

DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

(External DPC Clients - includes Government agencies)

1. PURPOSE AND AIM

The **purpose** of this policy is to establish a general complaint handling process in respect to services and products provided by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (the Department) to any of its external clients (including Government agencies). It also provides general procedures for complainants and complaint recipients (Department Officers).

The **aim** of the policy is to:

- support the provision of the highest possible quality service to our external clients;
- increase the level of client satisfaction with the delivery of the Department's services and products; and
- enhance our relationship with our external clients.

2. DEFINITION OF CLIENT COMPLAINTS

Complaints for the purposes of this policy are defined as:

Any expression of dissatisfaction or concern made to the Department by, or on behalf of, an individual client, group (including government agencies) or member of the public, related to the department's products or services, or the complaints handling process itself.

This does not include expressions of dissatisfaction, concerns or complaints received from the external clients in respect to:

- Government policies and/or legislation outside the control of, and not the responsibility of the Department. (Note: Information of this nature will be monitored and where considered relevant by the Department passed on to the respective policy makers for their information or the complainant will be referred to the relevant agency/person).

or

- "Complaints" that are covered by other formal procedures, such as the following, shall be dealt with separately in accordance with the relevant procedures:
 - the DPC Grievance Procedures for Complaints of Discrimination and Harassment under the Equal Opportunity Act or other Public Sector Human Resource Management Standards; and
 - the review processes available under the Freedom of Information Act 1992 WA.

3. DPC CLIENTS

- External clients (general public, government and non-government agencies and organisations)
- Primary clients (The Premier and Cabinet – Ministers); and
- Other key clients (Current and Former Members of Parliament)

This policy focuses on our external clients, including Government agencies. Complaints received from our primary and key clients will be dealt with separately in accordance with existing internal processes and procedures.

4. FORM OF COMPLAINT

A complaint can be made by a client (or an advocate representing the client) orally (in person or by telephone) or lodged as a written complaint (letter, facsimile, email, or electronically via the DPC on-line comments/feedback/complaints systems available on either our main web-site www.dpc.wa.gov.au - see the [Contact Us](#) link or other more specific Department web-sites).

5. COMMITMENT

The Department is committed to:

- recognising a client's right to make complaints, comments or suggestions about the level and quality of services and products provided;
- encouraging the submission of any complaints clients may have with any of the services and products provided;
- providing an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints;
- ensuring that all complaints are heard and equitably resolved as soon as possible;
- monitoring complaints in an endeavour to improve the quality of services and products;
- providing clients with information about the complaint handling process; and
- promoting a positive attitude towards clients and the commitment to resolving complaints.

6. PRINCIPLES

The Department, in respect to the following matters, will:

- **Fairness:**
Recognise the need to be fair and equitable to both the complainant and the officer and/or part of the Department against whom the complaint is made.
- **Resources:**
Provide adequate resources with sufficient levels of delegated authority to ensure complaints received are addressed and concluded in a timely manner.
- **Visibility:**
Promote the Department's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures for lodging complaints to all external clients.
- **Access:**
Ensure the complaint process is available to all external clients of the Department.
- **Responsiveness:**
Deal with complaints quickly, treat complainants with courtesy and wherever possible resolve complaints at the first point of contact.
- **Assistance:**
Provide assistance for complainants in the formulation and lodgement of complaints if requested. (eg. this may include provision of a translator or assistance in completing complaint documentation etc).
- **Charges**
If a client has a complaint about a product or service, the complaints handling process will be provided free of charge, (subject to statutory requirements).
- **Remedies**
The Department will review the need to develop remedies that are fair and reasonable in the circumstances, to meet any legal obligations and generally comply with good management principles and practice.

- **Data Collection:**

Collect and record data on complaints lodged and outcomes to assist in the identification of systemic and recurring problems and/or potential improvements to service delivery and customer relations.

- **Accountability**

All employees shall take responsibility for effective complaints handling. Managers are responsible for implementing the policy and the procedures outlined in this document in their respective Branches.

- **Reviews:**

Regularly review the complaints handling process to ensure it is efficiently delivering effective outcomes.

7. RIGHTS OF COMPLAINANTS

Fairness - Complainants have rights to:

- be heard;
- know whether the Department's relevant service and products procedures have been followed;
- be provided with, and request all relevant material to support the complaint, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act*;
- be informed of the criteria and processes;
- be informed of the response of the officer or part of the Department complained of;
- be informed of the Department's decision and the reasons for that decision;
- know that a genuine, thorough and unbiased examination of the complaint has been undertaken; and
- confidentiality, if requested,

Responsiveness - Complainants shall be:

- advised how long it will take to deal with the complaint; and
- be kept informed of progress by telephone advice, correspondence or interview.

8. RIGHTS OF DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

Dealing Directly with the Complainant – Oral or Written

Department Officer has rights to:

- obtain sufficient detail about the complaint to enable a proper assessment/review and response to the complaint;
- advise the complainant the time required to provide information to resolve the complaint;
- agree with the complainant the form the response will take (oral or written);
- record complaint details, timing and the form of response where required for reporting purposes (to Manager).

Written Complaints against a Department Officer

Department Officer against whom complaint has been made has rights to:

- assemble sufficient detail about the complaint to enable the officer to properly respond to the complaint;
- place all relevant material before the officer appointed to review the complaint;
- provide oral and/or written submissions regarding the complaint; and
- be informed of the decision and the reason for the decision.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGERS

Managers shall:

- appoint and empower officers in their Branch with the authority to resolve complaints quickly and effectively;
- provide sufficient resources within their area of control to ensure the efficient and effective management of customer complaints;
- ensure appointed officers are trained in general and branch specific complaint handling skills;
- ensure a no blame culture exists;
- ensure all complaints are dealt with in an acceptable and timely manner;
- monitor progress of their complaints handling process;
- maintain an appropriate recording mechanism for oral and written complaints (in accordance with this policy and procedures);
- identify repetitive complaints;
- evaluate the data and determine the causes of complaints and whether remedial action is required;
- develop and implement continuous improvements to services and products that are the cause of complaints within their area of responsibility; and
- report in the Department's Annual Report any significant complaint issues, particularly systemic complaints and those resulting in service improvements.

[Click here to view the Complaint Procedures on the DPC website](#)