

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

OLAO/2018/013

Version 1.4

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Purpose

Complaints management framework adopted by the Office of the Land Access Ombudsman (LAO) for customer complaints. Describing how customers can make complaints about our services or conduct of officers and provides information about how complaints will be handled.

Background

Section 264 of the *Public Sector Act 2022* requires the LAO to establish and maintain a complaints management system that complies with the current Australian Standard about the handling of customer complaints.

The current Standard is *Australian Standard AS10002:2022– Guidelines for complaint management in organizations* (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ). It provides that an organisation should implement a complaints management system that includes appropriate policies and procedures, clear lines of responsibility, and appropriate delegations.

The LAO's complaints management framework has been developed according to the *Public Sector Act 2022*, the *Australian Standard AS 10002:2022 – Guidelines for complaint management in organizations* (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ) and the Queensland Ombudsman's *Policy and Procedure Guide* (1 March 2023).

Policy statement

The LAO is committed to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism and integrity in providing a free and independent dispute resolution service for landholders and resource companies in relation to alleged breaches of Conduct and Compensation Agreements (CCA) and Make Good Agreements (MGA).

The LAO is committed to the responsible handling of personal information that it collects, holds, uses, and discloses in the discharge of its functions under the *Land Access Ombudsman Act 2017*, and to ensuring compliance with the requirements of the *Information Privacy Act 2009* (IP Act) when dealing with personal information.

The LAO takes all complaints received about its service delivery and the actions of its officers seriously and recognises that effective complaints management is good business practice. The customer complaints management system directly contributes to the strategic plan objective of developing an accountable workforce and culture, with sustainable systems and delivery.

Who is covered by the policy?

All officers of the LAO, including temporary staff, contractors, and consultants.

Scope of this policy

What is a complaint?

Complaints are defined as:

an 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.

- *Australian Standard AS 10002:2022 – Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ).*

We will treat a 'complaint' as having been made under this policy where:

(A) There is an expression of dissatisfaction about:

- the delivery of our dispute resolution service
- the conduct of an officer of the LAO
- how we have handled personal information under the IP Act

AND

(B) A response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

What is not a complaint?

Excluded from the scope of this policy:

TYPE OF COMPLAINT	POLICY/PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING COMPLAINT
Complaints about a decision or recommendation made in a case, or dissatisfaction about a decision made to refuse a land access dispute referral	<i>Internal Review Policy and Procedure</i>
Complaints that may amount to public interest disclosures under the <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010</i>	<i>Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure</i>
Complaints where there is reasonable suspicion of corrupt conduct against the Land Access Ombudsman under the <i>Crime and Corruption Act 2001</i>	<i>Policy for Complaints about Corrupt Conduct against the Ombudsman</i>
Internal staff complaints about an area of the LAO or a particular officer	<i>Managing Employee Complaints Policy and Procedure</i>

