

# Complaint management policy

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# Contents

Version control .....	iii
<b>1. Policy framework .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Policy statement .....	1
1.2 Authority .....	1
1.3 Objectives.....	1
1.4 Guiding principles.....	2
<b>2. Scope and application .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Who does this policy apply to? .....	2
2.2 What is a complaint?.....	2
2.3 Types of complaints.....	2
2.4 Out-of-scope complaints .....	3
2.5 Anonymous complaints .....	3
<b>3. Complaint management process .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 Complaint lifecycle .....	3
3.2 Receiving and acknowledging a complaint.....	4
3.3 Access to interpreters .....	4
3.4 Steps of the complaint process .....	4
<b>4. Standards, awareness, and training .....</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Service standards.....	7
4.2 Staff awareness and training.....	7
4.3 Monitoring and reviewing.....	8
<b>5. References and additional resources .....</b>	<b>8</b>

## Version control

The following table outlines the approval history of this document.

VERSION	DETAILS	AUTHOR	DATE APPROVED
1.0	First draft	Director	June 2018
2.0	Review and update to ensure consistency with the <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i>	Director	November 2019
2.1	Minor updates	Director	January 2022
2.2	Annual review	Director	March 2022
2.3	Annual review	Director	November 2023
3.0	Review and update to ensure consistency with the revised DoJ Client Complaints Management Policy	Director	November 2025

A copy of this Complaints Management Policy is made available on the [Council website](#).

# 1. Policy framework

## 1.1 Policy statement

The Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (the Council) is committed to delivering high-quality services that meet the needs of its clients and the community. The Council recognises the value of feedback, both positive and negative, as a tool for continuous improvement and effective service delivery.

The Council encourages individuals and organisations to share feedback, including any concerns or dissatisfaction with any act or practice. Such feedback is viewed as an opportunity to learn, enhance service delivery, and refine practices and procedures to better service clients and the community.

The Council is dedicated to managing complaints in a timely, people-focused, and proactive manner, while ensuring human rights are protected and respected. Accessibility and cultural responsibility form the cornerstone of the Council's complaints management system.

## 1.2 Authority

This policy adheres to:

- Section 264 of the Public Sector Act 2022
- Human Rights Act 2019
- Queensland Public Service *Customer Complaint Management Framework*
- Queensland Public Service *Customer Complaint Management Guideline*
- Queensland Ombudsman's *Guidelines on Complaint Management*
- Guiding principles of the Australian Standard *Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*

## 1.3 Objectives

The objectives of the Council's complaints framework are to:

- Maintain transparency and accountability in carrying out the Council's functions.
- Enhance staff capability to manage and resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, and consistently.
- Promote confidence in the Council's commitment to service delivery, effective complaint handling, and sound administrative decision-making.
- Identify opportunities for improvement by analysing complaint trends and feedback to enhance overall performance.

## 1.4 Guiding principles

The Council's complaints management system aligns with the Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework and adheres to the following principles:

- Customer focused
- Timely and fair
- Clear communication
- Improving services
- Accountable

## 2. Scope and application

### 2.1 Who does this policy apply to?

This Complaints Management Policy applies to all Council members, Secretariat staff, and any contractors or consultants engaged by the Council, whether paid or unpaid.

This policy has been adapted from the Department of Justice (DoJ) *Client complaint management policy and procedure*, as well as the Queensland Ombudsman's *Complaints management policy and procedure guide*.

For complaints specifically relating to public servants, further information can be found in the DoJ [Client complaints management policy](#).

### 2.2 What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction about policies, products, projects, or services provided by the Council or Secretariat staff.

### 2.3 Types of complaints

The council recognises multiple categories of complaints, as outlined above, with tailored approaches depending on the type.

Under this policy, complaints may include:

- **Privacy:** Complaints concerning breaches of obligations under the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#) related to an individual's personal information.
- **Human rights:** Complaints about actions or decisions by the Council that conflict with the rights outlined in the [Human Rights Act 2019](#).
- **Charter of Victims' Rights:** Complaints about a Council decisions or actions inconsistent with the Charter of Victims' Rights stated in the [Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Act 2024](#).
- **Decisions or actions:** Complaints about a decisions, actions, or recommendations made or not made by the Council.
- **Procedures or policies:** Dissatisfaction with practices, policies or procedures adopted by the Council.

- **Service issues:** Concerns related to how Council members or Secretariat staff interact, including courtesy, timeliness, communication, and diligence.

## 2.4 Out-of-scope complaints

Certain types of complaints are outside the scope of this policy and will be referred appropriately, including:

- **Misconduct complaints:** Referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission.
- **Government policy and sentencing complaints:** Referred to the DoJ.
- **Public interest disclosures:** Handled under the Council's Public interest disclosure policy and procedure (#4056989).

