



OIA Complaints management and internal review policy

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Policy statement

The Queensland Office of the Independent Assessor (the OIA) is committed to effective complaints management by managing complaints about its functions in an accountable, transparent, timely and fair manner.

The OIA recognises that effective complaints management is good business practice and integral to good client service.

The Office takes seriously all complaints by:

- accepting complaints that are made either orally or in writing
- taking a client-focused approach to how the OIA deals with complaints
- actively encouraging feedback
- using information about complaints to improve the delivery of the OIA's functions
- offering a robust process for the internal review of assessment decisions or actions concerning the assessment of a complaint to the OIA.

The objectives of this policy are to ensure:

- fair, accountable, transparent and responsive management of complaints about the OIA's functions
- identification and correction of errors or omissions
- effective monitoring of complaints; and
- identification and implementation of business improvement opportunities.

Principles

The complaint management principles underlying this policy reflect the [Australian/New Zealand Standard - Guidelines for complaints management in organizations \(AS/NZS 10002-2014\)](#), and [s.219A of the Public Service Act 2008](#).

The Office is committed to the following complaints management principles:

- providing a free and readily accessible complaints process for all persons regardless of background and circumstances
- provision of readily available information about where to lodge a complaint and how to make a complaint
- provision of readily available information on how complaints will be managed
- providing reasonable assistance to people who wish to make complaints
- providing clear explanations about what the Office can and cannot do



- informing staff of the existence and operation of the complaints management process
- responding to complaints in a timely manner
- monitoring timeframes for resolution of complaints
- communicating with parties about the progress of resolution
- enabling complaints to be dealt with fairly and objectively
- assessing the nature of complaints, how complaints should be dealt with and by whom
- referring complaints to external agencies, where required
- providing complainants, councilors and staff with timely feedback
- providing a clear explanation of the final decision and any recommendations
- notifying clients of any available review mechanisms
- protection of privacy and confidentiality
- providing feedback to relevant areas of the Assessor where potential system improvements are identified
- meeting any statutory, policy or procedural reporting requirements
- identifying complaint trends
- monitoring the time taken to resolve complaints
- ensuring complainants do not suffer any reprisals or detriment for making a complaint.

Application/Scope

This policy and associated procedures apply to all permanent and temporary employees of the OIA as well as contractors, employment agency staff, sub-contractors, clients, and work experience students (who are defined as workers in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*) while working in the workplace.

This policy applies to complaints about any of the OIA's functions, including complaint management, investigation and prosecution, subject to the exclusions set out below.

Service delivery complaints

Service delivery complaints are about any aspect of service or a product provided by the OIA or the conduct of an officer.

Internal review requests

Internal review requests are about the outcome of an assessment undertaken by this Office.



Exclusions

Complaints excluded from the scope of this policy:

Type of complaint	Procedure for managing complaint
Actions or decisions of another government agency who referred a complaint about councillor conduct to the OIA	Follow the complaints process for the relevant government agency as referenced on their website.
Actions or decisions of local government in relation to dealing with inappropriate conduct.	Follow the complaints process for the relevant Local Government as referenced on their website.
Actions or decisions of the Crime and Corruption Commission after complaints <i>are referred to and retained by the Crime and Corruption Commission.</i>	Crime and Corruption Commission complaint process as referenced on their website
Internal staff complaints about an area of the Office or a particular officer	Refer to the Independent Assessor or the Crime and Corruption Commission as appropriate.

Complaints management model

The OIA's complaints management model includes three stages - frontline, internal review of assessments and external review. All frontline complaints will be managed in accordance with this policy.

All internal review requests will be handled in accordance with this policy and the relevant procedure and a review undertaken by an authorised review officer where this is warranted.

All service delivery complaints will be handled in accordance with this policy and the service delivery complaints procedure. The process adopted under this policy will depend on whether the service delivery complaint is assessed as 'straightforward' or 'serious'.

Straightforward service delivery complaints are those which are likely to have minimal risk or detriment to the complainant, subject councillor or the OIA. Examples include complaints about incorrectly addressed correspondence, minor delays or minor communication difficulties.

Serious service delivery complaints involve significant or complex issues with a medium or high level of risk or detriment to the complainant, subject councillor or the OIA. Examples include complaints about significant delays, a challenge to the conduct or competency of an officer, or serious communication difficulties.



Model

Stage 1 - Frontline	Stage 2 - Internal review	Stage 3 - External review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straightforward service delivery complaints are handled by the relevant team/unit. • More serious service delivery complaints are referred directly to stage 2. • Client is advised of internal review option (stage 2) if dissatisfied with outcome of assessment. 	<p>Unresolved straightforward service delivery complaints are referred from stage 1 and reviewed by Deputy Independent Assessor.</p> <p>Serious service delivery complaints are reviewed by the Deputy Independent or a person allocated by the Deputy Independent Assessor unless the complaint involves the Deputy Independent Assessor, in which case the complaint is reviewed by the Independent Assessor.</p> <p>Internal reviews are conducted by the Deputy Independent Assessor or a person allocated by the Deputy Independent Assessor unless it is a review of a decision of the Deputy Independent Assessor in which case the review is conducted by the Independent Assessor.</p>	<p>Where the steps taken in Stage 2 do not resolve in a resolution of the complaint, the client is advised of any further appropriate external review options (i.e. judicial review or Ombudsman review of decision-making).</p>

Policy elements

The OIA's complaints management model reflects the following elements:

Visibility and access

- Any person with a sufficient direct interest in a matter can make a complaint under this policy.
- A person may complain on behalf of another person provided they are authorised to do so.
- Information regarding where and how to lodge a complaint and how complaints will be managed is available on the OIA website.
- Complaints may be made verbally or in writing at the OIA, or by telephone, letter, email, or via the Complaints section of the OIA website. The OIA may require a client who has made an oral complaint to put their complaint in writing.
- Reasonable assistance will be provided to any client upon request, including persons with any disability or those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Complaints may be made anonymously.

