



Electoral Commission SA (ECSA)

Feedback and Complaints Policy

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The signed version of this policy is available on the docket.

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Document Control

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Feedback and Complaints Policy

1. Framework

This policy forms part of the complaint management system adopted by Electoral Commission SA (ECSA). This document forms part of the following Framework:

- ECSA Feedback and Complaints Policy
- ECSA Feedback and Complaints Procedures
- DPC Circular 39: Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector
- AS/NZS 10002: 2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations

2. Purpose

The ECSA Feedback and Complaints Policy outlines the scope, definitions, principles and responsibilities of the Agency with respect to managing feedback, complaints or compliments.

3. Scope

This policy and associated procedures apply to all ECSA staff [refer *Public Sector Act 2009* Part 1 s3(1)].

This Policy relates solely to external feedback, complaints or compliments made directly to ECSA (such as feedback on the services ECSA provides; complaints about customer service etc.).

This Policy does not apply to:

- matters dealt with under ECSA's Complaints Protocol for State elections
e.g. complaints regarding political advertising
- matters dealt with under ECSA's Complaints Protocol for local government elections
e.g. complaints regarding advertising in council elections
- matters of administrative law
e.g. concerning political funding and disclosure requirements
- appeal decisions
e.g. concerning the registration of political parties
- judicial decisions
e.g. decisions by the Courts
- internal staff complaints
e.g. employee complaints regarding pay
- panel selection grievances
e.g. complaints about selection panels under the Public Sector Act
- official misconduct
e.g. matters which should be directed to the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption
- matters relating to the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993*.

Where an alternative whole of government Complaints Management Policy is mandated, the ECSA Complaint and Feedback policy is not applicable, for example, the State Procurement Board's *Supplier Complaints Policy*.

Matters concerning the conduct and practice of public officers and public authorities in South Australian public administration, specifically corruption, misconduct and maladministration should be reported via the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (www.icac.sa.gov.au).

4. Definitions

Complaint: expression of dissatisfaction made to ECSA 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 (based upon AS/NZS 10002: 2014).

Complaint management system (CMS): refers to the policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an agency to manage the receipt, processing and outcome of complaints.

Compliment: positive feedback about ECSA's products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint. It can recognise a skill, behaviour or activity of the organisation as a whole, an organisation's branch, or individual staff member.

Feedback: opinions, comments and suggestions, or expressions of interest or concern, made directly to or about ECSA, its products, services, staff or its handling of a complaint, where there is no explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required response or resolution (based upon AS/NZS 10002: 2014). Feedback may include compliments.

5. Principles

ECSA encourages feedback, complaints or compliments. Compliments help us to recognise what is working well. Complaints are an opportunity to resolve an issue with our products or services and to learn from it. ECSA will enable, respond to and be accountable for feedback, based on the following principles.

Enable feedback, complaints and compliments

- *People focus* – People have a right to give feedback and will not be adversely affected because a complaint is made for them or by them. Feedback is a tool for improvement.
- *Visibility* – ECSA will be open about how and where people can give feedback or make a complaint. This will include external review mechanisms, such as the Ombudsman.
- *Accessibility* – the process for giving feedback, a compliment or making a complaint will be clear, easy to understand, and free. ECSA will make it easy to give feedback in various formats (phone, web, post, in person). The process will be accessible, including for children and young people, people living in regional and remote areas, people with disabilities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Respond to feedback, complaints and compliments

- *Responsiveness* – ECSA will acknowledge all complaints and feedback where contact information is provided within five working days. ECSA will strive to resolve

complaints within 21 days of acknowledgment, or as negotiated with the complainant. A response to feedback is at the Manager's discretion.

- ECSA will strive for resolution of complaints at the first point of contact with the complainant. If a complaint can be resolved immediately, we will take action to do so. Assessment will occur within 10 days of acknowledgment, or as negotiated with the complainant. ECSA staff will assess all complaints and decide who will deal with them and what priority they will be given.
- For complaints, ECSA will be clear about our process and about resolution timeframes. ECSA will update people about how their complaint is being addressed, to avoid unnecessary escalation of complaints.
- *Objectivity and fairness* – We believe that a person who makes a complaint is entitled to internal review of the issues raised, if necessary, and a considered response. People should have confidence that our processes are fair and reasonable. ECSA will treat all matters in a fair, unbiased and objective manner.
- *Confidentiality* – any personal information provided in the course of managing feedback, compliments or complaints will be managed in accordance with relevant legal and policy requirements.
- *Transparency* – ECSA will be clear about how a complaint has been resolved. Where a complaint remains unresolved or cannot be resolved satisfactorily for our clients, ECSA will provide information about how the department's handling of a complaint can be reviewed or appealed. Where a staff member is named in a complaint, ECSA will provide the staff member with sufficient information to enable them to understand and respond to the complaint made against them, where appropriate.

Be accountable for feedback, complaints and compliments

- ECSA will use feedback, complaints and compliments to address systemic issues or trends and for continuous improvement, and to recognise our staff. Feedback to staff arising from compliments, feedback, or complaints will be given as soon as practicable.
- ECSA will develop and implement processes to prevent complaints escalating into ongoing disputes.
- Annual review of feedback and complaints handling processes will be undertaken, to ensure they are efficient and effective.
- ECSA will record all complaints, compliments and feedback received, for the purpose of business improvement and annual reporting requirements.

