



POLICY STATEMENT No. 83

GENERAL COMPLAINTS

1. OBJECTIVE

To ensure that a consistent method of management, monitoring and reporting of general complaints is implemented so as to improve the quality of services provided by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to its customers and to comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Commissioner's Circular *Complaints Management Policy 2009-27*.

2. SCOPE

A general complaint relates to the way DEC carries out its roles, or provides its services or products to the community, and is a complaint made about the department and/or its staff by external parties.

A comment should be sufficiently clear and specific to be treated as a complaint. Comments may not be positive towards DEC but do not necessarily require being recorded as a general complaint.

This policy applies to all staff who receive, process, manage or investigate general complaints received by the department.

Regulatory complaints concerning potential breaches of legislation administered by DEC or information alleging poor environmental or conservation practices for which DEC has a regulatory role are excluded from the scope of this policy. A separate Regulatory Function Complaints Policy Statement No 77 is in place for these complaints.

3. CONTEXT

The mission of DEC is:

"Working with the community, we will ensure that Western Australia's environment is valued, protected and conserved, for its intrinsic value, and for the appreciation and benefit of present and future generations."

DEC has responsibility for protecting and conserving the State's environment on behalf of the people of Western Australia. This responsibility is most effectively met when working in partnership with the community, which can provide valuable feedback on the way DEC carries out its roles, or provides services or products to the community. This feedback includes general complaints. DEC recognizes and promotes the right of community members to provide such feedback.

4. STANDARDS

The Public Sector Commissioner's Circular *Complaints Management Policy 2009-27* contains the procedures to be followed by government agencies in the management of complaints. See the link below:

<http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/document/public-sector-commissioners-circular-2009-27-complaints-management>

There is also a whole of government website at: www.complaints.wa.gov.au.

5. LEGISLATION

This policy is relevant to goods and services provided by WA State Government agencies covered by the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*.

6. POLICY

- 6.1 DEC recognizes and promotes the right of community members to provide feedback on how we carry out our roles and provide our services and products. This policy aims to ensure such feedback is handled in an accessible, consistent, open, accountable and confidential manner, free of charge. DEC also aims to continuously improve its products and services by the reporting, monitoring and analysis of general complaint data.
- 6.2 The general complaints process adheres to the customers' right to be heard in relation to complaints, which can be lodged online, emailed, received by post, over the telephone or in person. There is a *prima facie* acceptance of a complaint being legitimate. DEC will respect privacy and a complaint will be treated as confidential throughout the general complaints process. The department will also provide assistance to complainants as required. Complaints will be investigated in a fair and objective manner and the complainant will be advised of the outcome in a timely and efficient manner. An appeal process is available for complainants dissatisfied with DEC's decision.

DEC's general complaints process undertakes to:

- Register and acknowledge the receipt of a complaint;
- Document the progress, key milestones and outcomes of a complaint in a consistent and accountable manner;
- Provide confidentiality;
- Investigate the complaint in a fair and objective manner;
- Provide efficient and timely service to the complainant, including meeting appropriate timeframes;
- Inform the complainant of the outcome of their complaint as soon as possible;
- Provide an appeal process for complaints that remain unresolved;
- Refer people to appropriate external bodies, where complaints remain unresolved at an agency level;
- Report, monitor and analyse general complaint data to continuously improve the complaints handling process and the quality of DEC's products and services, wherever possible; and
- Review the general complaints process annually.

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To implement this policy, the department will:

- Ensure there is a direct link on the front page of its website to information that will assist people to make a complaint about DEC;
- Configure DEC's Corporate Record Keeping system for the registration, progress tracking, reporting and analysis of all general complaints; and
- Make this policy and associated handling guide available to, and known by, all DEC personnel.

8. CUSTODIAN

Director Corporate Services.

9. KEY WORDS

Complaint; Customer feedback; Products and services.

10. REVIEW

5 years from the approval date.

11. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved on

..... 26 June 2012

By Keiran McNamara
DIRECTOR GENERAL

..... Keiran McNamara