

# Making a complaint

## Who can complain?

Any person, including staff members of the department or funded Non-Government service providers (funded agency), can make a complaint. You can make a complaint on your own, jointly with someone else, or have another person (e.g. family member, friend, advocate etc.) act on your behalf.

## What can I complain about?

If you are not satisfied with a service provided or decisions made by the department, it is your right to make a complaint.

Complaints can be made regarding a range of issues, including:

- a decision the department has made or not made
- the service the department has provided or not provided
- a service that is funded by the department, including a funded agency
- the behaviour of the department's employees
- an act or practice of the department or funded agency in relation to the individual's personal information that may be a breach of the department's obligations under the *Information Privacy Act 2009*; or alleged breaches under the *Community Services Act 2007*, and the *Disability Services Act 2006*.

## How can I make a complaint?

Complaints can be made to the department in a number of ways. These include: in person; by telephone; in writing; by fax; by email; by audio CD or tape; or live Web chat.

Before making a complaint, try talking with the local team, or funded agency if your complaint concerns them. Talk to the person you have been working with or ask to speak to their manager. Every effort will be made to resolve your complaint; this is often the quickest and easiest way to address your concerns or fix a problem.

If you are not satisfied with the response, or feel uncomfortable talking with the service centre, region or funded agency, please contact the Complaints and Investigations Unit.

We are committed to effective complaints management and will deal with all complaints against our actions, decisions or officers' conduct in a responsive, confidential and fair manner.

## Where can I make a complaint?

Complaints are best resolved at the local level, so in the first instance please contact your local unit or team.

If your complaint concerns a funded agency, you are encouraged to contact them to try to address your complaint in the first instance.

There will be times when you may need to escalate your complaint for central resolution. The area responsible for the independent management and review of complaints is the Complaints and Investigations Unit.

Escalation of your complaint may be required where: unsuccessful attempts were made to address the complaint at the local level; or the complaint you are raising is of a serious or complex nature; or there are other factors that may prevent effective management of your complaint at a local level.

## Are there time limits to making a complaint?

A complaint about a decision or action of the department must be within 12 months after you were notified of or made aware of the decision or action.

Complaints made outside this time period will only be reviewed if the department considers that exceptional circumstances warrant consideration.

## When is the department unable to manage a complaint?

- When a complaint matter is being dealt with or previously dealt with by an external complaint agency, court or tribunal.
- When it is not possible to establish the department's jurisdiction in the matter.
- When the complaint is outside of the 12 month timeframe and no special circumstances warranting actioning have been identified.

## What happens after you've made a complaint?

Your complaint and outcome sought will be recorded and assessed to determine the most appropriate course of action. Assessment of your complaint will most likely require discussions with you and other relevant persons of interest, as well as review of relevant information and documentation.

Assessment will also determine the initial complexity of the complaint, which will then inform the anticipated timeframe for management of the complaint:

- Low complexity: 15 business days
- Medium complexity: 45 business days
- High complexity: up to 6 months

While every effort will be made to undertake this assessment as quickly as possible, it is essential that thorough assessment is undertaken as it will determine what actions are needed and how these will be taken.

You will be advised of the complaint results achieved, and given the opportunity to comment on these prior to finalisation of the matter.

## What can you expect from us?

You can expect that the department will be prompt, fair and professional in its management of your complaint.

We ask that you engage with the department in a courteous and respectful manner and that you provide us with the necessary assistance and cooperation when gathering information to assist with your complaint.

The department recognises that you may wish to make an anonymous complaint by requesting that your personal information is not provided to who you are complaining about. However, total anonymity cannot always be guaranteed as sometimes details you provide in your complaint may identify you as the complainant.

The department has an obligation to ensure that all personal information that it gathers through its handling of a complaint is kept confidential and is not disclosed to a third party without appropriate consent if required. This means that the department will control how and when information it collects as a part of the complaint process, will be used and disclosed.

Exceptions to this practice result from the department's statutory obligations.

## How will I know what's happening?

The contact details for your complaints officer will be provided to you at the commencement of your complaint. Your complaints officer will provide you with regular updates, including any delays that may impact on timeframes.

How often you are updated and how you will receive this update will be negotiated with you at the commencement of your complaint.

## If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint

If you are dissatisfied with how we have handled your complaint, you can request that our Complaints and Investigations Unit undertakes an Internal Review of the complaints process.

If following this review you are still dissatisfied with the handling of your complaint, you can request an independent external review of your complaint by the Queensland Ombudsman.

You can contact the Ombudsman by telephone on 3005 7000 or 1800 068 908; by mail to GPO Box 3314, Brisbane Q 4001; by email to [ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au); or in person at Level 18, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane.

## Do you need more information?

For more information about how the department manages complaints, you can contact the department's Complaints and Investigations Unit by:

- Email: [feedback@communities.qld.gov.au](mailto:feedback@communities.qld.gov.au)
- Phone: 1800 080 464
- Online feedback form: <https://www.qld.gov.au/contact-us/complaints/>
- Post: Complaints and Investigations Unit, Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, GPO Box 806, Brisbane Q 4001

Please also see other fact sheets available: Internal Review; Complaints Investigation; Alternative Response.

Other resources include: Complaints Management Policy; Complaints Management Procedure.