

Complaints Management Policy

Effective date

This policy will take effect from 15 March 2012.

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1 Policy Statement

Public Service Commission Directive 13/06 requires all government agencies implement a complaints management system. Effective complaints management is good business practice. Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is committed to managing complaints in an accountable, transparent, timely and meaningful way. This policy will ensure all complaints are dealt with fairly and staff members are competent to manage complaints to resolution.

TMR is committed to the following complaints management principles:

- complaints are addressed fairly, reasonably and in a timely manner
- complainants are treated with respect
- complainants are not to suffer reprisal
- easy access to information and advice
- application of natural justice and provision of avenues for review
- protection of privacy and confidentiality
- lodgement of complaint without charge
- clear accountability for complaints handling
- complaints data is integrated into business improvement processes.

The Complaints Management Policy and its application is regularly evaluated to ensure it remains an effective and an appropriate mechanism to business improvement.

2 Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- provide a uniform process across TMR for effective and prompt resolution of complaints
- ensure complaints are managed in an accountable and transparent way
- effectively monitor complaints and identify business improvement opportunities
- ensure compliance with complaint management principles.

3 Benefits

The benefits of this policy are to:

- encourage the expression of dissatisfaction in a positive environment
- ensure improvements in business processes by identifying complaint trends, systemic issues and corrective action.

4 Scope

This policy applies to complaints about TMR's policies, products and services and/or its staff, excluding specific complaints (as detailed in the Complaints Management Procedures).

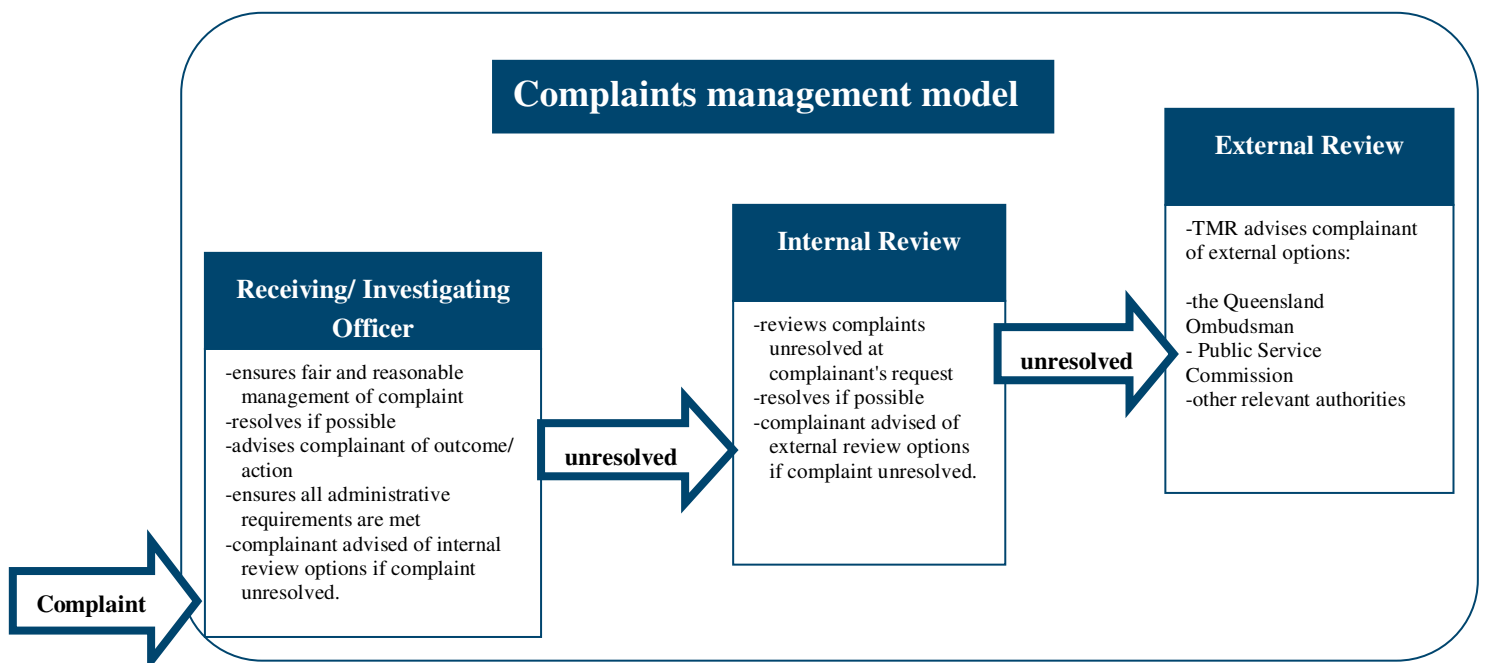
This policy does not replace, modify or revoke any legislation or policy dealing with complaints about privacy, right to information, official misconduct or mal-administration, criminal conduct or illegality, public interest disclosures or matters specifically dealt with through other legislative and/or appeal processes.

