

DEPARTMENT OF STATE DEVELOPMENT

POLICY

Complaints Management Policy

Purpose

The policy establishes a consistent approach to managing feedback and complaints across DSD which can be received through online forms, letters, telephone calls or in person. It aims to enhance the transparency and responsiveness of the complaint handling process, including staff responsibilities.

The policy seeks to ensure:

- increased customer satisfaction with DSD services, policies, and products.
- a fair, efficient, and transparent approach to feedback and complaints.
- respect for the privacy of the complainant, and
- improved processes and services arising from customer feedback.

Social media platforms are not considered suitable for managing complaints and matters will be acknowledged, but then customers will be re-directed to DSD's formal Feedback and Complaints [webform](#).

Scope

The Complaints Management Policy (**the Policy**) applies to all DSD employees and contractors who receive, manage, investigate, and respond to complaints and feedback from members of the public. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Complaints Management Procedure.

For matters concerning complaints about fraud, corruption, misconduct and maladministration, please refer to the [DSD Fraud Control Policy](#) and [DSD Public Interest Disclosure Procedure](#).

Should a complaint be related to a Critical Incident, please refer to the [DSD Critical Incident Management Procedure](#)

Policy Position

The Department of State Development (**DSD**) is committed to the highest standards of customer service. DSD is committed to the management of feedback and complaints in a manner that is fair, courteous, respectful, and consistent with the principles of natural justice and equity of access.

DSD promotes a culture that values complaints as an opportunity for improvement, and links service delivery improvements directly to feedback.

Our culture of customer service excellence is built on continuously improving leadership, knowledge, empowerment and enhancing our skills. We proactively use feedback and complaints to drive improvements to our systems and the way we work, and to support us in evolving our customer experience, services, and behaviours.

This policy conforms to the principles of the Australian/New Zealand Standard: Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations (AS/NZS10002:2014) (**the Standard**), and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet Circular [PC039 - Complaints management in the South Australian Public Sector](#).

Roles and Responsibilities

The [Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector](#) (Code of Ethics) requires all public-sector employees to comply with the principles and values of public sector behaviour.

Public officers are to exhibit the highest standards of professional conduct in undertaking their duties. All complaints will be investigated in a manner that upholds and champions those values.

The responsibilities of management and staff are outlined below.

Title	Responsibility
Chief Executive	Promotes a culture of valuing feedback and complaints and ensures the policy is effectively implemented. Supports the use of complaints and feedback data to drive a continuous improvement approach across DSD. Ensures the number and type of complaints received each year and related service improvements is reported in DSD's Annual Report in accordance with DPC Circular PC013 – Annual Reporting Requirements
Executive Directors/Directors	Ensures the policy accessible to staff and customers; complaints and feedback data is recorded and analysed; and related service improvements implemented and reported on.
Managers/Senior Staff	Ensures complaints and feedback in their areas are handled in accordance with the policy and supporting procedures. They appoint, empower and train staff to effectively resolve complaints and provide support and advice where required.
Complaints Management Officers (CMO)	Complies with the policy, procedures, and any related local guidelines. Respond promptly to complaints, aim to provide resolutions in a timely manner and record outcomes for reporting purposes. Must assess and identify immediately if the matter is to be dealt with under this policy or whether it is to be referred to the relevant contact person under the appropriate DSD policy or procedure.
Investigating Officers	Comply with the policy, procedures, and any related local guidelines. Investigate and respond promptly to complaints, aim to provide resolutions in a timely manner and record outcomes for reporting purposes.
Staff	Comply with the policy, procedures, and any related local guidelines.

Title	Responsibility
DSD Central Response Officer	Triages the matter to the relevant CMO and monitors to ensure that a response is provided to the complainant within 10 days. Ensures accurate capture in the DSD Central Register, recording of outcomes and regular reporting.

Complaints and Feedback

DSD follows the three-level model for handling feedback and complaints; early resolution, escalated and external. Refer to the Complaints Management Procedure for further detail.

The major stages in the complaint or feedback process are as follows:

1. Receive the complaint or feedback,
2. Assess the complaint or feedback,
3. Investigate the complaint or feedback,
4. Resolve, respond and record the complaint or feedback, and
5. Continuous improvement of services and processes.

Customers wishing to take the matter further may request a higher-level review by the Department or make a complaint to an external body such as the [Ombudsman SA](#).

All documentation relating to complaints and feedback will be retained in accordance with the [State Records Act 1997](#) and the details of the incoming complaint will be recorded in an approved records management system.

Refer to the Complaints Management Procedure for further detail.

