

Effective Complaints Management

14: Further Information and Reference Material

INFORMATION FOR NORTHERN TERRITORY PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCIES:

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This Fact Sheet forms part of a series designed to assist public sector agencies to ensure they have appropriate procedures in place to effectively manage customer complaints.

The Fact Sheet series has been kindly made available by the Queensland Ombudsman. It has been adapted for use in the Northern Territory.

For further information or advice, please contact the Northern Territory Ombudsman's Office on 08 8999 1818.

Effectively meeting the community's expectation

We hope the information contained in this series of Effective Complaints Management Fact Sheets will assist your agency to implement new or enhanced systems to deal with customer complaints.

The community expects that public agencies will be customer-focused and responsive to their feedback. One of the ways an agency can meet this expectation is to have as part of its business activities and procedures a complaints management system with a feedback loop to enable complaints information to be used to improve services.

If people are unhappy with an administrative decision or action, feedback via complaints gives an agency a second chance to explain why the decision was made or change it if appropriate. It can ensure that a good relationship between the agency and its customer is maintained, or a bad one improved.

Your agency may wish to move to a particular type of complaints management model or a less formally structured internal review process. Much depends upon your structure and business operations.

Agencies should view the information contained in these Fact Sheets about the fundamental principles of effective complaints management as a starting point for further discussion and consideration. We strongly urge those involved in recommending new or improved systems within your agency complete the Effective Complaints Management Self Audit Checklist, freely available on our website, and to refer to the sources outlined in this Fact Sheet.

At the end of the day, making a conscious decision about the shape of your complaints management system and commitment to quality customer service will pay dividends.

Further information

Additional resources to help public sector organisations make good decisions and manage complaints effectively are available free of charge from various agencies. These include:

- *An easy guide to good administrative decision-making.* Produced by the Queensland Ombudsman and available from www.Ombudsman.qld.gov.au. Today's community expects public agencies will operate consistently and fairly, and that government at all levels will have systems to ensure this happens. Good administrative decision-making lies at the heart of this process. These guidelines assist decision-makers make the best possible decisions.
- *Good decision-making for government,* a series of pamphlets produced by Clayton Utz available from www.claytonutz.com. Provides plain language explanation of the various aspects of administrative law that decision makers need to take into account.
- *Effective Complaints Management Self Audit Checklist* prepared by the Queensland Ombudsman and kindly made available to the NT Ombudsman. Drawn from the essential elements outlined in the Fact Sheets series, this checklist assists agencies to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their existing complaints management arrangements and to identify potential areas for improvement.
- *Developing Effective Complaints Management Policy and Procedures,* prepared by the Queensland Ombudsman and kindly made available to the NT Ombudsman. – A complaints management system is underpinned by effective complaints management policy and procedures. This guideline uses comprehensive examples and sets out basic principles for complaints management policy and procedures documents.
- *Handling a Northern Territory Ombudsman investigation – Information for Agencies,* available on our website. External review by an agency such as the Northern Territory Ombudsman is part of a robust system of accountability. The information and principles outlined in this document will assist agencies and individuals dealing with Ombudsman inquiries and investigations.

EFFECTIVE COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT – REFERENCE MATERIAL

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