

# Complaint Handling Policy



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## Policy Statement

The State Library of NSW (the Library) takes a client-focused, proactive, and timely approach to managing feedback and complaints about the Library.

The Library has adopted the Whole-of-Government “Commitments to Effective Complaint-Handling” developed by the NSW Ombudsman in partnership with the Customer Service Commissioner in 2016. The six commitments are implemented through the Library’s policies, procedures and practices and are centred on respectful treatment, information and accessibility, good communication, taking ownership, timeliness, and transparency.

This policy is intended to ensure that the Library handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively. The policy also provides staff with an understanding of their responsibilities. The policy outlines the key principles and concepts of the complaint management system and provides guidance for clients wishing to make a complaint.

## Target Audience

Clients of the Library and its services.

All staff receiving or managing complaints about the Library.

Staff grievances and public interest disclosures are dealt with through separate mechanisms.

## **Operational Requirements**

### **1. Complaint handling commitments**

The commitments demonstrate to clients what they can expect when they complain to the Library about services, systems, practices, procedures and products.

#### **1.1 Respectful Treatment**

Clients making complaints will be listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate.

The Library will take all reasonable steps to ensure that clients are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

The Library accepts anonymous complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

#### **1.2 Information and Accessibility**

The Library is committed to making it easy to make a complaint, and the process accessible. The Library will provide assistance if required. A range of methods are available for submitting a complaint including an online form, paper feedback form, in writing (by letter, email or fax), telephone or in person. Information is readily available about the complaint process. This information includes:

- a) available avenues to make a complaint
- b) what is involved in the process, for example next steps and timeframes
- c) a contact point to enable the client to get more information about the complaint process
- d) examples of how complaints have helped improve services.

If a client prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/or resolution of their complaint, the Library will communicate with them through their representative. Anyone may represent a client wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament or another organization etc.).

#### **1.3 Good Communication**

The Library will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

The Library is committed to managing the expectations of clients, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaint handling process;
- the expected timeframes for the Library's actions;
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay;
- the client's likely involvement in the process;
- the possible or likely outcome of the complaint.

The Library aims to finalise the response to a complaint within two (2) weeks of receiving it. The client will be advised as soon as possible when the Library is unable to meet the timeframe for responding to their complaint and provide the reason for the delay.

#### **1.4 Taking Ownership**

The Library will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

All Library staff may be required to respond to complaints and will receive guidance and training as required. The staff who have a key responsibility for managing complaints are appropriately trained and skilled and will provide guidance to other staff as required. The client will be informed if the matter is transferred to another staff member or team.

The Library will ensure that the staff member handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a staff member other than the original decision maker.

#### **1.5 Timeliness**

The Library is committed to dealing with complaints promptly.

The Library will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to health, safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

The Library aims to finalise the response to a complaint within two (2) weeks but serious or complex complaints may take longer. If there are unavoidable delays in dealing with a complaint the Library will inform the client and explain the reasons. Where possible the Library will also give an estimated timeframe for the outcome.

#### **1.6 Transparency**

The Library will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.

Regular reports will be run on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints
  - a. the number of complaints closed
  - b. the percentage of complaints closed within the required timeframe
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests the Library receives for internal and/or external review of the Library's complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of the Library's customer service and make improvements.

Reports and their analysis will be provided to the Library's Executive.

## **2. Complaint management system**



### **2.1 Receipt of complaints**

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, the Library will record the complaint and its supporting information.

The record of the complaint will document the contact information of the client; issues raised and the outcome/s they want; any additional support the client requires.

### **2.2 Acknowledgement of complaints**

All complaints will be acknowledged on receipt. Clients submitting their complaint via the online feedback form will receive an automatic acknowledgement by email. Complaints submitted by other methods will receive an acknowledgement within seven (7) working days.

### **2.3 Initial assessment and addressing of complaints**

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, the Library will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within the Library's control. The Library will also consider the outcome/s sought by the client and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, the Library will consider:

- how serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is;
- whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health, safety or security;
- how the client is being affected;
- the risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed; and
- whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

### **2.4 Providing reasons for decisions**

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, the Library will contact the client and advise them:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action the Library took;
- the reason/s for the decision;
- the remedy or resolution/s that the Library have proposed or put in place; and
- any options for review that may be available.

