

# External complaint handling policy

## Overview

IPART is committed to improving our services, identifying problems, strengthening relationships and we welcome and value feedback.

## Objectives

This policy provides guidance on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system. It is relevant to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint.

## Scope

This policy applies to employees receiving or managing complaints from the public made to or about:

- the process used to come to our decision or advice
- policy, procedures or processes (including complaints handling)
- behaviour or conduct of permanent, temporary and casual employees; consultants; and contractors

This policy does not apply to a complaint made to us about other agencies – this includes whether or not they adopted IPART's advice.

## Principles

IPART expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following principles apply when handling external complaints:

Facilitate complaints through:

- our **commitment** to seek and receive feedback and complaints about IPART, our review process, decisions, policy and procedures and staff from our stakeholders.
- **accepting** complaints via website, phone, email, letter, carer / agent, interpreter or relay services, including anonymous complaints<sup>a</sup>. Submitting a complaint is free.

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<sup>a</sup> Anonymous complaints limit our ability to contact you for further information and provide updates and response.

- taking all reasonable steps to ensure people making complaints suffer **no detriment**.
- providing information on how to make a complaint and ensuring our complaints handling process is **visible, transparent and accessible** on our website and available on request.

Respond to complaints through:

- being committed to **early resolution** of complaints, on first contact where possible, and if not, in a **flexible** and **responsive** and timely manner.
- ensuring that complaints will be referred to **trained and empowered staff** to determine how best to resolve concerns promptly.
- **acknowledging** complaints within a reasonable timeframe working days.
- treating all complainants with **courtesy and respect**.
- addressing complaints with integrity and in an **objective and fair** manner.
- protecting the **confidentiality** of people making complaints.

Manage the parties to a complaint through:

- providing alternate contact details for **complaints involving other parties**.<sup>b</sup>
- working with other agencies where **complaints involve multiple agencies**.
- assigning a single contact point where **complaints involve multiple teams** within IPART.
- arranging to communicate with a single representative where **complaints come from multiple parties**.
- **managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints** through proactive and decisive action to manage negative and unreasonable effects on IPART or our staff.

Learn through:

- **recording** all complaints received, handling actions, and outcomes in our records management system.
- **monitoring trends**, analyse, report and review complaints on a regular basis as part **continuous improvement**.

## Fraud and Corruption

IPART is committed to ensuring that our practices are fair and ethical, and that staff act with integrity and efficiency in meeting our obligations to the community, customers and stakeholders.

IPART has a Fraud and Corruption Control Charter which states how we manage allegations of fraud and corruption. Staff must report all allegations and matters of concern regarding suspected fraud or corruption to at least one of the position holders identified in the Charter. Members of the public can report through the same channels. The Fraud and Corruption Control

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<sup>b</sup> For emergencies, we will follow-up immediately to ensure notification is received by the correct agency.

Charter is available on our website. The Charter also includes information on making anonymous reports.

Alternatively, reports about fraud and corruption can be made to another appropriate agency, such as:

- NSW Ombudsman
- the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)
- NSW Police

Our Public Interest Disclosure Policy provides information for public officials reporting about wrongdoing under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*.

## Framework

IPART's Complaint Handling Framework provides a structure that facilitates the use of a consistent process for handling complaints at IPART.

## Governance

### Roles and responsibilities

Table 1 provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities for handling complaints at IPART.

Table 1 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Key responsibilities
Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote a culture that values complaints and effective resolution</li> <li>• Report publicly on IPART's complaint handling.</li> <li>• Provide support and direction to staff responsible for handling complaints.</li> <li>• Regularly review reports about trends and issues arising from complaints.</li> <li>• Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints resolve them promptly.</li> <li>• Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</li> <li>• Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.</li> <li>• Support recommendations arising from analysis of complaint data</li> </ul>
Complaints Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and manage IPART's complaint management system</li> <li>• Provide regular reports to CEO on issues arising from complaint handling work.</li> <li>• Ensure recommendations arising out of complaint data analysis are canvassed with the CEO and implemented where appropriate.</li> <li>• Recruit, train and empower staff to resolve complaints promptly and in accordance with IPART's policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Encourage staff managing complaints to provide suggestions on ways to improve the organisation's complaint management system.</li> <li>• Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints resolve them promptly.</li> <li>• Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff</li> </ul>

Role	Key responsibilities
Any staff member handling (or asked to handle) a complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices</li> <li>• Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</li> <li>• Assist people make a complaint, if needed.</li> <li>• Comply with this policy and its associated procedures.</li> <li>• Keep informed about best practice in complaint handling.</li> <li>• Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</li> <li>• Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve the organisation's complaints management system.</li> <li>• Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis and evaluation of complaint data as directed by management.</li> </ul>
Ongoing, temporary and casual employees; consultants; and contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist people who wish to make complaints access the IPART's complaints process by directing all complaints to the website for further information.</li> <li>• Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</li> <li>• Be aware of IPART's complaint handling policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.</li> <li>• Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</li> <li>• Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis and evaluation of complaint data as directed by management.</li> </ul>

Source: [https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/25375/Complaint-management-framework-June-2015.pdf](https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/25375/Complaint-management-framework-June-2015.pdf)

## Definitions

Table 2 provides a glossary of key terms that are not explained elsewhere in this document.

Term	Definition
Complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.<sup>c</sup></li> <li>• A complaint covered by this Policy can be distinguished from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– staff grievances (see our grievance policy)</li> <li>– public interest disclosures (see our PID internal reporting policy)</li> <li>– code of conduct complaints (see our code of conduct)</li> <li>– responses to requests for stakeholder feedback</li> <li>– feedback (see definition of 'feedback')</li> <li>– requests for information (see our access to information policy)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Dispute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation</li> </ul>
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about IPART, our review process, staff or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.</li> </ul>
Grievance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work related problem.</li> </ul>
Public interest disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A report about wrong doing made by a public official in New South Wales that meets the requirements of the <i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994</i>.</li> </ul>

Source: [https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/25375/Complaint-management-framework-June-2015.pdf](https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/25375/Complaint-management-framework-June-2015.pdf)

<sup>c</sup> Guidelines – AS/NZS 10002:2014 AS/NZS Complaints Management Standard

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