



## **Great Southern Development Commission**

# **COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES**

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# COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since its inception the Great Southern Development Commission has developed a range of internal policies and relevant manuals in accordance with best practice management and Government requirements.

While the GSDC has installed sound principles of management and encourages ethical behaviour and integrity of the highest order from its officers, it is aware that at some point in time, it may for one reason or another attract complaints from clients.

The Commission understands that it is important to have a mechanism in place to assist it with the management of complaints and to this end, this policy document has been produced.

It is important to note that this policy does not seek to apportion blame, but requires improvement through appropriate action.

This Policy supports: -

- ◆ The right of clients to complain.
- ◆ The view that complaints may lead to improvements in service delivery
- ◆ That an open and accessible complaint process is important to GSDC
- ◆ The importance of public recognition and accessibility of the complaint process
- ◆ The complaint process should be promoted to clients so that the pathway for clients can be negotiated with ease
- ◆ Dealing with complaints immediately and positively
- ◆ If possible and appropriate, dealing with complaints at agency level.

This complaint procedure is bound by the legal framework in which it operates:

- Freedom of Information Act 1992
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984.

This legal framework may impose restrictions and obligations on all the parties involved.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

Broadly speaking the principles that underpin the Complaints Management Process are:

- 2.1 Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
- 2.2 Promotion and transparency
- 2.3 Organisational commitment to effective complaint management
- 2.4 Fairness to all Parties
- 2.5 Timeliness of response
- 2.6 Assistance with complaints
- 2.7 Improvement of outcomes

### 2.1 Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

Clients can expect to:

- 2.1.1 Be treated with respect
- 2.1.2 Have complaints treated as genuine and properly investigated
- 2.1.3 Be given appropriate and easily understood information regarding the process of complaints
- 2.1.4 Have their complaint issues adequately addressed
- 2.1.5 Participate in decisions with the management of their complaint
- 2.1.6 Have information about their complaint filed appropriately
- 2.1.7 Have personal information remain confidential within the complaint process
- 2.1.8 Be able to comment on the process of the complaint management
- 2.1.9 Have their comments regarding their experience of the complaint process respected, documented and acted upon.
- 2.1.10 Not suffer any negative impact as a result of making a complaint

Clients are expected to:

- 2.1.11 Provide pertinent information to the GSDC regarding the issue of complaint
- 2.1.12 Respect the role of GSDC staff and their right to respond to a complaint
- 2.1.13 Treat all GSDC officers with courtesy and consideration
- 2.1.14 Ask for assistance when unsure about information given regarding the complaint management process.
- 2.1.15 Keep appointments, bringing relevant documents and information.
- 2.1.16 Raise any concerns about the complaint management process with the GSDC staff as soon as possible.

### 2.2 Promotion and Transparency

GSDC shall demonstrate commitment by:-

- 2.2.1 Publication and promotion of information on how to lodge a complaint and acknowledgment of the client's right to complain
- 2.2.2 Providing information to clients in a format that they can understand, and have this information explained to them by the GSDC

- 2.2.3 Operating the complaint management process in an environment, which recognises the importance of openness, accountability and service improvement
- 2.2.4 Receiving and accepting complaints and providing opportunities for feedback about their service
- 2.2.5 Recognising that details of a complaint are accessible under Freedom of Information Legislation by all parties involved

## **2.3 Commitment**

GSDC shall demonstrate its commitment to appropriate management of complaints by:-

- 2.3.1 Providing sufficient resources (human & material) to ensure all complaints are adequately managed and investigated
- 2.3.2 Putting in place a defined complaint process
- 2.3.3 Cooperate with the recommended time frames for complaint resolution
- 2.3.4 Making available clearly defined information systems, educational resources and training to manage complaints
- 2.3.5 Providing support processes for staff dealing with complaints

## **2.4 Fairness to all parties**

Consistent with the principle of fairness and the right of clients, all complaints will be treated as legitimate. Complainants and respondents will be afforded natural justice throughout the complaint process. Complainants can withdraw their complaint at any stage.

