

# COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

## 1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides a framework for the management of complaints within the Department of Public Works. The policy aims to identify and eliminate causes of complaints and improve service and organisational performance.

This policy applies to all complaints about the service or actions of the Department or its staff, other than those complaints and complaint management processes that are regulated by legislation, policies or systems, such as:

- reports of suspected official misconduct and public interest disclosures that are dealt with under the Department's [Management of Official Misconduct and Public Interest Disclosures Policy](#), the [Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 \(Qld\)](#) and the [Whistleblowers Protection Act 1994 \(Qld\)](#)
- staff grievances and/or conflict, including workplace harassment, that are dealt with under the Department's [Grievance Resolution Policy](#)
- complaints concerning privacy breaches under the [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)
- complaints that relate to the application, registration, review, sanction and performance reporting processes dealt with under the Department's [Prequalification \(PQC\) System for Building Industry Consultants and Contractors](#)
- complaints that are primarily contractual in nature and which:
  - do not involve alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct and
  - are responded to in a contractual context
- complaints and concerns raised by suppliers or members of the public about the purchasing activities of other government agencies that are dealt with under the [State Procurement Policy](#)
- staff appeals that are dealt with under [Appeals \(PSC Directive 6/08\)](#).

To make it clear, this policy does not give a complainant an additional avenue of complaint. For example a complaint that has been dealt with under the Department's Grievance Policy will not be dealt with under this policy.

## 2 POLICY STATEMENT

Effective complaints management is fundamental to the provision of quality service and provides a mechanism for obtaining feedback from clients, resolving disputes and reforming policies and procedures.

The Department of Public Works is committed to effectively handling complaints promptly and professionally in accordance with [Complaints Management Systems \(PSC Directive 13/06\)](#), including anonymous complaints. The Department will ensure that:

- complaints will be treated seriously, and assessed in a timely manner in accordance with the Complaints Management Procedure
- the level of investigation will be commensurate with the seriousness, frequency and consequences of a complaint
- personal information which is collected through complaints and in the course of investigating and taking action in response to complaints will be managed in

accordance with the 11 Information Privacy Principles in the [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)

- attempts will be made to resolve complaints within the local area in which they originate, to the greatest extent practical
- the Department will handle complaints in a way that is culturally appropriate and responsive to any special needs of all people involved
- reasonable assistance will be provided to complainants
- access to the complaints handling process will be free of charge to complainants
- people will not be victimised for making complaints or for being witnesses where complaints are investigated
- a staff member who is the subject of a complaint will be afforded natural justice
- complainants will be given timely feedback about their complaint.

## 2.1 Complaint levels

Complaints received by the Department may be addressed at one of three levels

### Level 1

<b>Definition</b>	Level 1 complaints are generally straightforward with minimal potential to impact on a Departmental Area. Such complaints are generally able to be resolved at the point of service or may require some assessment and/or investigation.
<b>Examples</b>	Incorrect invoice has been sent out repeatedly, tradesperson did not turn up to undertake a job despite repeated requests, documents were printed without a client proof being obtained, repeated failure to respond to a request for service etc.
<b>How complaint is to be received</b>	These complaints may be received verbally or in writing.
<b>Who is to deal with the complaint</b>	Level 1 complaints should be dealt with by staff within the Departmental Area.
<b>Escalation</b>	If a Level 1 complaint is unable to be resolved by frontline staff or local managers or directors, the complaint may be referred to the head of the Departmental Area (e.g. General Manager, Executive Director, Director or equivalent) as a Level 2 complaint.

