

# Customer Complaints Management Procedure

Owner Governance and Strategy  
Last Reviewed 29/08/2018

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Version 1.00

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide an overview of processes to be followed when dealing with a customer complaint, compliment or request for an internal review in accordance with the department's Customer Complaint Management Policy. More detailed information is contained within relevant guides for the different stages of managing a complaint or compliment.

## 2. Associated Policy

Customer Complaint Management Policy

Refer to the departmental Complaint Management Framework (Customer Complaints Management Policy, **Appendix 1**) for other complaint management processes.

## 3. Authority

*Public Service Act 2008, section 219A.*

## 4. Overview of Customer Complaint Management System

The Customer Complaint Management System (CCMS) is comprised of the Customer Complaint Management Policy, this procedure, employees involved in managing and responding to complaints and compliments and relevant record tracking and keeping systems used to receive, record, respond to and report on complaints and compliments, as defined by s 219A, *Public Service Act, 2008*.

For the effective functioning of the CCMS all employees are required to be familiar with the Customer Complaints Management Procedure (CCMP). The CCMP provides an overview of the steps involved in a customer complaint and is supported by associated guides that detail the required actions of each step.

This procedure includes an overview of the broader, DES Complaint Management Framework that describes categories of complaints that members of the public may lodge with the department. It is important to note that some categories of complaints are covered by other complaints procedures or processes.

### 4.1 DES Complaint Management Framework

The DES Complaint Management Framework is designed to ensure each type of complaint is addressed within the appropriate complaint-handling process. Complaints fall into a number of categories: Customer Complaints, Privacy Breaches, Employee Misconduct, Corrupt Conduct/PIDs, Employee Complaints and Other matters.

The policies and procedures for breaches of Privacy, Employee Conduct, statutory processes, Corrupt Conduct and Public Interest Disclosure are out of scope of this procedure. Please refer to the table in the Customer Complaints Management Policy, **Appendix 1** for guidance on which complaint handling process may apply.

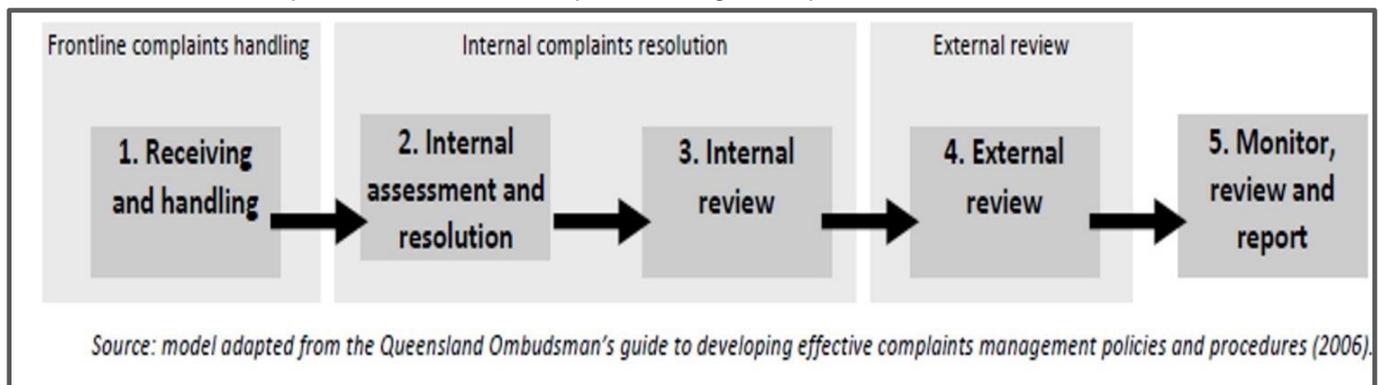
## 4.2 Key Participants

The following is a list of key participants involved in the CCMS procedure:

KEY PARTICIPANT	DESCRIPTION
<b>Complainant</b>	A person or organisation providing feedback to the department regarding dissatisfaction with departmental products or services
<b>Divisional Complaint Coordinator</b>	A single point of contact in each division where any complaints received directly by the business areas are assessed and lodged into either MECS and allocated to the business unit or to another complaint process if required
<b>Client Engagement Unit (CEU)</b>	Assesses and lodges incoming customer complaints from the DES online complaint form, Smart Service Qld (SSQ). Qld Ombudsman, Minister and Director-General. If complaint belongs to another complaint management process, it will be referred to that area for action
<b>Complaint Manager</b>	An impartial departmental officer who has the authority to investigate a complaint and recommend solutions/responses
<b>Complaint Decision Maker</b>	A senior officer who authorises/ decides upon a response prepared by the Complaint Manager
<b>Internal Reviewer</b>	An impartial senior officer of equal or higher level than the original Complaint Decision Maker who undertakes a review of the complaints process and outcome
<b>Ministerial and Executive Correspondence System (MECS) Support Team</b>	MECS Support Team receives and allocates correspondence addressed to the department or the Minister. If the correspondence relates to a customer complaint MECS Support Team will refer it to the relevant Divisional Complaint Coordinator for action
<b>Complaints Management System Manager</b>	Executive Director, Governance and Strategy, reports to DES Executive Leadership Team on operation, performance, significant trends and resources required