Our Complaints Management Standards

1. We will ensure customers are able to easily contact or submit or provide a complaint or feedback orally or in writing and have access to information about external reviews such as those undertaken by the Ombudsman's office. Customers will be provided with information about the process on our website.
2. Where contact details are provided, we will acknowledge all forms of feedback within **3 working days**.
3. We will log and record all feedback and complaints in Content Manager records management system.
4. We will resolve complaints that are not of a serious nature and/or not requiring extensive investigation or consultation within **10 working days**.
5. We will provide notice to a complainant within **10 working days** if there is a delay in responding and provide an interim response with an explanation and timeline for when the matter is likely to be resolved. Regular updates on the progress of the complaint will be provided to the complainant.
6. Complainants will not be charged a fee. DSD will take all reasonable steps to ensure that complainants are not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them or on their behalf.
7. We will adopt a customer focused approach and treat our customers with dignity and in an unbiased, non-discriminatory, and fair manner. We are sensitive to individual requirements of the customers, and wherever possible will extend support for those who have unique needs.
8. We will be accountable and undertake continuous and regular monitoring of data to use for service and training improvements.

9. We will not disclose personal information or data in accordance with the State Government [Information and Privacy Principles](#).
10. We will undertake quarterly reviews of the DSD Central Register to ensure consistency of application of the Policy and Procedure.

Complaints can be made or assisted by another person or organisation, e.g., an advocate, family member or community representative. Customers with unique needs or those from minority groups may be offered a call back appropriate to their circumstances.

Investigation by the Ombudsman

In the instance when the complainant has lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman, DSD are still required to follow the procedure, complete the investigation and respond to the complainant as per our timeframe of 10 days. The Ombudsman will notify the Department if a complaint has been received and will await the outcome of the DSD investigation before commencing their own investigation.

Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

DSD recognises that a small number of complainants may act unreasonably in seeking to have their concerns addressed. Complainant conduct that involves behaviour which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for DSD, our staff, and/or other service users is likely to be deemed unreasonable. Unreasonable behaviour by complainants does not preclude valid issues being addressed by DSD.

The Director responsible for the business unit handling the complaint will put in place appropriate strategies for managing unreasonable behaviour in a manner that is fair, reasonable and ethical.

Continuous Improvement of Services and Processes

Once complaints are resolved, the relevant business unit will identify any underlying causes and where necessary implement changes and strategies to services, policies, products and/or systems to reduce the risk of re-occurrence and better meet the expectations of our customers.

Reporting

In accordance with the Premier's Circular [PC013 – Annual Reporting Requirements](#), South Australian government agencies are expected to report annually on complaint data and to address planned system improvements.

Additionally, all feedback data (including complaints, suggestions, compliments, general enquiries and requests for assistance) will be reviewed and analysed quarterly to:

- Identify systemic issues to be addressed to improve performance;
- Identify trends and frequency of repeat complaints;
- Determine resolution of outcomes of complaints;
- Determine improvements to remedy issues; and
- Identify areas of best practice and promote learning.

Trends in numbers and types of feedback, volumes and themes will be collated by the DSD Feedback Officer and reported to the Director, Strategic Communications and Customer Experience for review and/or escalation as appropriate.

Review Period

The reporting and review period for the policy is 2026, as ideally policies should be reviewed every three years or sooner if business needs or, for example, underlying legislation changes.

Relevant documents and web links

- [DSD Complaints Management Procedure](#)
- [Premier's Circular PC013 – Annual Reporting Requirements](#)
- [Premier's Circular PC039 – Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector](#)
- [State Records Act 1997](#)
- [Information Sharing Guidelines](#)
- [Code of Ethics for South Australian Public Sector](#)
- [DPC Circular 039 – Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector](#)
- [Ombudsman SA – Audit Survey Report – June 2018](#)
- [Premier's Circular PC012 - Information Privacy Principles \(IPPS\) Instruction.](#)
- [Office for Public Integrity](#)
- [Directions and guidelines | Office for Public Integrity](#)
- [DSD Critical Incident Management Procedure](#)
- [DSD Fraud Control Policy](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure Procedure](#)

Definitions

Term	Definition
Customer	Individuals or organisations (internal or external to government) who receive or utilise our services, or are directly affected by DSD services, policies, or products.
Complaint	Expression of dissatisfaction related to DSD services, policies, or products 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 policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used for the management of complaints.
Complaint Management Officer	Nominated representative from each Group to coordinate and triage matters to Investigating Officers, ensure matters are promptly actioned and recorded and liaises with the Central Feedback Response Officer.
Compliment	Positive feedback on the quality of service, policies or products provided.
Dispute	Unresolved complaint escalated internally or externally, or both.
DSD Central Register	Captures all feedback received via the online webform to ensure matters are recorded, monitored and actioned in accordance with the policy, as well as for annual reporting and business improvement purposes.

Term	Definition
Feedback	Opinion, comment or expression of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly, or implicitly about DSD services, policies or products or its handling of a complaint. A response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
General Enquiry	Question seeking general information about DSD services, policies and products.
Investigating Officer	Nominated by the group CMO, to undertake thorough investigation of the matter, ensure documentation is kept and stored and appropriate recommendations and response are prepared.
Public Officer	Includes public sector employees and contractors performing contract work for a public authority or the Crown.
Request for Assistance	Seeking assistance with a task (e.g., navigating websites, acquiring information, accessing online portals, application queries or asking a specific question).
Suggestion	Idea, proposal, piece of advice or opinion for consideration in improving a service, policy or product.

Feedback

To provide feedback on this document contact Strategic Communications and Customer Experience via DSDcommunications@sa.gov.au

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