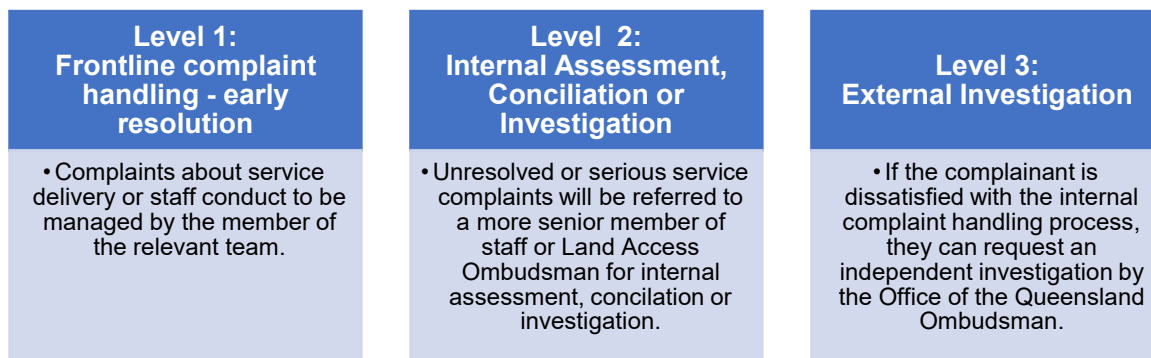
Guiding principles

1. **People focus.** Complainants will be treated with respect and will be actively involved in the process as far as practicable in the circumstances. We will work together with the to look for a solution that provides the best outcome within the resource and practical constraints the situation presents.
2. **Visibility.** We will publicise information about how and where to complain.

3. **Accessibility.** We will ensure that our complaint handling process is accessible for all customers.
4. **Responsiveness.** We will respond to all complaints as quickly as possible.
5. **Objectivity.** We will address all complaints in an equitable and unbiased manner, using evidence submitted by the complainant and our personnel through the process.
6. **No cost.** We will not charge a fee to lodge a complaint.
7. **Confidentiality.** We will observe strict confidentiality.
8. **Accountability and reporting.** We will ensure that our staff are accountable for complaints and complaints will be reported internally and externally as appropriate.

The LAO's complaints management system

Three levels of investigation:



How we will handle complaints

We will try to resolve all complaints at the first point of contact, preferably within the first 24 hours of receiving the complaint. Frontline staff will be given appropriate training to ensure they are adequately equipped to respond to complaints.

We will treat complainants with respect and maintain confidentiality. Personal information collected as part of the complaints process will not be released publicly.

A complaint will be escalated to a manager or senior staff member in the following situations:

- frontline staff have been unable to resolve the complaint, and the complainant is still unhappy
- the complainant asks to speak to a supervisor or manager
- the complaint raises serious or complex issues
- the complaint is about a possible privacy breach.

All complaints will be dealt with using the principles of natural justice, fairness, and objectivity.

Privacy complaints will be reviewed by the LAO's Right to Information & Information Privacy Officer. All other complaints will be handled by the relevant team, and the resolution and response to the customer will be monitored within the team. This is to ensure there are no unnecessary delays and that expected timeframes are met.

How complaints may be made

If the matter can't be resolved informally, complaints can be submitted:

By phone: 1800 717 550

By email: corporatelao@lao.org.au

Website: www.lao.org.au

By post: *For complaints about service delivery or staff conduct:*
Customer Feedback
Office of the Land Access Ombudsman
Reply Paid 87700
PO Box 15148
City East QLD 4002

For privacy complaints:
Right to Information & Information Privacy Officer
Office of the Land Access Ombudsman
Reply Paid 87700
PO Box 15148
City East QLD 4002

In person: Level 16, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane City, 4000

Complainants are encouraged to submit their complaint in writing. Where this is not possible, a record of the complaint is to be made by the receiving officer and the contents read back to the customer to verify the details are accurate. A copy of the complaint record must be sent to the customer.

Where the complaint is lodged in person the complainant will be asked to sign the documented complaint as an accurate record of the complaint.

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered in the same way as an identified complaint, however, the LAO's ability to investigate the complaint may be limited.

Complaints about senior staff

The Land Access Ombudsman will assess any complaints made about the conduct of LAO Managers and decide whether an investigation is required. If a decision to investigate the matter is made, the LAO or an external investigator may be engaged to undertake the investigation.

Complaints about the Land Access Ombudsman will be directed to the Queensland Ombudsman.

The complaints process

Steps for handling a complaint:

1. Record in the Complaints Register.
2. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint.

3. Review and assess, may include talking to the complainant and employees, and conducting a formal investigation in appropriate cases
4. Advising of the outcome of their complaint.

Timeframes

One business day: Complaint is recorded in the Complaints Register. In the case of privacy complaints, the complaint will be referred to the Right to Information & Information Privacy Officer who will inform the Land Access Ombudsman.

