

Complaints Handling Policy

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1 Context

To ensure that complaints are handled fairly, efficiently and effectively the Office of Sport (the Office) has established a complaint management system that:

- makes it easy for clients, stakeholders and the general public to submit complaints and feedback to the Office
- ensures that complaints and feedback are responded to in a timely and cost-effective way
- ensures public confidence in the Office
- ensures that complaints and feedback are collated and used to inform the continuous improvement of the services provided by the Office

2 Scope

Applies to all staff receiving or managing complaints and feedback from clients, stakeholders and the general public to the Office as well as representations made to a Minister which are referred to the Office for investigation and response.

3 Policy Statement

The Office is committed to providing high quality services to external stakeholders which includes customers and clients, industry participants and associations, community groups and the general public.

The policy and associated processes incorporate and are underpinned by a suite of Complaint Handling Commitments adopted by the NSW Government. These are: Respectful Treatment; Information and Accessibility; Good Communication; Taking Ownership; Timeliness; and Transparency.

4 Definitions

Complaint: Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the Office of Sport, the adequacy, quality or timeliness of services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Matters that do not fall under the definition of a complaint and which are not managed under this policy include:

- grievances, concerns and issues raised by staff
- allegations of possible corrupt or criminal behaviour
- matters where there is a legal remedy or formal rights of appeal or review
- objections or requests to review decisions made under a defined policy or process that challenge the outcome

While the subject of an initial representation may not be within scope, the lack of timeliness or quality of the response may later be a legitimate cause for complaint as that relates to the service being provided in responding to those representations.

Complaint Management System: All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by the Office of Sport in the management of complaints.



Feedback: Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about the Office, our services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Feedback Assist: A case management and referral system which sits on the Office’s customer facing websites providing a visible, consistent and easily accessible contact point to lodge complaints, compliments and feedback.

5 Roles and responsibilities

The Office expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

| Who | Commitment | How |
|--|--|---|
| Chief Executive (CE) | Promote a culture that values customer feedback and opportunities to improve service delivery. | <p>Report publicly on the Office’s complaint handling.</p> <p>Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints.</p> <p>Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints resolve them promptly.</p> <p>Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</p> <p>Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.</p> <p>Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.</p> |
| Executive Director, Corporate Services | Establish and manage the complaint management system. | <p>Provide regular reports to the CE on issues arising from complaint handling work.</p> <p>Ensure recommendations arising out of complaint data analysis are canvassed with the CE and implemented where appropriate.</p> <p>Train and empower staff to resolve complaints promptly and in accordance with the Office’s policies and procedures.</p> <p>Encourage staff managing complaints to provide suggestions on ways to improve the organisation’s</p> |



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| | | <p>complaint management system.</p> <p>Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.</p> <p>Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.</p> <p>Undertakes the role of Complaints Coordinator.</p> <p>Licence holder for Feedback Assist.</p> |
| Manager, Corporate Planning & Performance | Manage and monitor compliance with complaint management system. | <p>Monitor compliance, resolution of complaints and quality outcomes.</p> <p>Update policy and procedures as required to ensure they remain relevant and effective in meeting current and anticipated needs.</p> <p>Undertakes role of Complaints Handling Manager.</p> <p>Licence holder for Feedback Assist.</p> |
| Directors / Managers | Manage complaint handling for their areas of responsibility. | <p>Manage and oversight complaint investigations.</p> <p>Ensure staff are aware of and comply with this policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Provide feedback and suggestions on process improvements.</p> |
| Staff whose specific duties include complaint handling | Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices in line with the Office of Sport's complaint handling practices including assisting with the recording of complaints and options to progress concerns through the complaints process if the issue cannot be resolved at the frontline. | <p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Assist people to make a complaint, if needed.</p> <p>Comply with this policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Keep informed about best practice in complaint handling.</p> <p>Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve the organisation's complaints management system.</p> <p>Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.</p> |



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| All Staff | Understand and comply with the Office of Sport's complaint handling practices | <p>Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Be aware of the Office of Sport's complaint handling policy and procedures.</p> <p>Assist people who wish to make complaints access the Office of Sport's complaints process.</p> <p>Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.</p> <p>Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis and evaluation of complaint data as directed by management.</p> |
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6 Guiding principles

6.1 Facilitate complaints

People focus: The Office is committed to seeking and receiving feedback about our services and to deal with any concerns raised in feedback within a reasonable timeframe.

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about the complaint handling process
- provided with multiple and accessible ways to make complaints
- listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

No detriment to people making complaints: Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anonymous complaints: Anonymous complaints will be accepted and an investigation of the issues raised carried out where there is enough information provided.

Accessibility: Information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us will be well publicised. Our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the resolution of their complaint, the Office will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish.

Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).



No charge: Complaining to the Office is free.

6.2 Respond to complaints

Early resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with the Office.

Responsiveness

Receipt of complaints will be acknowledged promptly and assessed and prioritised in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

People making complaints will be informed about the process, expected timeframes and of the progress and reasons for any delay.

