

Complaints management policy

Policy statement

The Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) aims to deliver a high quality service to its customers and continuously improve its processes to maintain customer satisfaction. Customers are encouraged to provide feedback, including complaints with respect to DTF to highlight areas for improvement.

DTF is committed to resolving complaints in relation to our services in a timely and professional manner that is sensitive, fair, impartial, consistent and transparent. Any feedback, including complaints received, assists in guiding us to continuously improve our systems and services.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints received from the public and internal Northern Territory Public Sector employees in relation to the business undertaken by DTF in relation to:

- a product, service, decision or action by DTF, an employee, or service provider
- the conduct and/or behaviour of an employee or service provider
- the breach of an individual's privacy by DTF, an employee, or service provider.

In line with advice provided by the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, in the event there is a data breach or a breach of an individual's privacy, DTF will:

- report the breach to the Office of the Information Commissioner
- contact companies or corporate entities whose confidential information may have been disclosed to inform them of what has happened and what has been done, or is proposed to be done
- contact individuals whose personal information may have been disclosed to inform them of what has happened and what has been done, or is proposed to be done, and advise them of their rights to contact the Information Commissioner.

This policy does not apply to:

- commentary on government policy or actions by another Northern Territory Government department
- work related grievances against a fellow employee or employees
- allegations or suspicions of potential fraud, corruption, dishonesty, improper conduct including protected disclosures.

Complaints in relation to the operations or activities of another department may be referred to that department in consultation with the complainant. An independent confidential email service and phone contact is provided for matters relating to fraud, corruption, dishonesty, improper conduct on DTF's website.

Definitions

Complainant – A person who has a complaint.

Complaint – A statement either in writing or orally expressing dissatisfaction with an aspect of a product, service, decision, action, conduct or breach of privacy by DTF.

DTF – The Department of Treasury and Finance, including the Northern Territory Treasury Corporation.

Background

DTF provides a wide range of services for all government agencies, including in the areas of:

- financial management
- economic and commercial policy
- revenue policy and regulatory compliance
- superannuation.

The Northern Territory Treasury Corporation manages government's annual borrowing and investment programs.

How to make a complaint

Customers external and internal to government can lodge complaints via:

- email – enquiries.dtf@nt.gov.au
- phone – (08) 8999 6500
- post – GPO Box 1974, Darwin NT 0800

All complaints need to be evidence based and include sufficient detail and factual information to enable them to be appropriately investigated. Bear in mind that parties the subject of complaint will likely have a right to respond and these responses considered.

Principles

DTF values of commitment to service, ethical practice, accountability, impartiality, diversity and respect underpin our complaints management along with the following principles:

Respectful treatment – Complainants will be treated with courtesy and respect. We will be responsive and will ensure the complainant receives no detriment for having complained.

Information and accessibility – We make it easy and accessible to submit a complaint and if assistance is needed to lodge a complaint it will be made available. Information about the complaint process can be accessed in a variety of formats across a range of media. This information includes available avenues to make a complaint, what a complainant can expect and examples of how complaints have helped improve services.

Confidentiality – The privacy of all parties in the process will be respected and information treated confidentially.

Good communication – Complainants will be kept informed about the status of their complaint, including acknowledging receipt, initial telephone contact and updating complainants at regular intervals. A response outlining findings, the improvements made and/or agreed outcomes will be provided to the complainant, in writing.

Taking ownership – The employees who manage the complaint are appropriately trained and skilled. Contact details are made available to the complainant. Complainants are informed if the complaint is transferred to another person or team.

Timeframes – It is best to deal with complaints as soon as possible. Upon receipt of a complaint, DTF will provide an acknowledgement to the complainant within two **(2) business days**. Timeframes for finalising complaints recognise differing levels of seriousness, urgency and complexity. If there are unavoidable delays in addressing a complaint, the complainant will be informed to explain the reasons. Otherwise, a response will be provided to the complainant within 30 days of receiving the complaint.

Continuous improvement – All complaints are an opportunity to identify potential areas for improvement. In resolving a complaint, the causal factors will be reviewed and opportunities to make improvement identified and implemented, and reported as an outcome to the DTF Senior Management Group.

Existing complaint mechanisms

The Territory Revenue Office maintains a separate Complaints Management procedure, specifically to address complaints and comments received regarding services provided to taxpayers. Complaints from taxpayers are managed in accordance with Australian Standard AS ISO 10002:2018 (Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations).

The Northern Territory Superannuation Office also maintains a separate Complaints Management procedure, specifically to address complaints received from superannuation customers regarding services or information provided to members. Complaints from superannuation customers are managed in accordance with the *Information Act 2002* and reported to the Information Commissioner where they relate to customer privacy.

Out of scope and mandatory referrals

DTF is required to comply with a range of legislative and/or policy mandatory referral/reporting requirements and has implemented processes to manage the following matters.

Complaints received regarding compliance with the Buy Local Plan are referred to the Buy Local Industry Advocate.

Complaints received regarding government procurement policy are managed by DTF, however must be reported to the agency responsible for procurement actions/matters which is the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade.

Complaints in relation to public sector employment, the management of employees, or discrimination within public sector workplaces will be investigated in accordance with relevant legislative and policy requirements identified under the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993* or the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*, respectively.

Complaints in relation to breaches involving personal information will be investigated in accordance with relevant legislative and policy requirements including the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme where government has personal information security obligations under the *Privacy Amendment (Notifiable Data Breaches) Act 2017*.

Complaints relating to Freedom of Information applicants will be investigated in accordance with the *Information Act 2002*.

Allegations or suspicions of criminal activity including fraud and corruption by an employee, contractor, vendor, or supplier may require referral to Police in accordance with the Treasurer's Directions.

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a person of corruption or fraud, relevant details must be provided to the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption, Auditor-General, Under Treasurer and any other regulatory or statutory body (as required by legislation).

DTF Executive Services will coordinate all mandatory referrals.

Natural Justice

The decision maker must impartially consider submissions prior to making a decision, apply the principles of natural justice, and make a decision in a fair and considered manner, based on reviewing all relevant information.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about behaving discreetly and maintaining the privacy of all parties in the process. If any details of a complaint are provided to a third party by the officers addressing the complaint, there must be a clear and substantial reason for doing so. For example; the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment may be provided information about a complaint relating to public sector employment.

All parties involved in the complaint management process will exercise discretion and ensure that confidentiality and privacy is maintained.

Complaints Reporting

DTF's Senior Management Group will review a report analysing all complaints annually to ensure complaints improve the quality of services. An audit will be undertaken on the complaints handling process where significant risk is identified.

Legislation and related policy

- *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993* – Section 59 Review of grievances
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Information Act 2002*
- *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017*
- *Privacy Amendment (Notifiable Data Breaches) Act 2017 (Cth)*
- Employment Instruction number 12 – NTPS Code of Conduct
- Procurement Rules – Rule 4 Complaints
- Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme
- Treasurer's Direction – Fraud Control
- Australian Standard ISO 10002:2018 for Complaint Management

Further information

For further information contact DTF Executive Services on (08) 8999 6500.

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This policy will be reviewed on annually to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints handling process.