



Complaints Handling Policy

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) is committed to managing complaints professionally, efficiently, and fairly. Complaints are an important part of customer service and a way for the public to provide feedback, which assists DEW to improve performance and our interactions with the public.

What guides this Policy?

[Code of Ethics for the SA Public Sector](#)

Australian and New Zealand Standard: Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organizations (AS/NZS 10002:2014)

DPC Circular PC039: [Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector](#)

DPC Circular PC043: [Public Sector Responsiveness](#)

What is the scope of this Policy?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected, or legally required.

This policy applies to all DEW staff, agents, contractors, and volunteers who receive, manage, investigate and respond to complaints from members of the public.

Where DEW services are contracted out, DEW expects contracted service providers to have an accessible complaint management system. DEW will consider complaints regarding the actions of contracted service providers.

This policy does not apply to staff grievances, matters for the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption, Office for Public Integrity or the South Australian Ombudsman, Public Interest Information Disclosure's or SA Heritage Council complaints – separate processes apply.

What do I need to know?

Making a Complaint

Complaints are encouraged to be lodged electronically at <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/contact-us>, however complaints may also be lodged:

- in person;
- by telephone on (+61) 8204 1910; or
- in writing to GPO Box 1047 ADELAIDE SA 5001.

The Interpreting and Translating Centre provides access to an interpreter or translator if required – refer to <http://www.translate.sa.gov.au/home>. The National Relay Service provides a phone service for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment – refer to <http://relayservice.gov.au/>.

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A complaint should contain the following details:

- a clear description of the matter;
- when and where the matter occurred;
- the names and/or positions of anyone involved;
- any relevant documentation;
- the outcome(s) being sought; and
- contact information, or contact information of a representative.

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

Complaints may be made anonymously. However, anonymous complaints are more difficult to assess and investigate because DEW will not have the option to follow up if further information is required, nor will DEW be able to advise the outcome of the complaint.

Assessing a Complaint

Where possible, complaints are to be resolved at first contact with DEW.

Complaints are to be acknowledged promptly, ideally within five business days, and a substantive response provided within four weeks. Where this timeframe is not achievable, the person making a complaint or their representative will be contacted and advised on the expected timeframe for a response.

In instances where complaints involve complex matters (e.g. legal matters), a timeframe may not be provided, but DEW will endeavor to keep complainants or their representative informed on the status of their complaint.

DEW will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective, and unbiased manner. The person handling the complaint will be different from any staff member whose service or conduct is the subject of the complaint. Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed appropriately.

DEW will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf. Complaints lodged with DEW are however subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*. In these instances, DEW will take appropriate action to protect the identity of the complainant where practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by DEW as permitted by relevant privacy laws and confidentiality obligations.

Notification of Outcome

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issue(s) raised, DEW will contact the complainant or their representative and advise them of the:

- outcome of the complaint;
- any action undertaken;
- reason(s) for the decision;
- proposed remedy or resolution(s); and
- options for review.

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By default DEW will respond to complaints in the same format that they were received. Complainants or their representative can request that the response be provided in another format to ensure accessibility.

Options for review will include internal review by DEW, or raising the matter with either the South Australian Ombudsman or Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

John Schutz

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Date: 30 June 2019

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