

1. Title

Complaints Management Systems

2. Purpose

To establish complaints management systems in agencies and to specify the minimum standards for such systems.

3. Legislative Provision

Public Service Act 1996 – Sections 33 and 34

4. Effective date

10 November 2006

5. Definitions

“**Agency**” means a public sector unit as defined in Section 20 of the *Public Service Act 1996*.

“**Complaint**” is a generic term referring to the expression of dissatisfaction, orally or in writing, about the service or actions of an agency or its staff.

“**Complaints management system**” means the policy, procedures, personnel and technology used by an agency in receiving, recording, responding to and reporting about complaints.

“**Employee**” is as defined in Section 8 and 9 of the *Public Service Act 1996*.

6. Provisions

Complaints Management in Agencies

- 6.1 All agencies must implement and maintain a system or systems for complaints management.
- 6.2 An agency’s complaints management system is to be supported by written policies and/or procedures.
- 6.3 An agency’s complaints management system must, as a minimum, incorporate the ‘Elements for an Effective Complaints Handling System’ detailed in Section 7.

- 6.4 Notwithstanding 6.3, an agency may determine the actual substance, form and complexity of their complaints management system, having regard to matters including, but not limited to:
- the size of the agency;
 - the nature of the services provided by the agency;
 - geographic distribution of agency locations;
 - the source of complaints; and
 - the volume and type of complaints.
- 6.5 Decisions relating to the management of a particular complaint rest with the agency, subject to any relevant legislative requirements.
- 6.6 The chief executive must ensure the agency has a complaints management system in operation within 12 months of the commencement date of this directive.
- 6.7 A complaints management system should take into account all types of complaints, both internal and external to the agency. However, this Directive does not replace, modify or revoke any legislative requirements that apply to the management of particular types of complaints.
- 6.8 Nothing in this Directive confers a right of appeal, grievance or complaint on any person.

7. Elements

- 7.1 The elements of an effective complaints management system represent the minimum standards required.

Visibility and Access

- 7.2 An effective complaints management system has mechanisms and strategies in place to provide:
- a. readily available information about where to lodge a complaint and how to make a complaint;
 - b. readily available information on how the agency will manage a complaint (timeframes, how the complainant will be informed of progress, if relevant, and the result); and
 - c. reasonable assistance to people who wish to make complaints.

Responsiveness

- 7.3 An effective complaints management system has mechanisms and strategies in place to:
- a. inform agency staff of the existence and operation of the agency complaints management system;

- b. respond to complaints in a timely manner;
- c. monitor timeframes for resolution of complaints; and
- d. communicate with parties about the progress of resolution.

Assessment and Action

- 7.4 An effective complaints management system has mechanisms and strategies in place to:
- a. enable complaints to be dealt with fairly and objectively.
 - b. assess the nature of complaints, how complaints should be dealt with and by whom; and
 - c. refer complaints to external agencies, where required.

Feedback

- 7.5 An effective complaints management system has mechanisms and strategies in place to:
- a. provide complainants with timely feedback;
 - b. notify complainants of any available review mechanisms; and
 - c. provide feedback to relevant areas of the agency where potential system improvements are identified.

Monitoring Effectiveness

- 7.6 An effective complaints management system has mechanisms and strategies in place to gather and record information to:
- a. meet any statutory, policy or procedural reporting requirements;
 - b. identify complaint trends;
 - c. monitor the time taken to resolve complaints.

The following section does not form part of this Directive and is provided for information only.

Resources

A useful tool for agencies in conducting a review of an existing complaints handling system is the *Queensland Ombudsman Effective Complaints Management Self Audit Checklist*.

In implementing the Elements for an Effective Complaints Handling System, agencies may find useful the **Queensland Ombudsman Effective Complaints Management Fact Sheets**.

The Ombudsman's resources reference a number of publications, including the International and Australian Standards for complaints management - AS ISO 10002-2006.