All complaints will be investigated without prejudice.

## **2.5 Confidentiality**

GSDC recognises that complainants may wish to keep their complaint confidential, and as such, ensures that policies and procedures pertaining to complaints reflect the need to deal with complaints in a confidential manner.

However, it is noted that any information or documents provided to and generated by the Commission are subject to the statutory requirements as specified under the Freedom of Information Act 1992.

It is also recognised that complainants and those against whom a complaint has been lodged, are entitled to adequate protection, procedural fairness and natural justice throughout the course of the investigation.

The complaint process will ensure that:

- 2.5.1 Complainants will be managed in confidence

- 2.5.2 Complainants are entitled to protection and to expect no difficulties as a consequence of their complaints. If difficulties arise this should be referred back to the Complaints Coordinator or officer charged with responsibility for the complaints management process
- 2.5.3 Complaints will be recorded appropriately
- 2.5.4 Complaint documentation is to be located and stored in the CEO's office with restricted access

## **2.6 Timeliness**

GSDC shall demonstrate commitment to the resolution of complaints in a timely manner by:

- 2.6.1 Acknowledgment of all complaints in writing within **5** working days of receipt of the complaint
- 2.6.2 Informing the complainant of the approximate time that it will take to deal with the complaint
- 2.6.3 Investigation of complaints will begin within **5** working days of receipt. If there is a delay the complainant will be regularly advised at **15** working days intervals of the progress of the investigation.
- 2.6.4 Complaints will be resolved as soon as practicable in the best interest of all parties ideally within **30** working days of receipt.

## **2.7 Assistance with Complaints**

GSDC shall demonstrate commitment to ensuring that all clients have the opportunity to provide feedback by:

- 2.7.1 Ensuring clients with special needs (eg disability, elderly, remote, indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse) will be provided with appropriate information and/or assistance in making a complaint
- 2.7.2 Offering assistance/support to the complainant in making a complaint
- 2.7.3 Encouraging complainants to bring a family member/support person/union official to any meetings if desired
- 2.7.4 Providing confirmation of a verbal complaint by sending/providing a written summary of the complaint as requested by the complainant
- 2.7.5 By providing adequate support to respondents to complaints. This may include assistance with providing a report in response to a complaint. It may also include advice on accessing counseling/debriefing as necessary.

## **3. DEFINITIONS**

### **3.1. Complaint**

- 3.1.1 An expression of dissatisfaction or concern by or on behalf of an individual client or group regarding any aspect of service provision or activity of the GSDC

- 3.1.2 A complaint can be made verbally or in writing. Verbal complaints should be documented immediately by the staff member who received the complaint

### 3.2 Concern

An expression of concern regarding any aspect of service where the customer states:

- 3.2.1 they are not making a complaint,  
3.2.2 where the issue can be resolved by the provision of explanation of processes

A concern is noted and action regarding the concern is acted upon.

## 4. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

The following are established within GSDC:

- 4.1 A central point of coordination, being the Regional Manager Community & Corporate, who will:
- register the complaint
  - monitor the management of complaints
- 4.2 The Regional Manager Community & Corporate will prepare a letter of acknowledgement noting the receipt of the complaint, for the CEO, within **5** working days and will include:
- information on the investigation process
  - direct contact information.
- 4.3. An investigation procedure:

It is essential that GSDC staff record the complaint immediately  
Transfer the information onto the Complaint Form  
Refer the matter to the Regional Manager Community & Corporate  
The Regional Manager Community & Corporate will report the matter to the CEO  
The CEO will review all the information and make a determination.

(See Complaint Management Form and Complaint Process Flowchart)

- 4.4. GSDC will arrange, to supply a response to the complainant within **15** working days advising, under the CEO's signature :
- that the matter has been dealt with or
  - that an investigation is still being undertaken with a negotiated timeframe for the final report or outcome

The final response to the complainant will include:

- information relevant to the complaint
- explanation of the event(s)
- adequate reasons for any decisions made
- any changes that have resulted from the complaint
- providing an apology as appropriate

4.5 In the event of the complainant not being satisfied with the CEO's determination they may request for a review of the decision. This request is preferably to be submitted in a written format citing their reasons for requesting the review.

