

Customer Complaint Policy

Owner: Strategy, Governance and Risk

CHA/2024/6656

Last reviewed: 19/07/2024

Version: 4.00

“Please note, when implementing this policy and procedure you must consider whether any human rights are engaged under the *Human Rights Act 2019* and whether any limitations on human rights are reasonable and justifiable. If you engage a human right, you should conduct a proportionality assessment under the Act.”

1. Purpose

This policy is designed to ensure that customer complaints about departmental products, services, decisions and actions are managed through an effective and consistent process that meets the requirements of the *Public Sector Act 2022* and Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework and Guideline.

2. Authority

Section 264 of the *Public Sector Act 2022* requires departments to establish and implement a system for dealing with customer complaints. The system must:

- provide for the public sector entity to take responsibility for managing the receipt, processing, and outcomes of customer complaints
- comply with any Australian Standard about the handling of customer complaints that is in effect from time to time
- provide for giving notice of the outcome of customer complaints to the complainant unless the complaint was made anonymously.

3. Policy statement

The department recognises the importance and value of actively listening and responding to complaints. Customer complaints are an opportunity to hold the department accountable for its actions and decisions, and to improve its performance, systems, procedures, and processes to ensure a higher level of customer service.

The department is committed to ensuring all customer complaints are consistently managed in a responsive, efficient, effective, and fair manner. Complainants will be treated with respect and will receive a professional level of service throughout the complaint management process. The department will not tolerate unreasonable complaints and with due consideration will take steps to fairly manage, and if required end communications where complainants are behaving unreasonably.

4. Scope

A customer complaint is defined as a complaint about the service or action of the department, or its staff, by a person who is apparently directly affected by the service or action. This includes a complaint about any of the following:

- a decision made, or a failure to make a decision, by a public sector employee of the department
- an act, or failure to act, of the department
- the formulation of a proposal or intention by the department
- the making of a recommendation by the department
- the customer service provided by a public sector employee of the department.

Some complaints received by the department are not customer complaints and need to be managed in a different way. For example, this policy does not apply to complaints made or managed pursuant to other legislation or complaint management processes. These include but are not limited to privacy complaints, allegations of corrupt conduct, public interest disclosures, employee grievances, or contractual complaints.

5. Key principles for customer complaint resolution

1. Customer focus

Anybody can make an honest complaint to the department if aggrieved about a departmental product, service, or action. People are to be supported to enable them to participate in the complaint resolution process.

2. Timely and fair

All complaints will be handled in a transparent, timely and impartial way. Appropriate confidentiality is to be observed in the management of the complaint and the privacy of personal information is respected and maintained.

3. Accountability, continuous improvement and prevention

Departmental employees and contractors are accountable for their acts, omissions and decisions. Complaints are to be viewed as an opportunity to review business processes and to improve existing, and inform new, quality services to avoid future customer complaints.

4. Communication

Communication will be clear and respectful. Parties to a complaint will be informed of the status of the complaint to enable the process of resolution to occur effectively. The department will maintain appropriate records of complaints and their resolution and publicly report complaint statistics in accordance with its legislative obligations.

6. Responsibilities of key participants

Area	Responsibilities
Director-General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for ensuring there is a responsive, effective, efficient, and fair complaint management system within the department
Strategy, Governance and Risk (SGR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owns and maintains the customer complaints management framework, and the customer complaint policy, procedure, and templates Provides expert advice and guidance about the management of customer complaints Procure and or develop and provide education and training about the management of customer complaints Collects and reports information on themes, performance and assurance relating to department complaints Manages the enquiries mailbox, assesses and triages incoming correspondence, and acknowledges customer complaints Records customer complaints to be dealt with, and monitors status Provides a contact for, and coordinates information requests from the Queensland Ombudsman's Office
Deputy Directors-General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a professional approach to complaint management and that business groups comply with the policy and procedure Ensure staff who deal with complaints have the opportunity to receive the necessary training prior to dealing with a complaint Create a workplace culture of excellent customer service by promoting the value of customer complaints as opportunities to improve systems, procedures, processes, and customer experience
Complaint Management Representative (CMR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts as the business group's central point of contact for customer complaints Acts as a liaison point between SGR and the staff member managing the complaint, including assigning complaints for management and coordinating requests for data and updates within their business group Ensures records are maintained for all complaints managed within the business group, and determines whether this occurs at the CMR or SME level Champion professional complaint management across their business group in cooperation with Deputy Directors-General.
Subject matter experts (SMEs) involved in managing a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement professional complaint management practices with customers Manage customer complaints according to the customer complaint procedure Continuously develop their skills to facilitate effective complaint management Seek support from the Complaint Management Representative or SGR for managing a