Two business days: Customer advised in writing that the complaint has been received and the expected timeframe for review and resolution.

20 business days: LAO have resolved the complaint or made a genuine attempt to resolve the complaint.

If resolution cannot be met within this timeframe, the customer will be advised of the status of their complaint and the anticipated timeframe for resolution. Any further delays in resolving the complaint and the reasons for this must be communicated to the customer.

Recording and acknowledging complaints

All complaints received must be recorded in the Complaints Register.

Written acknowledgement will only be provided in respect of complaints that are not resolved by frontline staff and require internal assessment.

Assessing and investigating complaints

When a complaint cannot be resolved by frontline staff, the complaint will be assessed by the Senior Dispute Resolution Officer to determine:

- how it should be managed.
- if any extra information is needed.

Privacy complaints will be assessed by the Right to Information & Information Privacy Officer and may be referred to an external privacy unit for investigation.

We will make every reasonable effort to ensure complaints are fully understood and appropriate action taken. This may involve working with customers, informal inquiries, or a formal investigation.

Complaints investigations may vary, depending on its nature. The level of investigation will reflect the content of the issue, this may include:

- clarifying details provided
- identifying actions taken to resolve the issue before the complaint was lodged
- gathering and analysing information from relevant file notes, correspondence, and other sources
- reviewing documentation submitted
- reviewing previous administrative decisions and actions
- interviewing complainants, employees and other individuals involved in the complaint
- reviewing previous complaints about the same issue.

Investigations may be undertaken by the Senior Dispute Resolution Officer who completed the initial assessment or by an external investigator under contract. In all instances, the LAO will be briefed on the details of the complaint. When completed, a report regarding the findings of the investigation will be provided for consideration.

Complaint outcomes

Possible outcomes may include:

- an explanation of the process and information about how the complaint was handled
- an apology for the way we handled the matter
- a change in the way we are handling the matter
- ongoing monitoring of issues
- a change to our process
- staff training.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

There may be occasions a customer's conduct could be considered unreasonable. These include:

- frequent, lengthy, repeated telephone calls
- frequent letters, emails, faxes, or visits seeking resolution of issues beyond the scope of the original complaint or before the decision due date
- seeking information, advice, or resolution from a variety of staff about the same issue
- any contact involving abusive or threatening language and behaviour
- continued contact after feedback has been provided and all avenues have been exhausted.

The LAO Manager (or RTI & IP Officer) handling the complaint will consider the relevant circumstances, i.e., staff welfare and appropriate use of resources, and consult with the Land Access Ombudsman about the appropriate action to be taken.

External review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal investigation, or any part of the complaint process, you may contact the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman:

Website: www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au
Post: Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
GPO Box 3314
Brisbane QLD 4001
Phone: 07 3005 7000 or 1800 068 908
Address: Level 18, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane City, 4000

Privacy complaints

If you are dissatisfied with how we have dealt with your privacy complaint, or you do not receive a response from us within 45 business days, you may complain to the Office of the Information Commissioner:

Website: www.oic.qld.gov.au
Email: enquiries@oic.qld.gov.au
Post: Office of the Information Commissioner
PO Box 10143
Adelaide Street Brisbane
QLD 4000
Phone: 07 3234 7373 or 1800 642 753

Address: Level 7, 133 Mary Street, Brisbane City, 4000

Recordkeeping

The LAO will maintain records of complaints, this will include:

- correspondence sent and received
- evidence of the process used to consider the complaint
- records of meetings, telephone conversations and interviews
- findings from the investigation
- recommendations and approvals.

The complaint records will be available for internal and external review, subject to information privacy, right to information considerations and legislative obligations.

Reporting

The Complaints Register will be used to provide information on the effectiveness of the LAO's complaints framework.

The Senior Dispute Resolution Officer will:

- provide the Land Access Ombudsman with bi-annual reports on the number of customer complaints received, the number resulting in further action and the number resulting in no further action
- provide the Land Access Ombudsman with de-identified complaints data for annual publication on the LAO's website in accordance with s 264(3) of the *Public Sector Act 2022*.