Where the Library makes any adverse findings about an individual it will abide by the requirements of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act, 1998.

### **2.5 Closing the complaint, redress and review**

The Library will keep full and accurate records documenting:

- how the Library managed the complaint;
- the outcome/s of the complaint including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations; and
- any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

If a client is dissatisfied with the response to a complaint they can request an internal review. The manager or Director of the area that handled the complaint will review the complaint and decide whether or not it was handled fairly and reasonable steps were taken to resolve the issue.

Alternatively, clients can ask for their complaint to be reviewed by writing to:

- the NSW State Librarian and Chief Executive;
- the Secretary of the Department of Planning & Environment; or
- the NSW Ombudsman.

### **3. Managing breaches of the Client Code of Conduct or Library Regulation 2010**

The *State Library of NSW Client Code of Conduct* outlines the conduct expected from clients and visitors, both on site and when interacting with the State Library online. This includes interactions with Library staff during the complaint handling process. The Library's policy on the *Use of the State Library Under Library Regulation 2010*, provides guidelines for staff on managing breaches of the Client Code of Conduct or the Library Regulation 2010.

The NSW Ombudsman has further resources on managing unreasonable conduct by clients making a complaint [available at [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au)]

### **4. Other types of feedback**

The focus of this policy is on the handling of complaints, however other types of feedback are equally valuable to the Library. Suggestions received are considered as soon as possible, or collated for review during the business planning process. Compliments are passed on to the individual staff members or teams concerned. Following receipt of a suggestion or compliment, the Library will arrange an appropriate acknowledgement or expression of thanks to the client. Written suggestions and compliments are reported on and analysed to monitor trends, measure the quality of the Library's customer service and make improvements.

## Responsibilities

The Library expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
State Librarian and Chief Executive	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<p>Report publicly on the State Library's complaint handling.</p> <p>Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.</p> <p>Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</p> <p>Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.</p>
Branch Managers, Executive Team	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<p>Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints.</p> <p>Ensure that staff respond to complaints within two weeks.</p> <p>Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints resolve them promptly.</p> <p>Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</p> <p>Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.</p> <p>Ensure recommendations arising out of complaint data analysis are reviewed and implemented where appropriate.</p> <p>Conduct an internal review when a client is dissatisfied with the response to a complaint.</p>
Coordinator responsible for complaint handling	Oversee complaint management system	<p>Monitor library wide responsiveness to complaints and compliance with timeframes.</p> <p>Provide regular reports to Library Executive on issues arising from complaint handling.</p> <p>Ensure recommendations arising out of complaint data analysis are canvassed with the appropriate Branch Manager and implemented where appropriate.</p> <p>Train and empower staff to resolve complaints promptly and in accordance with the Library's policies and procedures.</p> <p>Encourage staff managing complaints to provide suggestions on ways to improve the organisation's complaint management system.</p> <p>Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints resolve them</p>

		promptly. Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff. Keep informed about best practice in complaint handling.
Library staff	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	Treat all people with respect, including clients who make complaints. Assist clients who wish to make complaints access the Library's complaints process. Respond to complaints when required. Comply with this policy and any associated procedures. Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly. Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints. Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis and evaluation of complaint data as directed by management.

## Related Key Legislation and Policy

- *Library Act 1939*
- *Library Regulation 2010*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
- *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*
- State Library of NSW Client Code of Conduct
- State Library of NSW Code of Ethics and Conduct (for staff)

## Definitions

**Complaint** - Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. [The Australian/New Zealand Standard *Guidelines for complaint management in organizations* (AS/NZS 10002:2014)]

**Complaint management system** - All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by the Library in the management of complaints.

**Dispute** - An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of the organisation.

**Feedback** - Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly to or about the Library about services or complaint handling.

**Grievance** - A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work related problem.

**Policy** - A statement of instruction that sets out how the Library should fulfil its vision, mission and goals.

**Procedure** - A statement or instruction that sets out how policies will be implemented and by whom.

**Public interest disclosure** - A report about wrongdoing made by a public official in New South Wales that meets the requirements of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*.

## References

- 1 Australian and New Zealand Standard: Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS/NZS 10002:2014)
- 2 NSW Ombudsman: Complaint management framework and model policy June 2015
- 3 NSW Ombudsman Effective complaint handling guidelines, 2nd Edition, December 2010

## Document history and version control

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Brief description
0.1			First Draft