime and Corruption Act 2001*](#)
- [*Industrial Relations Act 2016*](#)
- [*Information Privacy Act 2009*](#)
- [*Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*](#)
- [*Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*](#)
- [*Public Service Act 2008*](#)
- [*Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service*](#)
- Standards Australia: [*AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*](#)
- [*Queensland Ombudsman – Complaints management guidance*](#)
- [*Queensland Ombudsman – Managing unreasonable complainant conduct*](#)

Related documents

- [*Complaints management policy*](#)
- [*Managing employee complaints procedure*](#)
- Privacy complaint procedure
- [*Complaints about the Director-General procedure*](#)
- Corrupt conduct procedure
- [*Public interest disclosure procedure*](#)

Document control

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1.0	14/11/2019	Update to branding and minor changes	Senior Ethics Advisor, Ethics and HR	Deputy Director-General, Strategy, Governance and Engagement



Appendix A – Definitions

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

Term	Definition
Complainant	The person who makes a complaint
Corrupt Conduct	As defined under section 15 of the <i>Crime and Corruption Act 2001</i>
Customer Complaint	As defined under section 219A of the <i>Public Service Act 2008</i>