



Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Statement

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) is committed to managing complaints in a consistent, professional, efficient and fair manner. Complaints assist DEW to improve our customer service and performance.

Scope

In relation to DEW, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about DEW, related to our services, staff, products, or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected, or legally required.

Complaints can be distinguished from feedback or expressions of opinion, a request for service, or a request for an explanation of policy or procedure.

All DEW employees and persons who provide services on behalf of DEW must adhere to this policy.

This policy does not apply to staff grievances, matters that are subject to legal proceedings, Public Interest Information Disclosures, Freedom of Information matters or matters referred to DEW by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Office for Public Integrity or the South Australian Ombudsman – separate processes apply.

This policy also does not apply to complaints received by boards and committees administered by DEW – separate processes and reporting requirements apply.

Where it is deemed that a matter is outside the scope of this policy, the person who contacted DEW will be assisted in re-directing their matter.

Policy

Making a complaint

Complaints are encouraged to be lodged electronically at www.environment.sa.gov.au/contact-us, however, complaints may also be lodged:

- in writing to Department for Environment and Water, GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001
- in person at the Customer Service Centre (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm), 81-95 Waymouth Street, Adelaide SA 5000
- in person to any staff member
- [online](#) via the National Parks and Wildlife Service website
- by telephone on 8207 7700 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm).



The Interpreting and Translating Centre provides access to an interpreter or translator if required – refer www.translate.sa.gov.au. The National Relay Service provides a phone service for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment – refer www.accesshub.gov.au.

Where possible, a complaint should contain the following details:

- a clear description of the matter
- when and where the matter occurred
- the names and/or positions of anyone involved
- any relevant documentation
- the outcome(s) being sought; and
- contact information or contact information of a representative.

Any person or organisation may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. family member, legal or community representative, Member of Parliament or another organisation).

Complaints may be made anonymously. However, anonymous complaints are more difficult to assess because DEW will not have the option to follow up if further information is required, nor will DEW be able to advise the outcome of the complaint.

Acknowledgement and response timeframes

Complaints are to be acknowledged promptly, ideally within three business days, and a substantive response provided within four weeks. Where this timeframe is not achievable, the person making a complaint or their representative will be contacted and advised on the expected timeframe for a response.

In instances where complaints involve complex matters, a timeframe may not be provided, but DEW will endeavour to keep complainants or their representative informed on the status of their complaint.

Assessment of a complaint

DEW will assess each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective, and unbiased manner.

Where relevant, the person handling the complaint will be different from any staff member whose service or conduct is the subject of the complaint.

Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed appropriately.

DEW will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf. Complaints lodged with DEW are, however, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*. In these instances, DEW will take action to protect the identity of a complainant where appropriate.



The Department manages any personal information you disclose as part of a complaint in accordance with the [Information Privacy Principles Instruction](#) and DEW's Privacy Policy.

Address the issues raised by the complaint

Where possible, complaints are to be resolved at first contact with DEW. Alternatively, gather more information.

To address the issues raised by the complaint, the Department may gather further information or investigate the claims made in the complaint.

Notification of outcome of a complaint

Where appropriate, following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issue(s) raised, DEW will contact the complainant or their representative and advise them of the:

- outcome of the complaint;
- any action undertaken;
- reason(s) for the decision;
- proposed remedy or resolution(s); and
- options for review.

By default, DEW will respond to complaints in the same format that they were received. Complainants or their representative can request that the response be provided in another format to ensure accessibility.

Options for review include internal review by DEW or raising the matter with either the South Australian Ombudsman or Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Definitions

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Complaints can be distinguished from feedback or expressions of opinion, a request for service, or a request for an explanation of policy or procedure.

**Associated Documents and References**

- [*Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector*](#)
- *Australian Standard Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organizations (AS 10002:2022)*
- *Premier and Cabinet Circular PC039: [*Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector*](#)*
- *Premier and Cabinet Circular PC012: [*Information Privacy Principles \(IPPS\) Instruction*](#)*
- [*DEW Internal Review of Complaint Decision Policy*](#)

Major revision	Approved by Chief Executive	Version 2.0	2 September 2026
Responsible Unit	Office of the Chief Executive	Next Review Date	2 September 2036