### Level 2

<b>Definition</b>	Level 2 complaints are generally of a more complex or serious nature and have the potential to impact negatively on a Departmental Area. Such complaints will require assessment and/or investigation.
<b>Examples</b>	Industry, customer or client dissatisfied with an element of departmental operations, program expenditure/progress is unsatisfactory, etc.
<b>How complaint is to be received</b>	These complaints should be submitted in writing.
<b>Who is to deal with the complaint</b>	Level 2 complaints should be dealt with by the head of the relevant Departmental Area (e.g. General Manager, Executive Director, Director or equivalent), or delegate.
<b>Escalation</b>	If a Level 2 complaint is unable to be resolved by the head of the Departmental Area it should be reviewed by the Associate Director-General, the Deputy Directors-General, or the Assistant Directors-General (as relevant) before it is referred to the Office of the Director-General as a Level 3 complaint.

### Level 3

<b>Definition</b>	Level 3 complaints are generally complex and significant and have the potential to impact negatively on the Department and/or cause lasting detriment. Such complaints will require comprehensive assessment and/or investigation.
<b>Examples</b>	Departmental action has threatened the operations or viability of a private business, or other government department.
<b>How complaint is to be received</b>	These complaints should be submitted in writing.
<b>Who is to deal with the complaint</b>	Level 3 complaints should be dealt with by the Office of the Director-General or the Integrity Service Unit, Corporate and Executive Services.

## 2.2 Complaints the Department will not action

The Department will not accept complaints in respect to matters already dealt with or currently being dealt with by the Department, another Department or agency, court or tribunal; matters that are impractical to investigate; and matters that appear to concern frivolous matters or to have been given or made vexatiously.

## 2.3 Communication, training and awareness

Information on how to make a complaint is available on the Department's Internet and Intranet and at departmental office locations. Staff involved in managing or coordinating complaints management are to receive information and training on the Department's complaints management process as required.

## 2.4 Electronic complaints register

Departmental Areas must maintain an electronic record of all Level 1 and 2 complaints including the data contained in Attachment 2, as a minimum, with the exception of the Directorates of Corporate and Executive Services. Level 1 and 2 complaints received by Directorates of Corporate and Executive Services are to be recorded centrally by the Office of the Assistant Director-General, Corporate and Executive Services.

The Integrity Services Unit, Corporate and Executive Services will maintain an electronic record of all Level 3 complaints.

## 2.5 Internal review of complaint outcomes

If a complainant is dissatisfied with how their complaint has been dealt with, they can request that their complaint be reviewed by the Department. Unless the seriousness of the complaint has changed, a review would normally be undertaken by a nominated staff member at the same Level and the complaint would not be escalated.

## 2.6 External review of complaint outcomes

If a complainant is dissatisfied with any action taken by the Department in relation to a complaint, and after they have exhausted all available avenues of review within the Department, they can request that the Department's decision be reviewed by the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman (tel. 3005 7000, toll-free 1800 068 908, e-mail [ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au)).

## 2.7 Complaint audits

The complaints management process will be included for assessment in the annual compliance cycle.

## 3 RESPONSIBILITIES

***Heads of the Departmental Areas (e.g. General Managers, Executive Directors, Directors and equivalents)*** are responsible for:

- ensuring complaints in their areas are dealt with fairly, impartially and in a timely manner
- ensuring relevant staff are adequately trained to deal with complaints
- maintaining and analysing complaints data to improve complaints management processes
- referring all significant (Level 3) complaints to the Office of the Director-General.

***The Integrity Services Unit, Corporate and Executive Services*** is responsible for:

- the management and review of the complaints management policy and procedure
- the management of level 3 complaints as directed by the Director-General
- the quarterly reporting of level 3 complaints to the Corporate Governance Board.

## 4 DELEGATIONS

Not applicable

## 5 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Each quarter the executive management teams of Departmental Areas must formally review the number and nature of Level 1 and 2 complaints, the time taken to resolve complaints and any local trends or issues. A suggested template for quarterly reporting is provided in the Complaints Management Procedure.

The Integrity Services Unit will formally review the number and nature of Level 1 and 2 complaints received by Directorates of Corporate and Executive Services and provide quarterly reports to the Assistant Director-General, Corporate and Executive Services.

