

Policy

Customer complaints management policy

Version: 4.0 | **Version effective date:** 20/11/2024

Supersedes: 3.1

Scope

This policy covers complaints made to the Queensland Public Trustee (QPT) by customers, members of the public, stakeholders or staff members acting as members of the community.

Certain complaints are excluded from this policy as they are managed under particular legislation, directives, other policies or contractual requirements and are out of scope.

This policy is supported by the Customer complaints management procedure.

Purpose

This policy supports QPT's obligations to manage and investigate customer complaints, in compliance with the Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework and the Australian/New Zealand Standard on complaints management (AS/NZS ISO 10002:2014 – *Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*).

This policy explains how customers, stakeholders and members of the public raise complaints, and guides staff on the management of and response to customer complaints.

Policy statement

QPT is committed to consistent, effective and efficient customer complaints management. QPT supports the right to make a complaint, and strives to manage customer complaints in an accountable, transparent, timely and fair manner that is compatible with human rights and provides customers with accessible, equitable experiences.

QPT is committed to providing high standards of service and listening to those who interact with us.

QPT strives to respond constructively and resolve complaints at their earliest stage. When that can't happen, QPT treats seriously the issues that remain unresolved.

All staff have a role in actively supporting customers to be heard and helping QPT to understand, acknowledge and appropriately resolve concerns.

Principles

Principle	What this means for QPT
Customer focused People should be able to make a complaint via a clear and accessible complaint management system, with	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone has the right to complain and to not be adversely affected by their complaint.• Anyone making a complaint, and staff, will be treated with respect.• Customers have the right to be supported by a friend, advocate, interpreter, community elder or other support person of their choice.

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Principle	What this means for QPT
<p>complainants respected and responses addressing all issues raised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions and decisions consider, and are compatible with, the human rights of all parties to a customer complaint. • Customers are provided with assistance and support to make it easy to make a complaint, including people with a disability or impairment or from a culturally or linguistically diverse background. • Complainants are involved in the process as much as possible and as appropriate. • Customer complaints can be made anonymously. This may make it more difficult to investigate the complaint because the issues are unable to be clarified and further information cannot be sought from the complainant to assist the assessment or investigation. • Customer complaints can be made on behalf of someone else. • The confidentiality of personal information of complainants and others involved in the complaint is respected.
<p>Timely and fair Complaint handling processes are clear, impartial and confidential, with timely acknowledgments and responses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints processes are free and accessible, they are accepted orally and in writing in a range of ways. • Customer complaints are managed objectively, without bias and in a way that is compatible with and properly considers human rights. • Natural justice and procedural fairness are embedded in customer complaint management activities and all reasonable steps taken to ensure that a person is not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them or on their behalf. • If a complainant's conduct is unreasonable, strategies may be implemented to manage the conduct so the customer complaint can be productively resolved, and staff welfare and wellbeing is protected. • QPT advises customers about their internal and external review options. • QPT nominates independent and more senior officers to conduct internal reviews.
<p>Clear communication There are clear and communicated expectations and standards for all parties involved in a complaint.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, customer complaints are resolved early and informally at point of service. • Reasonable steps are taken to understand the customer complaint and assess how best to manage it. • Customer complaints are acknowledged and responded to fairly, reasonably and in a timely manner. • Complainants are kept informed about the progress of their complaint, and advised about the outcome reached, reasons for decisions, actions taken and any review options available.
<p>Accountable Roles and responsibilities for complaint management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how and where to complain is published on QPT's website, and is available on request from staff and at its public offices. • Formal documented processes are used to record and manage customer complaints, including monitoring timeframes for resolution. • Ongoing training and support are provided to staff managing customer

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Principle	What this means for QPT
are clear and publicly available.	<p>complaints.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibilities are clearly outlined, and adequate resources and training, are provided to staff.• Policies, procedures and practices are regularly reviewed, at least every 2 years, to ensure relevance, accuracy and effectiveness.
Improving services Complaints improve existing, and inform new, quality services, with QPT's complaint management system helping to prevent potential ongoing disputes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer complaints data is regularly analysed to understand performance and drive improvement, to ensure visibility of complaints trends and meet legislative reporting obligations.• A Customer Complaints Annual Report is published each year on QPT's website.• Regular feedback is sought about QPT's customer complaints management process.