6. Operation

Operation of this policy is detailed in the Feedback and Complaints Procedures.

7. Lodging feedback or complaints

Members of the public are given a range of options for providing ECSA with feedback or complaints. Options include:

Postal address: GPO Box 646 Adelaide SA 5001
Telephone: 1300 655 232 (within SA) or +61 8 7424 7400
Fax: +61 8 7424 7444
Email: ecsa.complaints@sa.gov.au
Face to face: Level 6, 60 Light Square Adelaide SA 5001
Online: www.ecsa.sa.gov.au

8. Dissatisfied and Escalated complaints

If a complainant is not satisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled, or the outcome, they may seek an Internal Review of the matter by the Electoral Commissioner.

Where a complaint remains unresolved or cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complaint may be referred to an external body such as the Ombudsman SA (www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au).

9. Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that employees understand their obligations under this Policy and are supported to deliver on those obligations (including, where appropriate, tools, training and engagement to manage compliments, complaints and feedback).

The **Executive Officer** is responsible for:

- Developing and implementing processes that ensure compliance with this Policy. Where a tailored / 'fit for purpose' process is implemented, the principles and standards of this policy are to be included.
- Collect and record data on feedback and complaints to assist in the identification of systemic and recurring problems and/or potential improvements to service delivery and customer relations.
- Preparing reports to the Electoral Commissioner as required, including for Annual Report requirements.
- Where required, reporting significant complaints (deemed to be high-risk) to the Electoral Commissioner.
- Ensuring that all documentation regarding compliment, complaint and feedback management is retained in accordance with the *State Record Act 1997*.

Employees are responsible for:

- Implementing the principles and standards set out in this Policy and associated procedures.
- Understanding the ethical issues that might arise as part of their role, including conflict of interest, procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy.

The **Electoral Commissioner** is responsible for the operation of this Policy and for reporting on the number and type of complaints received each year and related service improvements in the agency's Annual Report in accordance with *DPC Circular PC013 – Annual Reporting Requirements*. This Circular requires agencies to report annually on complaint data and to address system improvements planned for the next financial year. Complaints referenced in the Annual Report include as a minimum the number of complaints received, the category of complaints received and what service improvements were made as a result.

10. References

- ECSA Feedback and Complaints Procedures
- DPC Circular 39: *Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector*
- AS/NZS 10002: 2014 *Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*
- Ombudsman SA *An audit of state government agencies' complaint handling* [November 2014]
- Attorney-General's Department *Feedback, complaints and compliments management: Guidelines* [November 2015]

Feedback and Complaints Guidelines

Purpose

These guidelines are intended to assist staff in implementing ECSA's commitment to manage feedback, complaints and compliments as outlined in ECSA's Feedback and Complaints Policy.

These guidelines are based on the Attorney-General's Department *Feedback, complaints and compliments management: Guidelines* and provide the framework for how feedback, complaints and compliments should be received, captured, considered and resolved.

These guidelines will be supplemented by supporting materials such as flow charts, forms, handbooks etc along with computer systems.

Process

The major stages in the process are:

1. Receive feedback or complaint
2. Assess feedback or complaint
3. Resolve and/or record feedback or complaints.

1. Receive feedback, complaints and compliments

What information should be provided by someone wishing to make a complaint?

To capture data, particularly to effectively manage a complaint, consider collecting:

- Identification information
- Contact details (complainant)
- Preferred contact method
- What function, product, service, part of ECSA Branch the feedback, complaint or compliment is about
- For complaints – whether the issue has been raised previously by the complainant and they have previously received a response
- Space for details of the complaint to be recorded
- The outcome sought by the complainant
- Any assistance required to interact with ECSA (eg. interpreter services)
- Any other relevant details (eg. attachments that should be provided)
- Signature field (if in hardcopy) and date

2. Assess feedback, complaints and compliments

What information do we record to assess a complaint/feedback?

In addition to the information above, information to record for assessment include:

- Date lodged
- Reference number (where appropriate, for tracking)
- Branch/person compliment or complaint relates to (as appropriate)

- Who has been allocated to consider and respond to the compliment or complaint
- Whether the issue has been raised previously and any outcome
- Prioritisation – does the matter require immediate escalation or action (or both) [for complaints, this will be informed by any previous action on this issue]

3. Resolve and record the feedback, complaints and compliments

Complaints: Assessment and Action

Actions following initial assessment might include:

- Seeking resolution (eg. facilitating a discussion between frontline staff member and the complainant) and document agreed action/s where appropriate
- Making informal inquiries
- Do a more formal investigation
- Review the decision of frontline staff or the outcome of assessment
- Transfer the matter to the appropriate ECSA Branch for action.

Feedback: Assessment and Action

Actions following initial assessment might include:

- Seeking resolution (eg. facilitating a discussion between frontline staff member and the complainant) and document agreed action/s where appropriate
- Making informal inquiries
- Do a more formal investigation or analysis to see if there is a broader issue.
- Transfer the matter to the appropriate ECSA Branch for action.
- Clarify what action, if any, is expected by the customer.

Compliments: Assessment and Action

For positive feedback about products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, staff might:

- Identify who is involved
- Clarify what constitutes a compliment in each case
- Clarify what action, if any, is expected by the customer
- Determine the most appropriate form of recognition and reward.