## 5. Customer Complaint Process Steps

There are five steps in the Customer Complaint Management process.



Steps 1, 2, 3 and 5 are followed when dealing with complaints and compliments covered by this procedure.

Step 4 is followed as required or when requested.

### 5.1 Step 1 - Receiving and Handling

#### Range of entry points for customer complaints

This step of the CCMS procedure involves receiving complaint submissions from the public. Complaints may come into the department through a range of channels. For example, in person at a DES location, by telephone, letter, via the DES Complaints online complaint form, direct referral from the Queensland Ombudsman's Office to the CCMS, Smart Service Queensland call centre (SSQ) or via the Director-General, Minister's office or the Ministerial and Executive Correspondence System (MECS) Support Team.

### Customer complaint lodged directly with business unit

Frontline employees who receive complaints at a point of service should attempt to resolve the matter if it is a simple, informal type of complaint. If the matter cannot be resolved at the point of service, it should be sent to the relevant Divisional Complaint Coordinator who will assess the complaint and lodge it into MECS (or the local record keeping system) if it meets the definition of a customer complaint, or refer the matter to another complaint process if this is more appropriate.

### Customer complaints lodged via Client Engagement Unit

If a complaint comes into the department via the DES online complaints form, SSQ, Director-General's office or through the Minister's office the Client Engagement Unit will assess the submission to identify if it is a customer complaint, lodge into MECS as appropriate, and refer on to the relevant Divisional Complaint Contact. If the complaint relates to another complaint process CEU will refer it to the business area that manages that process.

### Customer complaints received by the MECS Support Team or Minister's Office

If correspondence received through these areas are identified as customer complaints, they are to be sent to the CEU for lodging into MECS, who then allocate to the relevant DCC for further action.

### Identifying the complaint category

In the first instance, the Divisional Complaint Coordinator or CEU will assess what complaint process is the most appropriate to refer to for action.

If the complaint category potentially relates to a statutory or regulatory process, the matter will be referred to the relevant business area for a determination. Due to DES' wide range of statutory / regulatory processes, the decision to manage a complaint within those processes is more readily made by the responsible business area for that process.

If the business area deems that the matter is not covered by an alternative complaints process, the business area will lodge the complaint into MECS (or the local record keeping system) as a customer complaint.

If, after assessing the complaint it clearly meets the definition of a customer complaint and alternative complaint processes have been ruled out, the matter is lodged in the department's MECS system or local record keeping system and then referred to the relevant DCC for action according to the customer complaints process.

This step involves two participants:

- **Divisional Complaint Coordinator**
- **Client Engagement Unit**

Upon receipt of the customer complaint, the Divisional Complaint Coordinator allocates it to a designated Complaint Manger who initiates Step 2.

Refer to the [Receiving and Handling Guide](#) for a more detailed description of Step 1.

## 5.2 Step 2 - Internal Assessment and Resolution

Step 2 involves the following key participants:

- **Divisional Complaint Coordinator**
- **Complaint Manager**
- **Complaint Decision Maker**

During this step the Complaint Manager assesses the complexity, severity, safety implications, urgency and if an investigation is required. The expected timeframes for resolving a complaint are determined by this assessment. Refer to the table below for details of timeframes.

Classification	Description	Complaint Manager level	Timeframe
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<b>Informal Complaint – simple</b>	Resolved at point of service e.g. clear up a misunderstanding; error in a record, lack of information minimal risk	Local (e.g. Manager / Supervisor)	Can be resolved at point of service within 5 working days
<b>Formal Complaint – standard</b>	Involves a single, low risk issue that can be resolved within 20 working days	Middle (e.g. Director / District Manager)	Resolved <b>within</b> 20 working days of receipt
<b>Formal Complaint – complex</b>	May involve a higher level of risk, and more than one issue or business area. Requires more time to investigate or coordinate responses from other areas	Middle (e.g. Director / District Manager)	Requires <b>more</b> than 20 working days to finalise
<b>Internal Review</b>	A review of the proper process undertaken to resolve the complaint and that the correct decision resulted from the process	Deputy Director-General / Assistant Director-General	Received within 20 working days of finalisation. Resolved within 20 working days
<b>External Review</b>	Independent review of finalised complaint	Ombudsman	Determined by Ombudsman

At the completion of the process undertaken, the Complaint Manager prepares a response for the Complaint Decision Maker. The Complaint Decision Maker makes a decision based upon the draft response/outcome letter prepared by the Complaint Manager.