Roles and responsibilities

Land Access Ombudsman

The Land Access Ombudsman is responsible for:

- ensuring that a complaints management system is established
- ensuring there is a process for regular reporting on complaints management
- publishing complaints data on the LAO's website before 30 September each year, to comply with s 264(3) of the *Public Sector Act 2022*
- allocating sufficient resources to ensure complaints are effectively managed
- providing appropriate training courses on Complaints Management.

Senior Dispute Resolution Officer

The Senior Dispute Resolution Officer will:

- monitor the general enquiries and corporate inbox for incoming complaints
- review the effectiveness of the complaints management framework at least every two years
- ensure that the complaints management policy is included in the induction process for new staff, and that all staff receive refresher training
- ensure that the complaints management framework is being followed by their team
- ensure timely and effective resolution of complaints in accordance with this framework
- allocate complaints that can't be resolved at the first point of contact to the Land Access Ombudsman within 24 hours of receipt
- ensure that complaints are logged into the Complaints Register for tracking and reporting purposes

- acknowledge the receipt of complaints not resolved at the first point of contact within five business days, and advise the customer of the expected timeframes for resolution or response
- attempt to address complaints through informal processes
- undertake complaints investigations and advise customers of the outcome
- approve and implement resolution actions
- ensure that appropriate action is taken to address sources of complaints, adverse issues and trends identified
- ensure that staff with roles in handling complaints are provided with appropriate information and training.

All staff

All officers of the LAO are responsible for:

- complying with the complaints management policy and procedures
- dealing with matters raised by customers locally to minimise formal complaints
- informing customers of the processes for lodging and managing complaints
- treating complainants in a respectful and courteous manner
- maintaining privacy and confidentiality
- recording and submitting verbal complaints received to their manager
- ensuring all complaint dealings are recorded in the Complaints Register.

Glossary

The following definitions shall apply:

Complainant: Any person who lodges a complaint with the LAO.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction from a member of the public about our services, the conduct of an officer of the LAO or about the way we have handled the individual's personal information.

Receiving officer: Any employee who receives a complaint.

Related documents

Read in conjunction with the following:

- *Internal Review Requests Policy and Procedure*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure*
- *Policy for Complaints about Corrupt Conduct against the Ombudsman*
- *Managing Employee Complaints Policy and Procedure*
- *Privacy Complaints and Breaches Policy and Procedure*
- *Information Privacy Plan.*

References

- [Land Access Ombudsman Act 2017](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009](#)
- [Public Sector Act 2022](#), s 264
- [Australian Standards AS 10002:2022 – Guidelines for complaint management in organizations \(ISO 10002:2018, NEQ\)](#)
- Queensland Ombudsman, [Policy and Procedure Guide](#)

Further information

Refer to:

- the Senior Dispute Resolution Officer
- the Land Access Ombudsman

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years after the approval date.

Approval



Jane Pires
Land Access Ombudsman

23/06/2025

Version History

VERSION	DATE	ACTION	DESCRIPTION / COMMENTS
1.0	15/04/2019		First release
1.0	30/03/2020	No change	Internal review
1.1	24/03/2021	Amended OLAO to LAO Included reference to the LAO Privacy Complaints and Breaches Policy and Procedure	Internal review
1.2	09/08/2021	Updated LAO physical address from level 12 to level 16 after relocation and amended error in corporate email address	Review of contact details after relocation of LAO office
1.3	10/08/2023	Amended legislative links Updated to AS10002:2022	Internal Review
1.4	16/06/2025	Minor wording amendments	Internal Review

Keywords

Complaints, complaints management framework, customer complaints, internal review, external review, service delivery complaints, AS 10002:2022, *Public Sector Act 2022*, Information Commissioner, privacy, information privacy.