The following are *not* classified as complaints for TMR:

- questions, enquiries and requests for information or action
- feedback obtained during formal consultation or negotiation processes
- feedback received about matters outside the direct responsibility of TMR
- feedback received about another agency or organisation.

5 Complaints management model

TMR's complaints management model is a staged way of receiving, assessing, recording, processing, responding to, reviewing and monitoring complaints. This process enables continuous improvement and informed decision making.



6 Applicability

This policy applies to all staff members including temporary and permanent staff, consultants, contractors, students or any other person who provides services on a paid or voluntary basis to TMR.

7 Rationale

A key element toward achieving our vision of **Connecting Queensland** is to engage with our stakeholders. Effective complaints management is a valuable way we can identify business improvement opportunities.

TMR's complaints management satisfies the requirements of the *Australian Standard for Customer Satisfaction - Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations (AS ISO 10002:2004, MOD)*, the *Office of the Public Service Commissioner - Directive 13/06 "Complaints Management Systems"*, the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* and the *Public Service Act 2008*.

8 Consultation

The Divisional Complaints Coordinator Network was consulted in the development of this policy. The divisional complaints coordinators consulted within their division.

9 Policy Elements

Complaints are managed in accordance with the principles described in Section 1 of this policy. Complaints management in TMR reflects the following elements consistent with *Directive 13/06*:

9.1 Visibility and Access

- Complaints about TMR policies, products or services can be lodged by any member of the public, customer, stakeholder or staff member.
- Information regarding where and how to lodge a complaint and anticipated response times is available through communication mechanisms such as TMR's website, intranet and TMR public offices.
- Complaints are accepted verbally and in writing through a variety of channels such as face-to-face, telephone, letter, email, facsimile or internet. Anonymous complaints are accepted.
- TMR is committed to providing assistance to any complainant upon request. In addition, services are provided to assist persons with any disability and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Complaints management information is available to the public, customers, stakeholders and staff members.

9.2 Responsiveness

- TMR recognises that complaints may be complex and may contain sensitive issues requiring investigation and analysis. Management of complaints is to be appropriate and timely.
- Staff members handling complaints are provided with information, education and training through established TMR mechanisms such as the intranet, induction training and information sessions. This ensures a consistent approach is followed in the management and resolution of complaints across TMR.

9.3 Assessment and Action

- When receiving a complaint reasonable steps are taken to ensure the complaint is properly understood and clarification or additional information is sought from the complainant where required.
- Complaints are assessed, recorded and reported by the group or division responsible for the policy, product or service the complaint is about. Where a complaint is about the service of a staff member, the complaint is assessed and investigated by the appropriate supervisor/manager.
- Complaints are managed according to this policy unless classified as a “specific complaint” as detailed in the Complaint Management Procedures.
- In the event TMR is unable or cannot address the complaint, where possible, the complaint will be appropriately referred within government with the consent of the complainant.

