

Client complaint management procedures



1. About these procedures

These client complaint management procedures set out the process for managing client complaints received under the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's (DJAG's) *Client complaint management policy*.

2. Application

These procedures apply to all employees of DJAG who receive a complaint from an internal or external client. They are to be used in conjunction with the *Client complaint management policy* and any relevant departmental guidelines.

These *Client complaint management procedures* outline the process for managing **complaints about a DJAG product, service, procedure, practice or policy, or DJAG staff conduct when providing a service**.

Complaints about a breach of privacy must be referred to the Right to Information and Privacy Unit and managed using the *Information privacy complaint management procedure*.

The process for managing out-of-scope matters identified in the *Client complaint management policy* is set out on the department's complaints webpage.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Receiving officer (*can be any DJAG employee*)

- Receives and assesses complexity of complaint
- Resolves simple complaints
- Advises complainant of the complaint process, including review options
- Refers complaints not resolved at the frontline to the managing officer
- Refers complaints to other areas as required.

Managing officer (*nominated by a business area manager, however can be the business area manager*)

- Assesses complaints to decide if they can be actioned by the business area
- Assigns complaints to complaint officers for action
- Liaises with senior management on complex issues
- Grants extensions
- Analyses and reports on complaints.

Complaint officer (*nominated by a business area manager*)

- Records complaints in the complaint register and tracks complaints using eDOCS (or other process if the business area does not have eDOCS)
- Assesses, investigates and resolves complaints
- Liaises with the complainant on a regular basis to provide progress updates and to seek and clarify information
- Advises complainant of outcome, sends the link to the survey and advises options for review if they are not satisfied.

Internal review officer (*nominated by a business area manager. Can be from the same business area as long as they weren't involved in the initial complaint investigation. Must have complaint officer training*)

- Manages the review of a complaint, decision and/or outcome as required/requested.

External review officer (*appointed by the Director-General, a Deputy Director-General or Assistant Director-General. External to the relevant business area. Must have complaint officer training*)

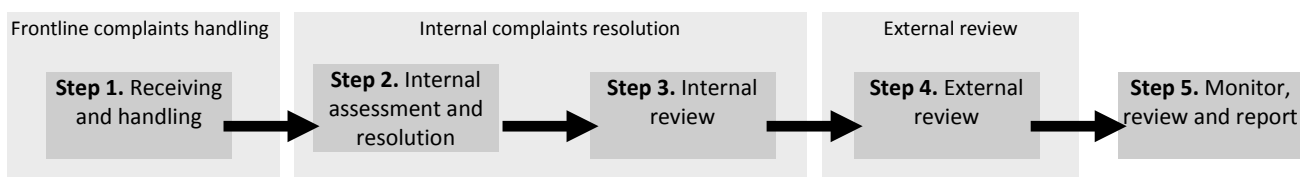
- Investigates complaints that cannot be resolved in the business area as required/requested.

External agency review (*the Queensland Ombudsman, Public Service Commission, Office of the Information Commissioner, or other relevant authority related to the nature of the complaint*)

- Investigates complaints as required/requested.

4. DJAG's client complaint management system

There are **five steps** in DJAG's client complaint management system:



Source: model adapted from the Queensland Ombudsman's guide to developing effective complaints management policies and procedures (2006).