People will be advised as soon as possible when the Office is unable to deal with any part of their complaint and advised where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

Objectivity and fairness

All complaints will be handled with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

Staff allocated to any complaint handling will be different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Responding flexibly

Staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. The Office will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.

Each complaint will be assessed on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

Confidentiality

The identity of people making complaints will be protected where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by the Office as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

6.3 Manage the parties to a complaint

Complaints involving multiple agencies

Where a complaint involves multiple organisations, the Office will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated. The Office takes complaints not only about the actions of our staff but also the actions of our service providers.



Complaints involving multiple parties

When similar complaints are made by related parties the Office will try to arrange to communicate with a single representative of the group or provide a common response to all parties.

Empowerment of staff

All staff managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

The Office is committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time the Office's success depends on:

- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety and security of our staff, and
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with the Office, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, the Office will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

For further information on managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints please see the Ombudsman's Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Model Policy 2012.

7 Complaint management system

Introduction

When responding to complaints, staff should act in accordance with this policy.

Staff should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

The five key stages in the Office's complaint management system are set out below. The primary mechanism for the capture and management of complaints is Feedback Assist.

Stage 1: Receipt of complaints

Complaints and supporting information will be recorded. A unique identifier will be assigned to the complaint file.

The record of the complaint will document:

- the contact information of the person making a complaint (where provided)
- issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want
- any other relevant information, and
- any additional support the person making a complaint requires (if applicable).



Stage 2: Acknowledgement of complaints

Receipt of each complaint will be acknowledged promptly, and preferably within two working days.

Stage 3: Initial assessment and addressing of complaints

Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, the Complaints Handling Manager will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. They will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, consideration will be given to:

- how serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- how the person making the complaint is being affected
- the risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

Addressing complaints

After assessing the complaint, consideration will be given to how to manage it. This may include:

- giving the person making a complaint information or an explanation
- gathering information about the service, or from the person or area that the complaint is about, and/or
- investigating the claims made in the complaint.

The Complaints Handling Manager will keep the person making the complaint up to date on progress, particularly if there are any delays. The outcome of the complaint will also be communicated.

The action that is taken will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

Stage 4: Providing information about our decisions

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, the person making the complaint will be contacted and advised of:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action taken
- the basis for the decision
- the remedy or resolution/s that is proposed or put in place, and
- any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review or appeal.

If in the course of investigation, any adverse findings are made about a particular individual, we will consider any applicable privacy obligations under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and any applicable exemptions in or made pursuant to that Act, before sharing our findings with the person making the complaint.

Stage 5: Closing the complaint, record keeping, redress and review

Staff investigating complaints are required to keep records about:



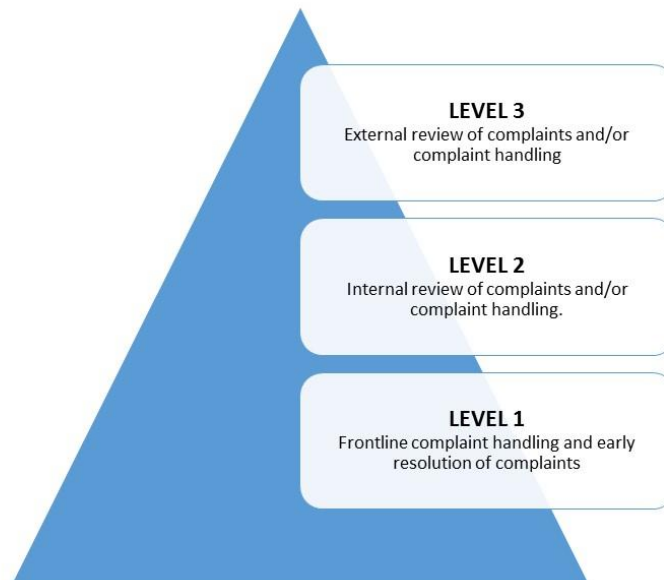
- how the complaint was managed
- the outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

Directors / Managers will ensure outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the Complaints Handling Manager and senior management.

7.1 Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

People who make complaints to or about the Office will be advised about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman or oversight bodies).

7.2 The three levels of complaint handling



Level 1 – Frontline Resolution

The Office aims to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible, staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Level 2 – Internal Review

Where it is not possible to resolve complaints at the first level, the complaint may be escalated to a more senior officer within the Office. This second level of complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:

- assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or
- facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).



Level 3 – External Review

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of an internal review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of the decision (by the Ombudsman, for example).

8 Accountability and learning

8.1 Analysis and evaluation of complaints

The Complaints Handling Manager ensures that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.

Regular reports will contain information on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints
- issues arising from complaints
- any systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided to the Core Executive Team for review by the Complaints Handling Manager.

8.2 Monitoring of the complaint management system

The complaint management system will be continually monitored to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints, and
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

Monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

8.3 Continuous improvement

The Office is committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system and will:

- support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- implement best practices in complaint handling
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff
- regularly review the complaints management system and complaint data, and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.



THREE TIERED COMPLAINT FLOW CHART

