



## DTF COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT POLICY

COR180

### BACKGROUND

On 27 July 2015 Cabinet approved the new DPC Circular PC039 that requires agencies to handle complaints in a manner consistent with the *Australian/New Zealand Standard: guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS/NZS 10002:2014)*. This was recommended by the Ombudsman SA in November 2014 following an audit of public complaint handling in 12 agencies. This DTF policy meets Recommendation 2 of the Ombudsman's report for an agency-wide complaints management policy that focusses on complaints from members of the public about the department.

### OBJECTIVE

This policy aims to:

- establish a uniform approach in the management of complaints and feedback across the department
- ensure complaints and feedback are handled in a manner that is fair, courteous and respects privacy
- outline the standards and principles for the management of complaints and feedback
- ensure DTF employees are aware of their responsibilities regarding complaint and feedback management
- enhance the department's relationship with its clients and general public, supporting the provision of quality service to our external clients.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all branches of the department who may receive, manage, investigate and respond to complaints and feedback from members of the public. Where a fit for purpose alternate complaint management policy and/or procedure for a departmental group (also referred to as "branch-specific policy") is implemented, the principles of this policy apply.

This policy conforms to the principles of the *Australian/New Zealand Standard: guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS/NZS10002:2014)* (the Standard).

Matters not considered applicable to this policy are complaints relating to: administrative law, appeal decisions, judicial decisions, internal staff complaints, panel selection grievances, official misconduct or the matters relating to the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993*.

Matters concerning the conduct and practice of public officers and public authorities in South Australian public administration, specifically corruption, misconduct and maladministration, (occurring whilst a public officer is discharging their duties in public administration) can be reported to the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (ICAC).

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### DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions, as per the Standard, apply:

*Complaint:* expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

*Complainant:* person, organisation or their representative (including clients, consumers, service users, customers, etc.) making a complaint.

*Complaint management system:* encompasses all aspects of the policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an organisation for the management of complaints.

*Disputes:* unresolved complaints escalated internally or externally, or both.

*Feedback:* opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to or about the organisation, its products, services, staff or its handling of complaint. Note that any such feedback can be chosen to be managed as a complaint.

### POLICY

#### How to lodge a complaint with the department:

Members of the public have a variety of ways to contact the department, including:

Postal address: GPO Box 1045, Adelaide, South Australia, 5001  
Telephone: +61 8 8226 9500  
Facsimile: +61 8 8226 3819  
Email: [commservices@sa.gov.au](mailto:commservices@sa.gov.au)  
Online: <http://www.treasury.sa.gov.au/our-department/contact-us>

Further contact details for DTF and individual business units that may have their own branch-specific policies and complaints processes are available online at:

<http://www.treasury.sa.gov.au/our-department/contact-us/third-level>



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### Complaint handling process

The department will endeavour to acknowledge the receipt of a complaint within three working days and resolve and respond to all complaints within 30 working days of receipt (or as specified in a branch-specific policy). Where a complaint cannot be resolved within 30 working days an interim response must be provided to the complainant with an indicative timeframe as to when a full response can be expected.

The four major stages in the complaint handling and feedback process are:

1. Receive the complaint/feedback
2. Assess the complaint/feedback
3. Investigate the complaint/feedback
4. Resolve, respond and record the complaint/feedback

Note: depending on the nature of the feedback received, investigation may not be necessary.

### Service Improvements

This policy is designed to identify opportunities for improving customer satisfaction with the delivery of services. Complaint data is to be reviewed at least annually to:

- identify systemic issues that are required to be addressed, in order to improve performance
- identify trends and frequency of repeat complaints
- determine resolution outcomes of complaints
- determine improvements to remedy issues.

### Recording and reporting

Complaints data should be recorded by the relevant branch in a suitable records management system (e.g. Objective), to enable data collection for reporting purposes and to identify system improvements.