Step 1. Receiving and handling

- **Receiving officers:**

- respond in a positive and courteous manner and read DJAG's privacy statement to the complainant:
 - *"The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is collecting your personal information for the purposes of identifying and dealing with your complaint, under the department's Client complaint management policy. Your personal information may be forwarded to the business unit or region relevant to your complaint so your complaint can be addressed. Your personal information will not be provided to any person you are complaining about, unless it is specifically required to ensure your complaint is appropriately dealt with. Any use of your personal information will be limited to that necessary to investigate and respond to the issues raised in your complaint."*
- offer complainants the opportunity to provide feedback using a *manual complaint form* or *online complaint form*.
- listen to the complainant, confirm particulars of the complaint, seek to understand what outcomes (remedy) the complainant is after and advise complainant of timeframes for resolution and review options (using the *Client complaint management policy*).
- resolve simple complaints (see the *Client complaint management policy* for descriptions) and liaise with a managing officer about what should be captured in the complaint register.
- refer standard, complex and privacy complaints to a managing officer. Standard and complex complaints will be actioned by the complaint officer and privacy complaints will be directed to the Right to Information and Privacy Unit for action.
- provide the complainant with assistance as required (e.g. arranging an interpreter or other assistance).



Step 2. Internal assessment and resolution

- **Receiving officers, managing officers and complaint officers:**

- assess complaints (using the *Client complaint management policy*) to decide if complaints are in scope and decide the complainant's complexity and issue.
- refer any out of scope complaints to the appropriate process (using the process set out on the department's complaints webpage) and complaints outside of the area's responsibility to the appropriate area. *Seek the complainant's consent to refer complaint or provide them with the relevant details to contact the area directly.
- refer complaints if the complainant requests it or if there is a real or perceived conflict of interest which may jeopardise the process.

- **Complaint officers:**

- create a secure file in eDOCS or other available document management system to record and track the complaint. Store your *Complaint action record* here and any other correspondence relating to the complaint. Your *Complaint register* should also be stored in a secure location where only the relevant staff have access to it.
- use the *Complaint action record* and *Complaint register* to record and action the complaint.
- if the complaint is classified as 'complex' an investigation report must be completed and all appropriate

information collected. This must be saved in the eDocs file with other complaint information.

- acknowledge complaints within five working days of the complaint being received.
- decide a remedy (consulting managing officers where required), discuss outcomes with a managing officer, respond to the complainant (within five working days of the outcome being known), record outcomes in the *Complaint action record* and *Complaint register*, then close the complaint.
- **Complainants** may request an internal review if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation.



Step 3. Internal review

- **Business area managers** nominate an **internal review officer** (with complaint officer training) if an internal review is required or requested.
- **Internal review officers** can be from the same business area as long as they were not involved in the initial complaint investigation.
- **Business area managers** should liaise with each other to find suitable internal review officers if an officer outside the relevant business area is required to conduct the review.
- **Complainants** should clearly detail in writing the grounds on which the matter is to be reviewed.
- **Internal review officers** reopen the complaint and complete the review within 14 business days of the request being received, recording their findings in the complaint file and relevant information in the *Complaint register*.



Step 4. External review

- The **Director-General**, a **Deputy Director-General** or **Assistant Director-General** can appoint a complaint officer from another business area as an external review officer if a complaint cannot be resolved within the relevant business area.
- If a complaint cannot be resolved within DJAG, or the complainant requests a review by an external agency, the complaint should be referred to an external party. *The complainant's consent must be obtained before referring the complaint, or provide the complainant with details to contact the external reviewer directly.
- External review may include review by the Queensland Ombudsman, Public Service Commission, the Information Privacy Commissioner or other relevant authority related to the nature of the complaint.



Step 5. Monitor, review and report

- **Complaint officers** and **managing officers** monitor complaints (number received and timeframes for resolution).
- **Managing officers** and **business area managers** review and analyse complaints on a regular basis.
- **Managing officers** provide complaints reports, approved by the relevant divisional head, to the Corporate Governance Unit quarterly.
- **Corporate Governance** prepares a complaints report to the Board of Management quarterly and publishes annually on its website information about complaint trends for matters received during the financial year

Need help?

If you need more information or help with managing complaints, please speak with your manager in the first instance. A separate resource – the *Client complaint management handbook* is also available that provides more details and handy tips to help staff manage client complaints.

A copy of the handbook can be found on the intranet with other complaint management resources, or by contacting the Corporate Governance Unit: corpgov@justice.qld.gov.au or phone: (07) 323 93853.