9.4 Feedback

- The progress of the complaint is monitored until the outcome is communicated to the complainant and all reasonable avenues are exhausted.
- Appropriate remedies are to be offered that are fair to both the complainant and TMR.
- If the resolution is not satisfactory to the complainant, information will be provided about available review options.
- If a review is requested, this will be conducted by an independent officer, senior to the original officer.
- As a result of systemic issues and trends, potential improvements are identified within TMR.

9.5 Monitoring Effectiveness

- Executive Directors/Regional Directors and General Managers are responsible for implementing the Complaints Management Policy and the Complaints Management Procedures within their respective areas of responsibility.
- TMR records, monitors and analyses trends and revises relevant components of the complaints process where appropriate.
- Complaints trends and systemic issues are provided to the Board of Management and Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis and are used to inform the continuous improvement process within TMR.

10 Review/Evaluation

This policy is reviewed annually by Governance and Policy Unit, Governance and Planning Branch (Corporate Governance Division). Reviews will be conducted more frequently as deemed appropriate.

The policy and application of procedures will be regularly reviewed by the Evaluation and Review Unit, Internal Audit Branch (Corporate Governance Division).

11 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the definitions below apply:

Term	Definition
Complaint	The verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction about the policies, products or services provided by TMR or its staff.
Confidentiality	Access to information is controlled. Information does not have to be of a personal nature.
Complainant	The person who makes the complaint.
Divisional Complaints Coordinator	A representative in the division/ region nominated as the local point of reference for complaints management. They provide assistance, advice and have reporting responsibilities.
Employee complaint	A complaint managed under <i>Public Service Commission Directive 08/10 – Managing Employee Complaints</i> involving workplace harassment, workplace bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment or treatment that is unfair and/ or unreasonable.
Enquiry	This is a question or query about the policies, products or services of TMR or its staff.
External complaint	A complaint received from a member of the public, stakeholder or staff member (acting as a member of the community rather than as an employee of TMR).
Executive Management	One or more members of the department's leadership team.
Feedback obtained during consultation or negotiation processes	Feedback received in response to a formal process where the department has invited comment.
Internal complaint	A complaint received from a staff member acting as an employee of TMR or a complaint received from another government department regarding an issue where TMR is acting as an internal service provider to this department.
Natural justice	Providing a person who might be adversely affected by an administrative decision with a fair hearing before the decision is made.
Public Interest Disclosure	A disclosure received about a substantial and specific danger to the environment; or the conduct of another person that could, if proved, be a reprisal; or a substantial and specific danger to the health and safety of a person with a disability.
Request for service or action	This is a request for TMR to provide a particular service or undertake a specific action.
Specific complaint	A complaint with particular legislative, contractual or other Queensland Government Directive requirements or a complaint that has been granted a specific exemption (as detailed in the Complaints Management Procedures).
Staff member	All temporary and permanent staff, consultants, contractors, students or any other person who provides services on a paid or voluntary basis to TMR.
Systemic problem	This is a failure of a product, service, system, policy or procedure which causes or contributes to a complaint, as opposed to an employee's error in judgement.

12 References

- Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service 2011
- Crime and Misconduct Act 2001
- Department of Main Roads Complaints Management Policy 2008
- Public Service Commission Directive 13/06 Complaints Management Systems
- Public Service Commission Directive 08/10 Managing employee complaints
- Queensland Ombudsman State Perspective – April 2007, November 2006 and June/July 2006
- Queensland Ombudsman Effective Complaints Management Fact Sheets 1-16
- Queensland Ombudsman Complaints Management Project Phase 1 Report December 2005
- Queensland Ombudsman Complaints Management Workshops (2008)
- Queensland Ombudsman Developing Effective Complaints Management Policy and Procedures December 2005
- Queensland Ombudsman Effective Complaints Management Self Audit Checklist
- Queensland Transport Complaints Management Policy 2008
- Standards Australia: Australian Standard (AS ISO 10002-2006) Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaint handling in organisations
- Standards Australia: Handbook (HB 229-2006) The why and how of complaints handling