Requirements

Complaints management system

Section 264 of the *Public Sector Act 2022* requires QPT to establish and implement a system for dealing with customer complaints. The system must enable QPT to:

- Manage the receipt, processes and outcome of a customer complaint.
- Comply with the Australian Standard for customer complaints management.
- Notify a complainant about the outcome of their complaint (unless the complaint was anonymous).

QPT is also required to comply with the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* for complaints that are also human rights complaints.

Complaints within and outside the scope of this policy

Complaints under this policy are to be managed using QPT's system for customer complaints.

A customer complaint involves an expression of dissatisfaction about the service or action of QPT, or its staff, and the complainant is apparently directly affected by the service or action. and a response or resolution to the complaint is expected or legally required. Examples include:

- A decision made, or failure to make a decision, by a QPT employee.
- An act, or failure to act, of QPT.
- The formulation of a proposal or intention by QPT.
- The making of a recommendation by QPT.
- The customer service provided by a QPT employee.
- A complaint about the handling of a complaint (Refer to Level 2 Internal Review for how these complaints will be managed).

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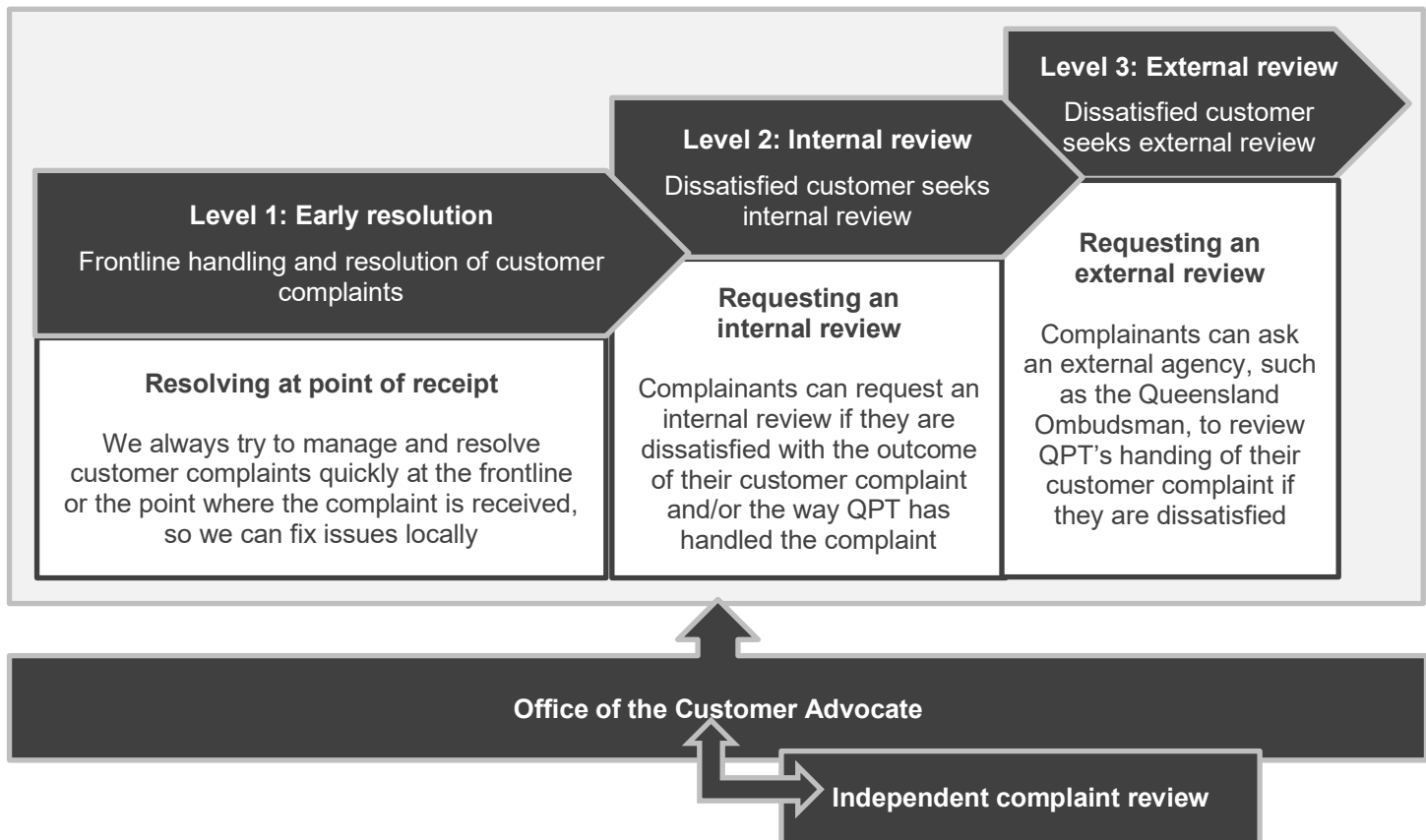
Some complaints are not within the scope of this policy, and QPT will manage these matters under different processes, using relevant legislation, policies or procedures. This includes:

- Complaints about human rights under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, other than a customer complaint under this policy. It is noted that customer complaints under this policy can also relate to human rights and human rights must be considered as part of this complaints process.
- Complaints about corrupt conduct under the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*.
- A privacy complaint under the *Information Privacy Act 2009*, and managed under the QPT Information Privacy Complaints Management policy and procedure.
- Public interest disclosures under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*.
- Complaints about decisions made under contract with another party (such as a procurement contract). Any issues that arise will be dealt with under the contract.
- Employee complaints about their employment (*Public Sector Act 2022*).

The Customer complaints management procedure provides more information.

Complaints handling approach

QPT must manage complaints in accordance with this Customer complaints management policy and Customer complaints management procedure. This approach follows the three levels of complaints resolution.



Under this approach, QPT aims to resolve customer complaints quickly at the frontline or the point where the complaint is received, wherever possible and appropriate. Customer complaints that are unable to be resolved quickly at the frontline or point of receipt, either because it is not appropriate to do so or because of

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their complexity, seriousness, desired outcome or other matter raised in the complaint, will be escalated to the manager to determine the action required.

Receipt of a customer complaint is to be **acknowledged within 3 work days**, and a **response provided within 30 work days** from the date the complaint is received. This is level 1.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the customer complaint and/or the way their complaint was handled, they may request an **internal review**. This is level 2.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after an internal review, they may seek an **external review**. This is level 3.

At any time in this process, a complainant can also contact the **Office of the Customer Advocate** to discuss their concerns.

In some circumstances, the Office of the Customer Advocate **may facilitate an independent complaint review process** where options under the Customer complaints management policy have been exhausted. While this could occur at any stage in the process, it is most likely to occur after the internal review stage. The independent complaints review process is not compulsory, and a complainant may, at any time, choose to progress their complaint to an external review agency, such as the Queensland Ombudsman.

This approach ensures:

- Customer complaints are managed responsively, using a clear and accessible process.
- Human rights are considered.
- Staff are empowered to resolve customer complaints promptly, effectively and efficiently.
- Trends and issues are identified, and effective improvements are put in place.

Complainant rights and responsibilities

While complainants have a right to make a complaint, they also have balancing sets of responsibilities, which QPT will make them aware of. These responsibilities are outlined in the Customer complaints management procedure, including unreasonable conduct by a complainant.

Conduct that is abusive, threatening, unreasonable, vexatious, or makes inappropriate demands on QPT's time, resources or staff, will not be tolerated.

Conduct is likely to be considered unreasonable where it involves actions or behaviours which, because of the nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, wellbeing resource or equity issues for the organisation, its staff, other services users or the complainant themselves. Staff safety and wellbeing is paramount and if complainant conduct creates an unacceptable risk, contact with the complainant about the customer complaint may be discontinued.