In the event that a decision is made not to look into or investigate a complaint refer to the [Internal Assessment and Resolution Guide](#) for the steps in this process.

For details on the step by step actions required refer to the [Internal Assessment and Resolution Guide](#)

### 5.3 Step 3 - Internal Review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the department's response they have the option to request a review. The complainant has **20 business days**, from receipt of the department's advice, to lodge a request for an internal review by the department. The complainant will need to be informed that they have this option in the department's initial response.

An internal review is a systematic way of reviewing the original process and outcome. The aim of an internal review is to ensure the complaints process complied with the department's policy and procedural requirements. An internal review is not an investigation or re-investigation of a complaint. It is a review of the complaints process and outcome.

For details on the step-by-step actions required, refer to the [Internal Review Guide](#).

### 5.4 Step 4 - External Review

This step in the procedure involves the following key participants:

- **The Queensland Ombudsman**

The Queensland Ombudsman provides a further point of escalation for complainants that remain dissatisfied.

In order to request an external review by the Queensland Ombudsman's office the complainant must have already exhausted the department's complaint system processes. If this has not occurred, the Ombudsman's office generally refers the matter back to the department for action within the Customer Complaints System.

The Ombudsman's office will make a decision whether or not to proceed with an external review of the department's complaints management process and outcome. If the Ombudsman decides to undertake an

external review the investigation will be facilitated by staff of the Ombudsman's office.

The Queensland Ombudsman can be contacted through the methods listed below:

**Telephone:** 07 3005 7000

**Toll free:** 1800 068 908

**Email:** [Ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:Ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au)

**Post:** Level 18, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane QLD 4000 GPO Box 3314

## 5.5 Step 5 - Monitor, Review and Report

This step in the procedure involves the following key participants:

- **Divisional Complaint Coordinator**
- **Senior Management**
- **Complaint Management Manager**

The **Complaints Management System Manager** will send a request to all Divisional Complaint Coordinators to provide their customer complaint numbers each quarter. These reports will be assessed for trends and provided to senior managers of divisions and regions.

For details on the step by step actions required refer to the [Reporting Monitoring and Reviewing Guide](#)

## 6. Responsibilities

### Director-General

- Ensure the establishment and maintenance of a departmental complaints management system that complies with s219A *Public Service Act 2008*

### Deputy Directors-General/Assistant Director-General

- Ensure that the complaint management policy and procedure is followed within each division and region
- Ensure that when a complaint is received it is assessed to determine if it can be dealt with within an alternative complaints process or a statutory process
- Ensure the timely and effective resolution of complaints in accordance with the complaints management policy
- Designate an internal reviewer or conduct an internal review of a complaint as considered appropriate
- Ensure that appropriate action, including preventative action where warranted, is taken to address sources of complaints, adverse issues and trends identified and foster continuous improvement
- Monitor, analyse and review complaints data to identify trends, impacts and timeliness of responses. Report any identified trends or relevant information to the Principal Governance Officer, Accountability Services, Governance and Strategy

### Executive Directors, Directors (as appropriate)

- Allocate sufficient resources to ensure the complaints management process is effectively administered, including the assignment of specific roles and responsibilities to staff as appropriate
- Ensure that staff with roles in handling complaints are provided with appropriate information, training and include expectations/performance indicators in their Professional Development Plan
- Refer allegations of misconduct, immediately to the Manager, Workforce Relations and Safety, Human Resources, for assessment (if not already identified and referred)
- Ensure that their business area records all the necessary information related to all customer complaints (refer to Step 4. Monitoring, Reporting and Reviewing Guide)
- Designate an appropriate complaint manager and complaint decision maker that have not had prior involvement in the complaint matter
- Monitor the progress of resolution and responses to complaints
- Ensure that the approved resolution actions are implemented

- Monitor, analyse and review complaints data to identify trends, impacts and timeliness of responses. Report any identified trends or relevant information to the Principal Project Officer, Accountability Services, Governance and Strategy
- Ensure that appropriate action, including preventative action where warranted, is taken to address sources of complaints, adverse issues and trends identified and foster continuous improvement

