

Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy

Commitment

WaterNSW is committed to seeking and receiving feedback (good and bad) about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling, to ensure that WaterNSW staff at all levels handle the feedback fairly, efficiently and effectively.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively, in alignment with the WaterNSW Operating Licence 2022-2024 and the Australian Standard *AS10002:2022 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations* ("the Standard"). Our complaint management system is intended to:

- enable us to respond to issues raised by people making complaints in a timely and cost-effective way
- boost public confidence in our administrative process, and
- provide information that can be used by us to deliver quality improvements in our products, services, staff and complaint handling.

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

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all WaterNSW staff receiving or managing complaints from the public made to or about us, regarding our products, services, staff and complaint handling.

1.3 Organisational commitment

WaterNSW expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

2. Terms and Definitions

Complaint: Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Complaint management system: All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

Dispute: An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

Feedback: Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our products, services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. In the interest of providing improved customer experiences, WaterNSW may treat negative feedback as a complaint.

Policy: A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.

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

Unreasonable Conduct (by Complainant): any behaviour by a person which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the people involved in the complaint process

3. Guiding Principles



3.1 - Step 1 Facilitate Complaints

3.1.1 People Focus

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback (good and bad) about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling. Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame. We accept anonymous complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process
- provided with multiple and accessible ways to make complaints
- listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review

3.1.2 No detriment to people making complaints

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

3.1.3 Accessibility, Visibility and Transparency

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised. We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance. If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

3.1.4 No charge

Submitting a complaint to us is free of charge.

3.2 - Step 2 Responding to complaints

3.2.1 Responsiveness

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We 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 safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

3.2.2 Impartiality, Equity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. We will ensure that the person 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 person other than the original decision maker.

3.2.3 Privacy and Disclosure

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by the WaterNSW as permitted under the WaterNSW Privacy Management Plan, relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations. Any privacy related complaints will be handled in accordance with the WaterNSW Privacy Management Plan and Data Breach Policy.

3.2.4 Communication

To facilitate early resolution of complaints, WaterNSW endeavours to ensure that staff have access to clear, simple information to provide effective communication with complainants.

3.3 - Step 3 Manage the parties to a complaint

3.3.1 Complaints involving multiple parties

When similar complaints are made by related parties, and subject to privacy obligations, we will try to arrange to communicate with a single representative of the group.

Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between the parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response to the complaint.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas within our organisation, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will also be coordinated.

Where our services are contracted out, we expect contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. We take complaints not only about the actions of our staff but also the actions of service providers.

If a complaint involves multiple organisations, we will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure that communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

3.3.2 Empowerment of staff

All staff managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities. Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

3.3.3 Conduct of Parties

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety and security of our staff, and
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. Examples of conduct may include unreasonable:

- Persistence - e.g. refusing to accept a final decision, excessive contact
- Demands - insisting on unattainable or non-procedural outcomes
- Lack of Cooperation - refusing to define exact issues
- Arguments - irrational cause and effect arguments, illogical interpretation of facts/law
- Behaviour - threatening behaviour, aggression, threats of harm to self/others

As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy. This may mean WaterNSW management will communicate our right to safety, up to and including the refusal to dealing with your complaint.

3.4 - Step 4 Accountability, Learning and Prevention

3.4.1 Accountability

Our complaint management system is independently audited by IPART to ensure its effective operation.

3.4.2 Continuous Improvement

Our policy and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated according to feedback from our staff and customers, external audit recommendations and/or updates to the Standard.

3.4.3 Prevention of Ongoing Disputes

WaterNSW customers have, at all times, the option of contacting EWON should they feel the need for a third party to assist in their issue or to provide mediation. Our frontline staff are also trained in dispute resolution to ensure effective communication between parties.

Complaints Management System

WaterNSW has a comprehensive 5 step complaint management system and all complaints received are managed in accordance with this system.



Contact Us

- Phone: 1300 662 077 between 8.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. A voicemail and callback service is available 24 hours, 7 days per week.
- Email – customer.helpdesk@waternsw.com.au