Area	Responsibilities
customer complaint	complaint where required
Respondent (e.g. officer whose act or omission has led to the complaint)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respects the confidentiality of the process • Accepts the complaint process forms part of their accountability obligations as a professional public servant • Participates in the process and co-operates with the department's response to the complaint in a respectful and reasonable way • Remains accountable for their own acts and omissions • Seeks guiding if unreasonable complainant; safety; support
Complainant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a clear description of the problem and the desired solution or outcome • Provides all relevant information • Informs the department of any changes affecting their complaint • Understands that complex customer complaints can take time to assess, manage and resolve • Understands that some decisions cannot be overturned or changed using the customer complaints management framework • Co-operates with department staff in a timely, respectful and reasonable way • Understands that abusive, aggressive, or disrespectful conduct will not be tolerated.

All participants will behave in an acceptable manner that enables meaningful and respectful dialogue in compliance with the department's [Stakeholder Engagement Charter](#).

7. Assurance

The Strategy, Governance and Risk Unit will provide the Director-General with a biannual summary of complaints made to the department, an analysis of trends or themes, and a summary of actions taken. The report may also provide an overview of the activities of SGR in discharging its complaint management function.

Strategy, Governance and Risk may review the application of, and compliance with the Complaint Management Policy and Procedure within business groups and report the results as part of its biannual report.

The Complaint Management function is subject to internal audit. Strategy, Governance and Risk may propose the function be subject to internal audit scrutiny if that has not occurred within the previous four years.

8. Review

Minor updates that do not materially affect the intent of the Customer Complaints Policy will be made to the policy with the authority of the Deputy Director-General, Corporate. The Policy Owner will seek the approval of the Director-General for any material changes to the policy in consultation with Deputy Directors-General or their representative(s).

In the absence of any significant review in the intervening period, the Customer Complaints Policy will be reviewed at least every two years.

9. Related documents and references

- *Public Sector Act 2022* (Specifically Part 9 Complaints Management System)
- Complaints Management Framework
- Customer Complaint Procedure
- Employee Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure
- Information Privacy Complaint Management Procedure
- *Right to Information Act 2009* (Specifically Part 8 Internal Review and Part 9 External Review)
- *Human Rights Act 2019* (Specifically Division 2 Human rights complaints)
- Human Rights – Guide: Handling Human Rights Complaints
- Complaints about the Director-General Policy
- Stakeholder Engagement Charter
- Fraud and Corruption Control Policy

10. Approval

Signed:

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Graeme Bolton

Director-General

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

Date: 19 July 2024

11. Version history

Date	Version	Action	Comments
19/07/2024	4.00	Approved policy and procedure for DAF	Updated to reflect revision of the complaints management system within the department
29/01/2024	3.00	Approved policy and procedure for DAF	Updated to reflect critical updates to comply with QG Complaints Management Framework and Guideline
13/01/2020	2.00	Approved policy and procedure for DAF	Replaced the Service Delivery Complaints Management Procedure. Ensured the policy and procedure complied with the <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> .
23/09/2015	1.00	Endorsed DAF and DTESB procedure	Combined DEEDI and DTESB Service Delivery Complaints Management Procedures into BCP template for DAF and DTSEB.

12. Keywords

CHA/2024/6656; complaints; code of conduct; service delivery complaints; natural justice; visibility; access; responsiveness; assessment; complainant; respondent; complaint resolution; resolution; investigation