#### **Complaint Management System Manager: Executive Director, Governance and Strategy, Corporate Services**

- Establishing a process of performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- Reporting to senior management on significant complaints and systemic issues or trends identified with recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- Identifying and allocating resources needed for effective oversight of an efficient complaint management system.
- Implementing and maintaining the complaint management system, including
  - i. Provision of adequately documented complaint management guidance for all staff
  - ii. Setting and meeting key performance indicators for the effective and efficient functioning of the CCCMS
  - iii. Other requirements including system reviews
  - iv. Implementing internal and external escalation procedures for unresolved complaints/ disputes

#### **Divisional Complaint Coordinator**

- Act as a central referral and coordination point regarding requirements of the Customer Complaints management policy
- Log, action, refer, and report on customer complaints to ensure they are appropriately managed
- Act as liaison between division and Client Engagement Unit, Governance and Strategy

#### **Complaint Manager**

- An impartial departmental officer who has the authority to investigate a complaint and recommend solutions/responses
- Undertakes the necessary actions to investigate the complaint
- Identifies facts, gathers relevant information, considers relevant procedures/legislation that applies and prepares a report with findings and recommendations for the Complaint Decision Maker

#### **Complaint Decision Maker**

- A senior officer above the Complaint Manager who authorises/ decides upon a response prepared by the Complaint Manager

#### **Internal Complaint Reviewer**

- An impartial senior officer of equal or higher level than the original Complaint Decision Maker who undertakes a review of the complaints process and outcome

#### **Manager, Workforce Relations and Safety, Corporate Human Resources**

- If a customer complaint involves allegations of misconduct, as defined in the Code of Conduct it is immediately referred to Conduct assessments of allegations of misconduct and manage under the relevant Human Resources procedure
- Refer suspected corrupt conduct or public interest disclosures to the Director, Executive Services, or the Director, Business and Professional Services, Corporate Services for appropriate action

#### **Principal Governance Officer, Accountability Services, Governance and Strategy**

- Act as the liaison between the Queensland Ombudsman's office and departmental staff in relation to complaints referred to the department by the Ombudsman.
- Monitor trends and emerging issues and provide reports to Customer Complaints Management System Manager

## All Employees

- Assist the public with resolving issues before they become a complaint
- Need to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the department's Complaint Management System to be able to assist complainants in lodging a complaint where a resolution is not attainable
- Managers are required to ensure that all staff who deal with complaints have received the necessary training prior to dealing with a complaint

## 7. Forms.

Complaints Management Checklist

## 8. Definitions and glossary of terms

Customer complaint definition, *Public Service Act, 2008, s 219A (4)*.

- (a) Means a complaint about the service or action of a department, or its staff, by a person who is apparently directly affected by the service, or action: and
- (b) includes for example, a complaint about any of the following –
- (i) a decision made or a failure to make a decision, by a public service employee of the department;
  - (ii) an act or failure to act, of the department;
  - (iii) the formulation of a proposal or intention by the department;
  - (iv) the making of a recommendation by the department;
  - (v) the customer service provided by a public service employee of the department

A complaint is not:

- the reporting of any environmental nuisance or incident regarding noise, dust, light or other pollution events
- the reporting of wildlife offences or wildlife interactions
- disputes regarding the issuing of an infringement or commercial wildlife licence
- a general service request
- a way to overrule or change any decision made by a court of law as the result of any other departmental appeals process
- an internal process for recording staff issues

## 9. Related Documents

- Customer Complaint Management Policy
- Information Privacy Compliance Policy & Information Privacy Complaint Management Procedure
- Code of Conduct; Appropriate Behaviour Policy; Investigation and Discipline Procedure
- Corrupt Conduct Management Policy and Procedure
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure
- Employee Complaints Management Policy and Procedure
- Ombudsman's Inquiries and Complaints Procedure

## 10. Further information

For further information please contact, Executive Director, Governance and Strategy  
DESCSGS.corro@des.qld.gov.au

## 11. Review

This procedure will be reviewed two years after the effective date of this procedure.

## 12. Approval

Signed: *B Klaassen*

Ben Klaassen  
Acting Director-General  
Department of Environment and Science

Date: 15 January 2019

## 13. Version history

Date	Version	Action	Description / comments
15 January 2019	1.00	Approved by the Acting Director-General.	New procedure document

## 14. Keywords

Complaints Management System, Internal Review, Customer Complaints, Statutory processes, Privacy, RTI,