The review will be undertaken within **10** working days by the Regional Manager Community & Corporate who will take into consideration all the information considered in the first review, and the reasons cited for the matter to be reconsidered.

The Regional Manager Community & Corporate will make a final decision and will prepare a written response which will include

- information relevant to the complaint
- explanation of the event(s)
- adequate reasons for any decisions made
- any changes that have resulted from the complaint
- providing an apology as appropriate; and
- information on where to seek an independent review of complaint, if appropriate

## **5. GUIDE TO HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

**In all cases it is important to clarify what does the complainant want to happen?**

- 1 Register their concern  
The complainant may express that they do not want anything to happen, but wish to bring this issue to the attention of the GSDC
- 2 Receive an explanation  
The complainant wishes an investigation and explanation of why something occurred
- 3 Obtain and receive an apology  
The complainant believes there has been wrong doing and they are entitled to an apology
  - 3.1 Apology from the Commission
  - 3.2 Apology from staff member involved
- 4 Access to service - the complainant expects the service previously sought to be received
- 5 Change in procedure
- 6 Change in the policy



## **Recommendation/action taken as a result of this complaint**

This section demonstrates that there was a response documented as a result of the complaint, even if no further action was required, that a conscious decision was made about the recommendations or action that the GSDC would take.

- 1 Quality improvement activity initiated and system changes made
- 2 Policy and / or procedure written or modified
- 3 Training/education of staff provided
- 4 Staff member/contractor counseled and offered performance support
- 5 Duties changed
- 6 Formal warning given
- 7 Formal warning documented on personnel record
- 8 No further action required

## **6. STAFF COMPLAINTS**

Staff complaints/queries about other staff are not addressed under this policy, but are to be addressed through normal management grievance processes.

