



Great Southern Development Commission

Complaints Management Policy

Overview

The Great Southern Development Commission (Commission) is committed to providing its clients with high quality services to meet their needs. If clients are not happy with the services we provide, or the way in which they are provided, they have the right to make a complaint.

We encourage feedback to enable any issue to be investigated and, if necessary, the problem rectified. Of course, we are also appreciative of positive feedback, which will help reinforce the good work of our staff.

The Commission has developed a suite of internal policies and procedures in accordance with best practice management and government and legislative requirements. A suitable policy and procedure for addressing any complaints the Commission may receive is an integral part of the Commission's governance arrangements.

The PSC Circular on Complaints Management requires conformance to the principles of the Australian Standard on Complaints Handling AS/NZS 10002:2014.

Definitions

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction by or on behalf of an individual client or group regarding any aspect of service provision or activity of the Great Southern Development Commission that requires a formal response.

Concern: Feedback received regarding any aspect of service provision or activity of the Great Southern Development Commission where the issue can be resolved by the provision of information or explanation.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to ensure:

- Any complaints are addressed immediately and appropriately
- The process of addressing complaints leads to improvements in service delivery
- The complaints process remains open and accessible at an agency level

The complaints procedure exists in the context of legislation including the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* which may impose restrictions and obligations on parties involved.

Policy

Complaints will be dealt with effectively and promptly without prejudice or bias. At all times we will be honest and fair in our dealings with customers.

A complaint may be made in person, by phone, fax, and email or in writing. The staff member who receives the complaint should document verbal complaints immediately.

As required by the Complaints Management Guidelines issued by the Ombudsman of Western Australia, the Commission will conform to the principles of the Australian Standard on Complaints Handling AS ISO 10002. These principals are:

- **Visibility:** Information about how and where to complain will be well publicised to customers, personnel and other interested parties.
- **Accessibility:** The complaints handling process will be easily accessible to all complainants. This includes readily accessible information about the process, flexibility in the methods of making complaints and special arrangements and/or support for complainants with specific needs (including interpreters).
- **Responsiveness:** Receipt of each complaint will be acknowledged to the complainant immediately. Complaints will be addressed promptly, complainants will be treated courteously and kept informed of the progress of their complaint through the complaints handling process.
- **Objectivity:** Each complaint will be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner through the complaints handling process.
- **Charges:** Access to the complaints handling process will be free of charge to the complainant.
- **Confidentiality:** Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant will be available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint and will be actively protected from disclosure, unless the customer or complainant expressly consents to its disclosure.
- **Investigation of Complaints:** Every reasonable effort will be made to investigate all the relevant circumstances and information surrounding a complaint.
- **Customer-Focused Approach:** The Commission will adopt a customer-focused approach, be open to feedback including complaints, and will show commitment to resolving complaints by its actions.
- **Resolution of Complaint:** Following an appropriate investigation, the Commission will offer a response to the complaint. The decision or action taken regarding the complaint will be communicated to the complainant as soon as the decision or action is taken.
- **Accountability:** The Commission will ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions of the Commission with respect to complaints handling is clearly established.
- **Continual Improvement:** The continual improvement of the complaints handling process and the quality of services will be a permanent objective of the organisation.

Clients can expect to:

- Be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness;
- Have complaints treated as genuine, with confidentiality and be properly investigated, documented and addressed;
- Be given appropriate and easily understood information regarding the process of complaints and the opportunity to comment on the complaint management process;

- Not be discriminated against because of any disability, race, religion, age, sex or sexual orientation; and
- Not be victimised or harassed as a result of any complaint made nor suffer any negative impact as a result of making a complaint.

Clients are expected to:

- Respect the role of Commission staff in responding to a complaint and treat all officers with courtesy and consideration;
- Provide documentation and evidence and all relevant information to the Commission regarding the issue of complaint; and
- Raise any concerns or queries about the complaint management process with the Commission staff promptly.

The Commission will:

- Provide sufficient resources to ensure that all complaints are properly managed and investigated without prejudice;
- Ensure the complaints process is prioritised to comply with the following time frames for resolution:
 - Acknowledgment of complaint in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint, including an estimated timeframe for resolution that should be no more than 30 working days.
 - Investigation of complaints commenced within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint.
 - Periodic updates to the client in writing not longer than 10 working days apart during the course of the complaint investigation process.
- Provide support to staff dealing with complaints
- Ensure that clients with special needs are provided with appropriate information and/or assistance in making a complaint and are allowed to bring a support person to any meetings.

Confidentiality

Notwithstanding the Commission's commitment to protect any matters of confidentiality that arise during a complaint process, 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*.

All complaints will be handled in accordance with the published Complaints Management Procedure.

Who does the Policy apply to?

The policy applies to all employees resourced to the Commission regardless of classification or level, full time or part-time status and whether on permanent or on fixed term contracts.

Staff complaints/queries about other staff are not addressed under this policy but are addressed via normal human resource management processes.