In accordance with section 3.22 of *DPC Circular PC013 - Annual Reporting Requirements*, South Australian government agencies are expected to report annually on consumer complaints data commencing 2014/15 and to address service improvements planned for the next financial year.

Complaints referenced in the DTF Annual Report will include as a minimum:

- number of complaints received
- category of complaints received
- service improvements made as a result.

### Disputed complaints

Where a complaint remains unresolved or cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complaint may be referred to an external body such as the Ombudsman SA.

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**Unreasonable conduct by complainants**

As per Appendix E of the Standard, examples of unreasonable complainant behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- unreasonable persistence
- unreasonable demands
- unreasonable lack of cooperation
- unreasonable arguments
- unreasonable behaviour

Such unreasonable conduct does not preclude valid issues being addressed by the department. However, where complainants act unreasonably in seeking to have their concerns addressed, alternatives may be arranged, including alternative service arrangements, restricting service or terminating service altogether.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

***Chief Executive (Under Treasurer) will:***

- ensure the management of complaints and feedback is consistent with this policy
- report on the number and type of complaints received each year and related service improvements in the department’s Annual Report in accordance with *DPC Circular PC013 – Annual Reporting Requirements* commencing 2014-15 financial year.

***Executive and Management (includes Branch Heads) are responsible to the Under Treasurer to:***

- ensure this policy is visible, accessible, communicated and promoted throughout the department
- encourage an environment where complaints and feedback are handled promptly and fairly
- ensure responses to complaints and feedback are signed by the senior executive of the business group the complaint or feedback relates to. Where applicable, the senior executive may delegate their authority to sign responses to complainants to a director or senior manager within their business group.
- ensure DTF employees are compliant with this policy
- ensure DTF employees are supported and their obligations under this policy are communicated
- ensure DTF employees are adequately resourced, trained and engaged to manage complaints and feedback
- where required, ensure escalated and unresolved complaints are effectively managed
- report significant complaints (deemed to be high-risk) to the Under Treasurer
- review and analyse complaints and feedback received, identifying opportunities and requirements for service and system improvements
- ensure the effective and efficient management of complaints and feedback within their areas of control in accordance with this policy
- identify complaint trends to enable corrective action and prevent a problem from reoccurring
- appoint and empower staff with the authority to resolve complaints quickly and effectively



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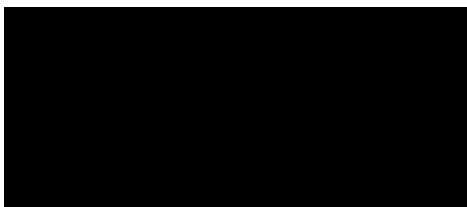
- ensure all complaints are responded to in an efficient and timely manner
- monitor the progress of the complaints handling process
- develop and implement continuous improvements to services that are the cause of complaints
- provide support and advice to staff managing consumer complaints.

***DTF staff will***

- treat complainants with respect
- respect requests from a complainant that their complaint be handled confidentially or anonymously in accordance with the *DPC Circular PC012 - Information Privacy Principles (IPPS) Instruction*
- communicate with the complainant throughout the process to help avoid complaints escalating further
- comply with the principles of this policy
- have a complete understanding of their responsibilities
- have a good understanding of the ethical issues that might arise as part of their role, including (but not limited to) conflict of interest, procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy, and fiduciary obligations
- record complaints in accordance with this policy
- treat all complaints fairly and impartially and in accordance with the obligations in the *Code of Ethics for South Australian Public Sector Employees*.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Australian/New Zealand Standard: guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS/NZS 10002:2014)
- Code of Ethics for South Australian Public Sector Employees
- DPC Circular PC012 - Information Privacy Principles (IPPS) Instruction
- DPC Circular PC013 - Annual Reporting Requirements
- DPC Circular PC039 - Complaint Management in the South Australia Public Sector
- Ombudsman SA, An audit of state government agencies' complaint handling, November 2014.



UNDER TREASURER

02/ 10/ 2015