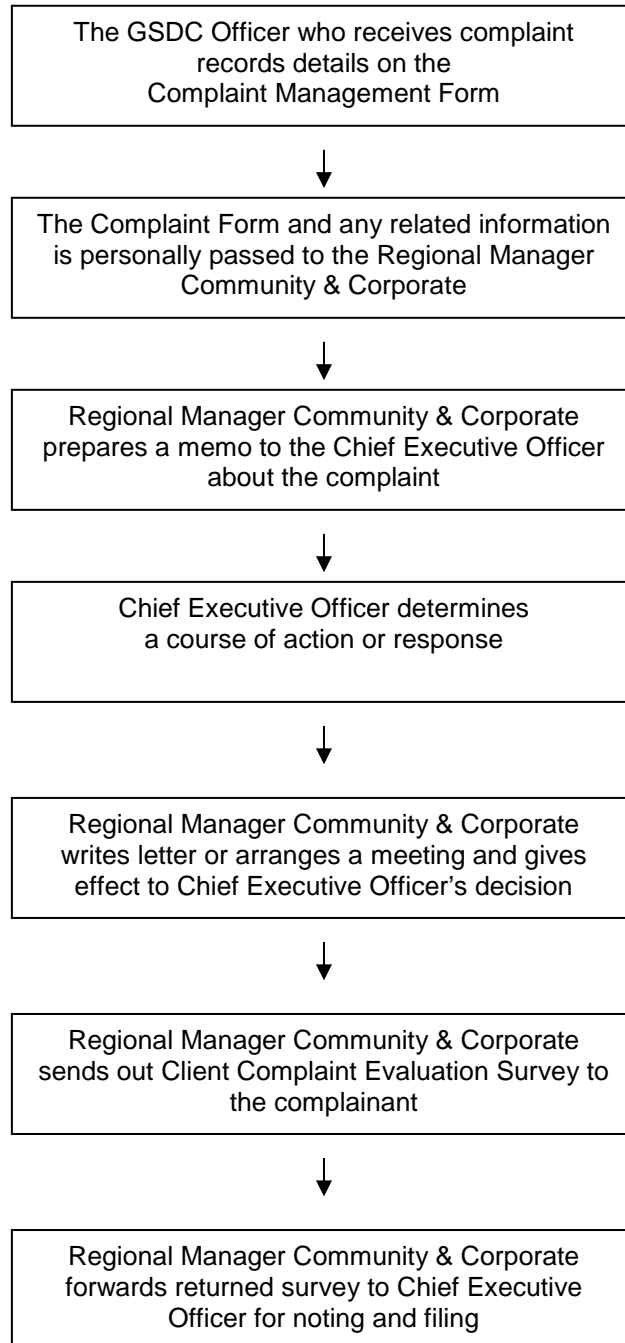
## **7. STORAGE OF COMPLAINT RECORDS**

All complaints will be recorded separately in a special Complaints File, which will be retained in the CEO's office with restricted access permissions.

Records of all complaints are to be retained for **7** years by GSDC

## APPENDIX 1

### COMPLAINT PROCESS FLOWCHART, PROCEDURE & FORMS



## **COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE**

The investigation of a complaint will offer the opportunity to ascertain what occurred, to whom and how. This information will form the basis of a response to the complainant's concern by:-

1. Providing a more timely response to the complainant,
2. Identifying areas for improvement to prevent recurrence

The conduct of an investigation should include:

- Gathering all relevant documentation
- May include interviewing the complainant and/or significant others.
- May include interviewing staff members involved in the incident.
- Complaints may not arise from a specific incident but rather may be about an activity of the Commission

The following information will provide the key facts and should form the basis of the investigation report.

- Description of complaint – what happened?
- Time of complaint
- Exact location of incident/complaint
- What should have reasonably occurred, including references to supporting policies and procedures
- What should not have occurred
- Recommendations to prevent recurrence
- Time-line for implementation of recommendations
- Strategies for implementation of recommendations
- Timeframe for evaluation of effectiveness of changes
- Strategies for evaluation of effectiveness of changes
- Gathering of contributing factors and analysis



# CLIENT COMPLAINT EVALUATION SURVEY

We seek your assistance in obtaining feedback about the Complaints Process at the Great Southern Development Commission

You brought your concern to our attention on ..... at .....  
about.....

Would you mind answering the 10 questions on our survey?

Please circle a number on questions 1, 2 and 3.

If you choose 1, it means you received excellent service and you strongly **agree** with the statement.

If you choose 5, it means you received appalling service in the management of your concerns and you strongly **disagree** with the statement.

Other questions require a Yes or No response. There is an opportunity for you to make comments at the end of the survey.

Q1.	My complaint was taken seriously (Please circle a number)				
	<b>1</b> Very seriously	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Not seriously

Q2.	I was treated with respect (Please circle a number)				
	<b>1</b> Very respectfully	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Very disrespectfully

Q3.	I was satisfied with the information given (Please circle a number)				
	<b>1</b> Very Satisfied	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Very dissatisfied

Q4. Were you given the name and phone number of a person to contact for information?  
(Please circle your response)

Yes

No

Q5. Did you need additional assistance in making your complaint (eg interpreter, written assistance (Please circle your response)

Yes

No

Q6. If yes, were you satisfied with the assistance given? (Please circle your response)  
Yes No

Comment:

Q7. My complaint was treated in a confidential manner (Please circle your response)  
 Yes  No

Q8. I was kept informed of the progress of my complaint (Please circle your response)  
Yes No

Q9. I did not suffer any negative impact from making a complaint (Please circle your response)  
Yes No

Q10. I achieved what I expected by raising my concern (Please circle your response)  
Yes No

Do you have any suggestions, comments that would help us improve the way we deal with concerns raised by our clients?

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*Thank you for your time and cooperation!*

**Please return the completed form to the GSDC  
PO Box 280  
ALBANY WA 6331**

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