Responsiveness

- Staff will receive training in this policy and associated procedures and the operation of the complaints process at induction and on an annual basis thereafter.
- Complaints will be acknowledged and responded to in a timely manner.
- Staff will communicate with clients regularly and at appropriate intervals about progress of their complaint.
- Service delivery complaints should be finalised as soon as practicable. Internal review of assessment requests should be addressed within six weeks of receipt.

Assessment and action

- Complaints will be handled in a fair and objective manner.
- Most complaints will be assessed and actioned by the team/unit the

complaint is



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about. Where a complaint is about the service delivery of an employee, the complaint will be assessed and handled by the Deputy Independent Assessor. Unresolved straightforward complaints and serious complaints will be referred to the Deputy Independent Assessor at the earliest opportunity.

- Requests for internal reviews of an assessment will be actioned in accordance with the internal review procedure. Reviews will be conducted by Deputy Independent Assessor or the Independent Assessor as appropriate.
- Complaints will be carefully assessed and, where appropriate, confirmed with the client to ensure the complaint issues are properly understood.
- If a complaint is identified as falling outside the scope of the policy, this will be discussed with the client.
- Complaints assessed as unsuitable for handling by the Office will be referred to an appropriate external agency with the consent of the client.

Managing unreasonable conduct

- All clients will be treated with fairness and respect.
- In the absence of very good reasons to the contrary, all clients will have a right to access the OIA. Unreasonable conduct does not preclude there being a valid complaint issue.
- All complaints will be considered on their merits.
- The substance of a complaint dictates the level of resources dedicated to it, not a client's demands or behaviour.

Feedback

- Regular and timely communication will be provided to clients at appropriate intervals during the handling of the complaint.
- Outcomes from the consideration of the complaint will be communicated to clients at the earliest opportunity.
- Appropriate remedies are to be offered that are fair to both the client and the Office.
- Clients will be advised of available review options.
- Complaint outcomes, systemic improvements and actions requiring attention following the consideration of a complaint will be communicated to relevant units or employees in a timely manner.

Recording and reporting

- All serious service delivery complaints will be recorded in a complaints register.
- All requests for review of an assessment decision will be recorded in an Internal Review Register.
- High level information concerning service delivery complaints and internal review requests are to be reported in the annual report.

Monitoring effectiveness

- The Deputy Assessor is responsible for implementing and meeting the complaints policy reporting requirements.
- Complaint trends and systemic issues will be provided to the OIA Management Group on a quarterly basis to align with half-yearly and end of year reporting, and used to inform the continuous improvement process within the Office.
- An audit of compliance with this policy by the Principal Executive Officer should be undertaken annually as part of the annual report process.
- The operation of this policy will be reviewed every two years.

Roles and responsibilities

Deputy Independent Assessor

- Review service delivery complaints in accordance with the service delivery complaints procedure.
- Conduct internal reviews of assessment decisions in accordance with the internal review procedure unless it is appropriate to refer that review to the Independent Assessor.
- Review policy and procedures at least every two years.
- Ensure records are kept in the relevant recordkeeping system.



Independent Assessor

- Conduct internal reviews of assessment decisions in accordance with the Internal review requests policy.
- Review service delivery complaints in accordance with the service delivery complaints procedure.
- Ensure records are kept in the relevant recordkeeping system.

All Members of Staff

- Receive and handle complaints about service delivery or internal review requests as per procedures
- Ensure records are kept in the relevant recordkeeping system.

Principal Executive Officer

- Maintain a complaints register for serious service delivery complaints.
- Maintain a register of requests for internal review of assessment decisions.
- Provide six-monthly report to OIA Management Group on OIA service delivery complaints and requests for internal review data.
- Collect relevant data for the Annual Report
- Ensure CMS and internal review policy and procedures are included in induction process
- Ensure two-yearly training on Complaints Management and internal review policy and procedures is arranged for all staff.

Authority

- [Australian/New Zealand Standard – Guidelines for complaints management in organizations \(AS/NZS 10002-2014\)](#)
- [Public Service Act 2008, s.219A](#)

Relevant Procedures

[Service delivery complaints procedure](#)

[Internal Review of an OIA Assessment Decision procedure](#)

Definitions

internal review request	An expression of dissatisfaction about a decision made or action taken by the OIA in relation to the assessment of a complaint.
serious service delivery complaint	A service delivery complaint which is significant/complex with medium or high level of risk/detriment to the client or the OIA. Examples include complaints about significant delays, a challenge to the conduct or competency of the officer, or serious communication difficulties.
service delivery complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of this Office’s services or the conduct of employees.
straightforward service delivery complaint	A service delivery complaint which is likely to have minimal risk or detriment to the client or the Office. Examples include complaints about incorrectly addressed correspondence, minor delays or minor communication difficulties.

Related documents/policy/procedure/legislation

- [Australian/New Zealand Standard - Guidelines for complaints management in organizations \(AS/NZS 10002-2014\)](#)
- [Public Service Act 2008](#)