

Policy No. PP020

Complaints Management Policy

1 INFORMATION ABOUT THIS POLICY

POLICY INFORMATION

Date Adopted by Board 22 June 2017	Resolution No. 17/040, 20/021
Policy Responsibility General Manager	
Review Timeframe 4 Yearly	
Last Review 21 February 2020	Next Scheduled Review February 2024

DOCUMENT HISTORY

DOCUMENT NO.	DATE AMENDED	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
	21/02/2020	Updated in line with review schedule
	DD/MM/YYYY	
	DD/MM/YYYY	

FURTHER DOCUMENT INFORMATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Related Legislation	<p>Local Government Act 1993</p> <p>Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988</p> <p>Ombudsman Act 1974</p> <p>Anti-Discrimination Act 1987</p> <p>NSW Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPAA)</p> <p>Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act NSW 1998 (PPIPA)</p> <p>Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994</p>
Related Policies	<p>PP031 Code of Conduct Policy (Code of Conduct)</p> <p>PP021 Internal Reporting Policy</p>
Related Procedures, Protocols, Statements and Documents	

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3 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is ensure Goldenfields Water has in place an effective complaints management system which;

- ensures complaints are received, recorded and resolved in an appropriate manner;
- allows Goldenfields Water to deal with complaints in an fair, open and impartial manner;
- uses complaints as a means to improve Goldenfields Water's service quality, policies and procedures;
- demonstrates Goldenfields Water's commitment to deal with complaints in a positive manner; and
- allows general complaints to be dealt with in a timely manner.

4 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all staff and delegates of Goldenfields Water.

5 TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

5.1 General Complaints

This category covers a wide range of issues about policies and procedures, behaviour of employees and quality of service that are dealt with and resolved inside the organisation. These complaints may be written or verbal and there is an identified complainant. Goldenfields Water aims is to deal with these complaints as close to the source of the complaint as possible. Goldenfields Water determines how to deal with general complaints, unlike complaints where statutory rules exist.

Customers who have made a general complaint and are dissatisfied with the outcome can take the matter further by contacting the Office of Local Government, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), the NSW Ombudsman or Anti-Discrimination Board, so it is important that Goldenfields Water does everything possible to try to resolve the issue. However, there are times when a complaint is not justified and a decision or outcome cannot be changed. At these times Goldenfields Water must continue to deal with the complainant in a professional way and inform complainants about their rights and other avenues available to them.

5.2 Anonymous Complaints

While anonymous complaints will be recorded, they will generally only be acted on where the matter is relatively serious and where there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable an investigation to be undertaken.

Anonymous complaints should always be referred to the relevant Manager. Complaints about hazards and public safety concerns should be referred to Goldenfields Water's WHS Coordinator.

Generally only anonymous complaints about staff involving the following serious matters will be investigated:

- hazards involving possible risks and public liability;
- corrupt conduct;
- illegal activities; and
- public safety concerns.

5.3 Code of Conduct Complaints

These complaints relate to breaches of the Code of Conduct. Any complaint alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct by a Board Member, member of staff or delegate of council will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures prescribed under the Code of Conduct.

5.4 Competitive Neutrality Complaints

This is a complaint that Goldenfields Water has not met its obligations under the National Competition Policy and has not abided by the spirit of competitive neutrality in the conduct of a Council business.

5.5 Complaints with Statutory (including Industrial) Reporting requirements

This category covers a range of issues that may be dealt with and resolved inside the organisation and may also have external reporting requirements. These complaints will be dealt with by the relevant Manager and possibly referred to an appropriate external authority. The General Manager will be kept informed about the nature and resolution of these types of complaints and the process used.

Public Interest Disclosure, Corrupt Conduct, Maladministration and Serious/Substantial Waste

These complaints are to be dealt with in accordance with PP021 Internal Reporting Policy. The General Manager will be notified about all protected disclosures made.

Pecuniary Interest

These complaints are to be referred to the relevant Manager for investigation.

Grievance Complaints

These complaints may be referred to the relevant Manager or Human Resources Coordinator.

Complaints regarding service quality and reliability will be dealt with in accordance with 'best practice' as set out by the Office of Water.

6 UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

This Policy exists for the benefit of service users to provide a process which is both transparent and fair in dealing with expressions of dissatisfaction. However in certain instances it is apparent that some complaints are unlikely to be concluded due to their unreasonable nature. Complaints are deemed unreasonable if:

- The complaint lacks substance or merit;

- The complaint is outside of Goldenfields Water’s jurisdictional responsibility; or
- The conduct of the complainant is unreasonable, unacceptable or uncooperative.

7 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Goldenfields Water recognises that an effective complaints system is an essential part of the provision of quality public sector service. To achieve this, the best practice model as advocated by the NSW Ombudsman to handle complaints has been adopted:

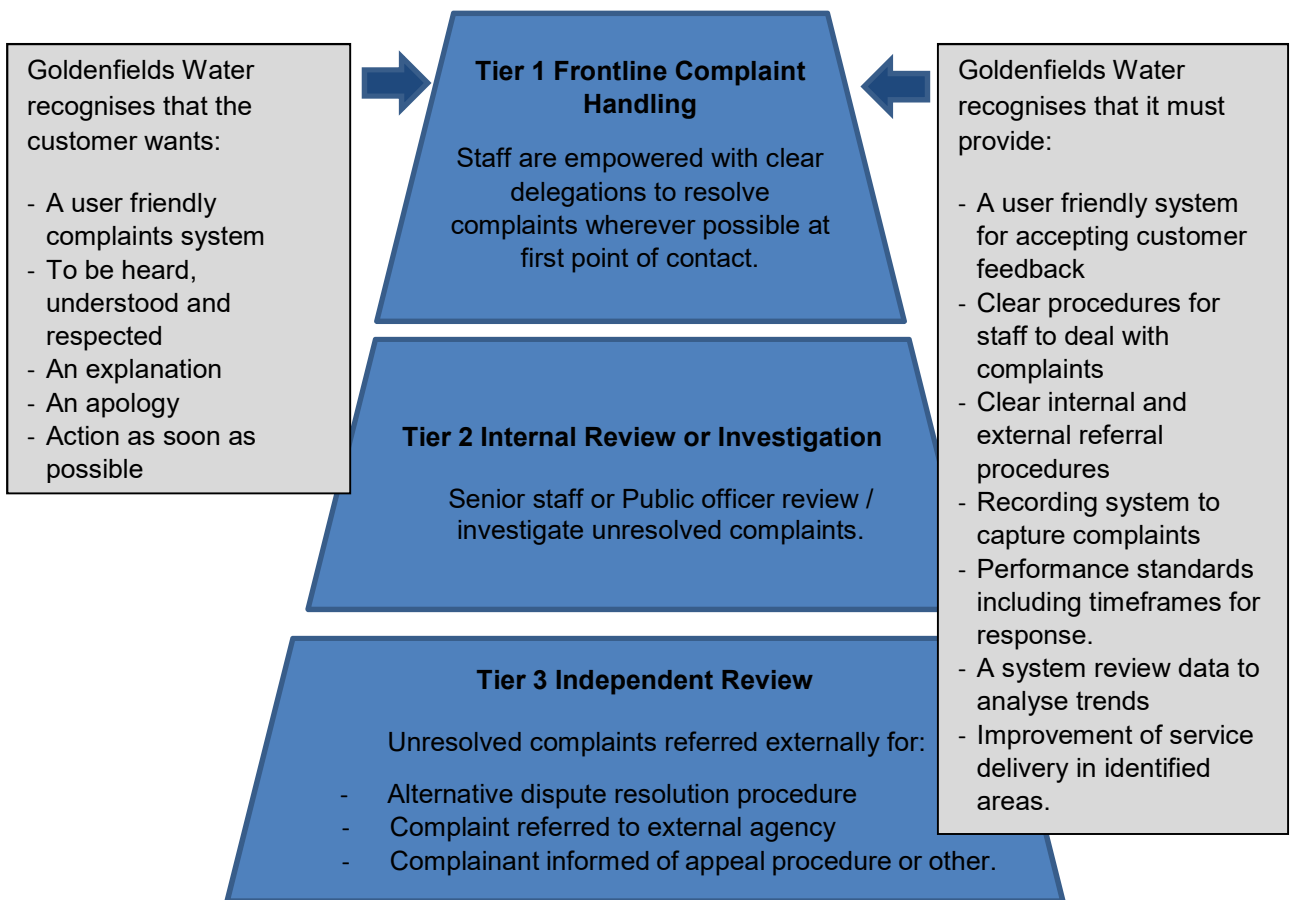


Figure 1: Goldenfields Water’s Complaints Management Process

Tier 1. Frontline Complaint Handling

Staff are empowered with clear delegations to resolve complaints wherever possible at first point of contact. All complaints are registered in Goldenfields Water’s records management system to outline the resolution/action taken.

Tier 2. Internal Review

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the first point of contact then the complaint is reviewed or investigated by the Public Officer, Senior Officer or General Manager and the results of the review are reported back to the complainant.

Tier 3. External Review

If the complaint cannot be reviewed within Goldenfields Water the complainant is referred to an outside agency or to some other alternative resolution procedure or, as a last resort any legal remedy.

Goldenfields Water will maintain a Complaints Register which will provide a complete record of all complaints received and processed.

The Corporate Services Manager shall maintain statistics of complaints to allow performance reporting in the quarterly review and the Annual Report.

By adopting the best practice model for complaint handling as advocated by the NSW Ombudsman's Office, Goldenfields Water will ensure it has in place an efficient and effective system for handling complaints. It will ensure that complainants can see that Goldenfields Water has a transparent system which handles their complaint fairly. Also, it will allow Goldenfields Water to learn as an organisation in achieving better outcomes for the constituent communities.

8 RESPONSE TIMES FOR COMPLAINTS

It is the aim of Goldenfields Water to finalise all complaints within twenty-eight working days. However, in some cases, response times may be delayed due to the nature and complexity of the complaint. Additional information or clarification may be required. Staff handling the complaint may also need to consult or seek information from other Goldenfields Water employees. The investigation period will vary according to the nature and complexity of the complaint. When response times are longer than the set standard, the complainant will be informed about progress.

All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days regardless of the way the complaint was made. Wherever possible, complaints will be acknowledged at the time the complaint is made.

9 RECORD KEEPING

General complaints received by telephone, e-mail and mail are to be recorded and placed on the relevant file.

Complaints about staff, Code of Conduct complaints, competitive neutrality complaints, protected disclosures and grievances are to be kept on a secure and confidential file.

10 MONITORING PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE POLICY

Regular monitoring of performance response times against the time standards set out in the Policy will be undertaken with an annual report being presented to the Management Executive (MANEX) and circulated to Board Members.