If a complaint of one of these types is referred back to the Council for resolution, the Director (or an appropriate delegate) will be responsible for dealing with the referred matter.

The matter will then be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Public interest disclosure policy and procedure.

## 2.5 Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints are treated like any other; however, insufficient details may limit the Council's ability to resolve the matter effectively.

Complainants are encouraged to provide contact details to facilitate communication and resolution.

# 3. Complaint management process

## 3.1 Complaint lifecycle

The Council manages complaints according to the seven stages outlined in the Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework.

1. **Receive:** Ensure the complaint is received and appropriately recorded.
2. **Assist:** Provide support to the complainant, particularly if additional help is required to lodge the complaint.
3. **Acknowledge:** Formally acknowledge the complaint and provide the complainant with initial information.
4. **Assess:** Review the complaint to determine its nature, complexity, and required course of action.
5. **Respond:** Deliver a resolution or written outcome to the complainant, outlining result and actions taken.
6. **Report:** Document the complaint details and any lessons learned for reporting purposes.
7. **Improve:** Use insights from the complaint to evaluate and improve practices and procedures.

## 3.2 Receiving and acknowledging a complaint

Complaints can be received through various channels, including online submissions or email, as well as in-person complaints or via Ministerial or Director-General correspondence.

- **Phone:** (07) 3738 9499
- **In-person:** Level 30, 400 George Street, Brisbane, QLD
- **Email:** [admin@sentencingcouncil.qld.gov.au](mailto:admin@sentencingcouncil.qld.gov.au)
- **Mail:** Secretariat Director  
Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council  
GPO Box 2360  
Brisbane QLD 4001

Secretariat staff will assist complainants with advice and guidance where required. Third-party complaints will also be accepted as appropriate.

## 3.3 Access to interpreters

Access to interpreters will be arranged, if required, to ensure all complainants can fully participate in the complaints management process.

## 3.4 Steps of the complaint process

All complaints will be monitored, reviewed, and reported throughout the process and upon finalisation to ensure proper oversight and feedback.

### **Step 1: Receiving and acknowledging a complaint**

Where possible, Secretariat staff will aim to resolve the complaint at the point of receipt. If early resolution is not possible, the complaint will proceed through the formal management process.

Within three business days, the complainant will receive an acknowledgment, providing:

- A tracking number.
- An outline of the complaints process.
- Expectation resolution timeframes.
- Contact details of the assigned officer.

If the resolution takes longer than expected, the complainant will be updated. Personal information will be kept secured and not disclosed without authorisation by law.

### **Step 2: Assessment and triage of complaints**

The assessment may involve speaking with the complainant to gather additional details and understand the desired outcome.

Complaints are then assessed and categorised ('triaged') by type and complexity, with target timeframes outlined below.

RATING	DESCRIPTION	TARGET TIMEFRAME
<b>Simple</b>	Resolved at the point of service without referral.	Immediately at point of service.
<b>Standard</b>	Single issue requiring further consideration but no extensive investigation.	Within 30 business days of receiving the complaint.
<b>Complex</b>	Multiple issues requiring further consideration and extensive investigation.	Within 45 business days of receiving the complaint.
<b>Privacy</b>	Complaint about the Council's handling of personal information.	Within 30 business days of receiving the complaint.
<b>Human rights</b>	Complaint about infringement of rights under the <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> .	Within 30 business days of receiving the complaint.
<b>Victims' rights</b>	Complaint regarding rights infringed under the Charter of Victims' Rights.	Within 30 business days, unless external investigation or additional time is required.

Complainants will receive fortnightly updates on the progress of their complaint.

Complex complaints, or those involving privacy, human rights, or victims' rights, may require external investigators or longer resolution times.

### **Victims' rights complaints**

The *Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Act 2024* defines the rights of victims and outlines reporting and referral for related complaints.

Complaints about breaches of an affected victim's Charter Right (as per the Act) are within scope; however, complaints about actions or decisions of the Victims' Commissioner or their office are out of scope.

If a complainant does not explicitly mention a breach of the Charter of Victims' Right but describes a potential breach, the Council will initiate an investigation.

Complaints referred to another entity that involve a Charter of Victims' Rights breach must still be recorded in complaints reporting.

### **Misconduct and other issues**

Complaints involving suspected misconduct will follow the Council's *Public interest disclosure policy and procedure*.

If the complaint relates to matters outside the Council's scope, complainants should be advised of the appropriate agency processes and informed accordingly.

### **Unreasonable complaints or vexatious complaints**

Vexatious complaints are made in bad faith, vindictively, or with no supporting evidence, as well as those that are knowingly false or fabricated.

The Council recognises its responsibility to manage such complaints appropriately, balancing fairness to the complainant with the efficient use of resources.