Monitoring and review

The customer complaints approach is reviewed regularly, at least every 2 years, to ensure it continues to meet needs and requirements. Information that informs these reviews includes:

- Feedback from customers, staff and focus groups.
- The results of internal or external audits or evaluations. Independent audits will be undertaken regularly.

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- Any changes in policy, legislation or organisational systems.

Policy controls and managing non-compliance

Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all staff. Managers must ensure the policy is embedded into practice within their teams, and staff are required to report any instances of non-compliance immediately through their manager to the Policy Owner or Policy Delegate (refer to QPT's internal policy register).

Roles and responsibilities

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

Roles and responsibilities in relation to each step in the process are detailed in the Customer complaints management procedures, and key contact details are provided below.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Anonymous complaint	The identity of the complainant is not disclosed in the complaint or readily ascertainable from QPT's records.
Days	Calendar days unless stated otherwise
Complainant	A person, organisation or their representative/advocate making a complaint about a service or action of QPT.
Customer complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction about a service or action of QPT by someone who is apparently directly affected by the service or action, and a response or resolution to the complaint is expected or legally required. Examples may include complaints about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A decision made, or failure to make a decision, by an employee• An act, or failure to act, by the organisation• The formulation of a proposal or intention by the organisation• The making of a recommendation by the organisation• The customer service provided by an employee.• The handling of a complaint.
Complaints management system (CMS)	Encompasses all aspects of the policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by QPT to manage customer complaints.
External review	A process conducted by an external review body (for example Queensland Ombudsman) to ensure decision making is fair, reasonable and proper.
Human rights complaint	A complainant can make a human rights complaint if QPT has:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">acted or made a decision in a way that is not compatible with human rights; orfailed to give proper consideration to a relevant human right when making a decision.
Internal review	<p>A process conducted by an appropriately trained QPT staff member on request from the complainant which examines if the customer complaint management process for the original complaint was appropriate and/or if the outcome reached was reasonable.</p> <p>An internal review is not a re-investigation of the original complaint.</p> <p>QPT's customer complaints management procedure provides more information about the internal review process.</p>
Procedural fairness	<p>Providing any party who may be affected by a complaint with a fair opportunity to be heard and a reasonable opportunity to respond to any claims. Procedural fairness is also known as natural justice.</p>
Resolution	<p>A complaint is resolved when the issue raised is dealt with in line with QPT's complaint policy and procedures. The resolution may or may not be to the complainant's satisfaction.</p>
Unreasonable conduct by a complainant	<p>Unreasonable conduct by a complainant is any behaviour which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resources or equity issues for the people involved in the complaint process.</p> <p>QPT's Customer complaints management procedure provides more information.</p>
Work days	<p>Days that the organisation is open.</p>

Legislation and other compliance obligations

- *Disability Services Act 2006 (Qld)*
- *Disability Services and Inclusion Act 2023 (Cth)*
- *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*
- *Public Records Act 2002 (Qld)*
- *Public Sector Act 2022 (Qld)*
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 (Qld)*
- *Public Trustee Act 1978 (Qld)*

Supporting documents

- Customer complaints management procedure
- Your Complaints Journey

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Related resources and information

- [Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework](#)
- [Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Guideline](#) (and referenced resources)
- AS/NZS ISO 10002:2022 – *Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*
- *Crime and Corruption Act 2001 (Qld)*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 (Qld)*
- Queensland Ombudsman Complaints management resource: Managing unreasonable complainant conduct and Policy and procedure guide

Contact

For further information, please contact: Email: Complaints@pt.qld.gov.au
Phone: 1800 014 536 (Monday–Friday 9am–4pm)
Online: [Customer Complaints](#) (pt.qld.gov.au)
[Make a complaint - The Public Trustee of Queensland](#)
Write to: Complaints
Queensland Public Trustee
GPO Box 1449, Brisbane QLD 4001
In person: Visit your local QPT office. [Office locations](#) (pt.qld.gov.au)

The Office of the Customer Advocate can be contacted at: customer.advocate@pt.qld.gov.au

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