The Integrity Services Unit will also coordinate quarterly reporting for the Corporate Governance Board detailing the number and nature of Level 3 complaints, trends and issues, as well as grievances, public interest disclosures and CMC-related complaints.

## 6 APPROVAL

**Mal Grierson**  
**Director-General**

**Date: September 2009**

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| <b>Attachment 1:</b> | Contacts   |
| <b>Attachment 2:</b> | Definitions  |
| <b>Attachment 3:</b> | References   |
| <b>Attachment 4:</b> | Minimum data required to be held in electronic complaints register |

## **CONTACTS**

### **INTERNAL**

Manager  
Integrity Services Unit  
Corporate and Executive Services  
Department of Public Works  
Level 7A 80 George Street  
CDE Box M52 GPO Box 2457  
Brisbane Qld 4001  
Phone: 3405 5011  
Fax. 3224 4602

Principal Integrity Officer  
Integrity Services Unit  
Corporate and Executive Services  
Department of Public Works  
Level 7A 80 George Street  
CDE Box M52 GPO Box 2457  
Brisbane Qld 4001  
Phone: 3227 8585  
Fax. 3224 4602

Manager, Right to Information and Privacy  
Legal Services  
Corporate and Executive Services  
Department of Public Works  
Level 6A 80 George Street  
CDE Box M52 GPO Box 2457  
Brisbane Qld 4001  
Phone: 3224 5245  
Fax: 3224 6938

### **EXTERNAL**

Office of the Queensland Ombudsman  
Level 25, 288 Edward Street  
GPO Box 3314, Brisbane 4001  
Phone: 3005 7000  
Toll Free: 1800 068 908  
Fax: 3005 7067  
Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au)

## DEFINITIONS

**Complaint** is a generic term referring to the expression of dissatisfaction, orally or in writing, about the service or actions of the Department or its staff. A complaint is not a question, an enquiry or a request for information or rework, unless the person specifies that they wish to make a complaint.

**Departmental area:** Divisions, Business Units and Directorates of the Department.

**Electronic complaints register** is a register of complaints as described in section 4.4.

**Employee record** (as per section 10 of the *Public Service Regulation 2008 (Qld)*) includes:

- a report, correspondence item or other document about the employee's work performance, work conduct or work history
- a medical report about the employee
- a written allegation of misconduct by the employee

to the extent that it contains information about a public service employee as defined in the *Public Service Act 2008 (Qld)*, but excluding the following documents:

- a medical report about the employee indicating that disclosure of information in it to the employee might be prejudicial to the employee's mental or physical health or wellbeing
- an employee assistance provider document about the employee
- a document to which legal professional privilege applies.

**Staff/staff members** are departmental employees.

## **REFERENCES:**

The requirements set out in this document are based on and are consistent with relevant government legislation, regulations, directives, information standards and/or policies at the time of publication.

### **LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS**

[Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 \(Qld\)](#)

[Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)

[Whistleblowers Protection Act 1994 \(Qld\)](#)

### **QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS**

[Appeals \(PSC Directive 6/08\)](#)

[Complaints Management Systems \(PSC Directive 13/06\)](#)

[Prequalification \(PQC\) System for Building Industry Consultants and Contractors](#)

[State Procurement Policy](#)

### **DPW DOCUMENTS**

[Complaints Management Procedure](#)

[Complaints Management Guidelines](#)

[Grievance Resolution Policy](#)

[Management of Official Misconduct and Public Interest Disclosures Policy](#)

### **STANDARDS**

International and Australian Standard AS ISO 10002 – 2006 Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations

Minimum data required to be held in electronic complaints register

Complaint number <sup>1</sup>	Date received	Name of staff member to Whom complaint made		Level (1, 2, 3)	Nature of complaint								Staff member dealing with complaint	Outcome / resolution	Date complainant notified		Business improvements required Y/N
					Service / Product				Staff			Other					
					Cost	Quality	Time	Other	Conduct	Skill/ knowl.	Other						

<sup>1</sup> Complaint number must be sequential