Unreasonable complaints or vexatious complaints will be handled in accordance with the DoJ's *Managing unreasonable conduct or vexatious complaints by complainant's policy*. This may include:

- Declining to investigate complaints that are unreasonable, vexatious, or lack substance.
- Setting boundaries for complainants whose behaviour is disruptive or inappropriate, including limiting communication methods or contact points.
- Advising complainants of their right to appeal the decision through internal or external review processes.

The Council will ensure that any decision to classify a complaint as vexatious or unreasonable is supported by clear evidence and communicated to the complainant in writing.

### **Step 3: Internal investigation and resolution**

The complaint is investigated to determine outcomes or actions required.

Once finalised, complainants who provided contact details will receive advice outlining:

- The outcome of the complaint
- The process for requesting a review of the outcome

#### **Response to a complaint**

Responses can be provided in writing or over the phone and should include:

- The decision made regarding the issues raised.
- Clear and accurate reasons for the decision, referencing relevant policies, legislation, or directives.
- Actions taken as a result of the complaint (subject to privacy considerations), including any remedies or business improvements.
- Review options available to the complainant, including relevant contact details.
- Contact details for the departmental officer available to provide further information.

### **Step 4: Internal review**

If dissatisfied, the complainant can request an internal review within 20 business days of receiving the complaint outcome. Requests for reviews received outside the specified timeframe will still be considered if reasonable grounds exist.

Internal reviews will be conducted by an impartial officer (or higher authority) who was not involved in the original decision.

The Council's will provide a written response to the internal review request within 20 business days, unless further time is required. If an extension is necessary, the complainant will be notified and provided with a revised timeframe.

In the event that the internal review upholds the original decision, complainants will be will be advised of their external review options.

### **Step 5: External review**

If still dissatisfied following an internal review, complainants may escalate their concerns to an external agency. The Council will assist complainants by providing clear guidance on the appropriate agency and steps to lodge their complaint. Escalation options include:

- **Queensland Human Rights Commission** for human rights complaints (1300 130 670).
- **Office of the Information Commissioner** for privacy complaints (1800 642 753).
- **Office of the Victims' Commissioner** for victims' complaints (1800 714 100).
- **Queensland Ombudsman** for decisions and actions made by Queensland state government departments or public authorities (1800 068 908).

The Council will ensure complainants are informed of the relevant contact details and process for pursuing an external review.

### **Step 6: Monitoring, reviewing, and reporting**

Complaints are monitored, reviewed, and reported biannually. A complaints register is securely maintained by the Secretariat Director (or an appropriate delegate).

Recommendations arising from complaints will be implemented and monitored by the Secretariat Director.

Reports on complaints, including statistics (e.g., number of complaints, outcomes, and median days to resolution), will be included in the Council's annual report which is due by 30 September each year. If the annual report is not published by 30 September each year, then complaints will be published by 30 September on the Council's website.

Complainants will be provided with opportunities to comment on their experience with the complaints management process. Feedback will be used to identify areas for improvement and enhance service delivery standards.

## **4. Standards, awareness, and training**

### **4.1 Service standards**

The Council is committed to upholding the principles of natural justice in its complaints management process. All complaints will be addressed fairly, consistently, and professionally, ensuring complainants are treated with respect, compassion, and courtesy.

Complaints will be managed by the Secretariat Director or an appropriate delegate, with consideration of the following standards:

- The Council will provide additional support to individuals who may require assistance or alternative approaches, including:
  - People with disabilities.
  - Children or young people.
  - Individuals living in regional or remote areas.
  - People from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Complainants will be given timely information about services relevant to their circumstances and a written outcome of their complaint, unless they chose to remain anonymous.

### **4.2 Staff awareness and training**

To maintain a consistent and effective approach to complaint management, all staff will:

- Be made aware of this policy and understand its purpose.
- Attend briefings on the operation of the policy and its application.
- Participate in annual training sessions focused on managing complaints effectively.

Secretariat staff will also be required to complete the DoJ *Client Complaints eBriefing*, available through the Evolve professional development course catalog, to ensure they remain aligned with best practices and compliance requirements.

### 4.3 Monitoring and reviewing

The Council will review the operation of this policy and its associated complaint-handling processes on an annual basis.

## 5. References and additional resources

This policy aligns with best practices and guidelines outlined in the following resources:

- Queensland Public Service:
  - Customer Complaints Management Guidelines
  - Customer Complaints Management Framework
- Department of Justice:
  - *Client complaint management policy* and related material.
  - *Managing unreasonable conduct or vexatious complaints by complainants' policy*.
- Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland: *Complaints management policy*.
- Department of Premier and Cabinet: *Complaints management policy* and related material.
- Queensland Ombudsman: *Complaints management policy and procedure* and related material.
- Queensland Human Rights Commission: Making a complaint webpage.
- Victorian State Government: *Good practice guide: Managing complaints involving human rights*.