

Complaints Management Policy

Introduction

The Northern Territory Superannuation Office is committed to delivering quality services that are responsive to the needs of members. This includes building an organisational culture that recognises the benefits of effective complaint handling.

Complaints are a valuable source of feedback and an important tool for business and staff development. Diligent and prompt attention to complaints can help us identify the needs of our clients, understand our business shortcomings, increase client satisfaction and improve overall performance.

To this end, the Superannuation Office has developed an internal complaints management framework that includes this policy and a basic set of procedures.

Objectives

The Superannuation Office will ensure that complaints received are dealt with fairly, promptly and in an efficient and confidential manner, and that the complainant is aware of the complaints management process and what to expect when they lodge a complaint.

Policy statement

The Superannuation Office's complaint management policy and procedures are underpinned by the following principles:

Visibility and access

- Members will have access to information about the complaints management system (CMS) including how and where to make a complaint. The complaint management policy and procedures will be available on the Superannuation Office's website. Information material will be available at service delivery points.
- Reasonable assistance will be available to complainants with special needs, including complainants who are unable to lodge a complaint in writing.

Responsiveness

- Complaints will be resolved in a timely manner. Complainants will receive regular progress reports during complex or lengthy investigations.
- Superannuation Office employees will be aware of and have access to the complaint management policy and procedures in the Superannuation Office directory. New employees will receive general complaint management training during induction.

Integrity

- The principles of natural justice will be applied to all complaints. Further information about natural justice is available in the complaint management procedures.
- Complaint officers will demonstrate fair and consistent decision-making.
- Complaints will be investigated without prejudice to any other right a complainant may have.

Accountability

- Parties to a complaint will receive information that clearly explains how and why a decision was made.
- Complaint data will be analysed to identify systemic issues that need to be addressed in order to improve performance and reduce the number of complaints received.
- Where potential system improvements are identified, such feedback shall be provided to the relevant section of the Superannuation Office.
- The Superannuation Office will ensure adequate resources, including staff and training, are available to manage complaints.

Complainant privacy

- The privacy of complainants and any employee named in a complaint will be maintained where possible.

What is a complaint?

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about a service, procedure, practice or policy that is NOT resolved at the point of service.

For the purpose of this policy, an issue or concern is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about a service procedure, practice or departmental policy that is resolved at the point of service.

Application/scope

The complaints management policy applies to all Superannuation Office employees of the Northern Territory Treasury (NTT) in respect to services provided by the Superannuation Office.

The complaints management policy does not cover complaints about:

- decisions made in respect to member's rights or benefit entitlements under the *Superannuation Act*, NT Supplementary Superannuation Scheme or the NT Police Supplementary Benefit Scheme (complaints of these types must be commenced through the formal appeal processes of the relevant scheme. For further information please refer to [Fact Sheet: Review of Decisions](#));
- decisions made by the Superannuation Review Board, Superannuation Investment Board or the Police Supplementary Benefit Scheme Trustees;
- allegations against employees involving suspected misconduct, including official misconduct; or
- denied FOI (Freedom of Information) applications.

Privacy

The NT Government protects privacy through the *Information Act* that contains 10 Information Privacy Principles (IPPs). IPPs are rules for the collection and handling of personal information that bind NT government organisations.

If a complainant believes their personal information, or the personal information of a third party, has not been managed in line with one or more of these principles they can lodge a complaint under this policy. If you are not satisfied with the resolution of your complaint, you can lodge your complaint with the Information Commissioner (for further information refer to the Office of the Information Commissioner's website <http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/infocomm/index.htm>).

Misconduct

Complaints about suspected misconduct, including official misconduct or breaches of the Code of Conduct, are not covered by this policy and should be immediately referred to the Under Treasurer, in accordance with the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*.

Vexatious complaints

The Superannuation Office may refuse to investigate a complaint if it is considered to be trivial, frivolous or vexatious. This decision is at the discretion of the Commissioner of Superannuation (the Commissioner).

A complaint may be considered vexatious when the purpose of the complaint is to harass, annoy, delay or cause detriment. A complainant may lack reasonable grounds for lodging the complaint or possess insufficient direct interest in the issue complained about.

If a complaint is considered vexatious, the Commissioner may choose to limit or cease correspondence to the complainant. Once this decision is made, it must be communicated to the complainant in writing.

Complaint categories

Complaints should be categorised by complexity and issue.

Complexity

- Standard complaints usually involve a single issue or concern of a type that may have been raised previously.
- Complex complaints may require detailed or lengthy investigation. Complex complaints may involve multiple issues or parties. In some instances, a formal investigation may be necessary.

Issue

For recording and tracking purposes, complaints should also be categorised by issue. If a complaint falls into more than one category, the complaint officer must determine which category is most accurate. The complaint categories are:

- service delivery;
- staff conduct;
- policy and/or procedure; and
- privacy.

Lodging a complaint

Complainants should submit their complaint in writing, by letter or by filling out a Complaint Form available on the Superannuation Office website. In instances where this is not possible a complainant may contact Superannuation Office staff for assistance. Complaints should be addressed to the Complaints Officer.

Complaints Officer
NT Superannuation Office
GPO Box 4675, Darwin NT 0801
Tel: 1800 631 630

Or email: ntsuperannuation@nt.gov.au
(insert "To Complaints Officer" in the subject field).

Timeframes

The timeframes outlined in this policy are indicative only and will depend on the complexity of the complaint. The Superannuation Office encourages the prompt resolution of complaints and will reduce the stated timeframes where possible.

- Standard complaints should be finalised within 10 working days.
- Complex complaints should be finalised within 30 working days.

Reporting

Aggregate complaint data will be included in the annual report. The Superannuation Office will provide a bi-annual report to Senior Management of the NTT. This will highlight the performance of their CMS over the previous six months. The report will also be made available to the auditors. At a minimum, the report will include:

- number of complaints received during the reporting period by category;
- number of complaints resolved during the reporting period; and
- significant service improvements (if any) implemented as a result of the CMS.

The Superannuation Office will maintain a complaint register, which will underpin the reporting process. The Superannuation Office will provide a copy of the register to Senior Management as part of the bi-annual reporting and to auditors upon request.

Documentation and data collection

All stages of the CMS will be documented. Documentation, even for withdrawn complaints, will be complete and up to date.

Confidentiality and Privacy

All personal information relating to the complaints process will be used specifically for the purpose that it is collected and will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the *Information Act*. Superannuation Office employees are to treat all complaints in the strictest confidence and only disclose information and the complainant's personal information to officers who have a requirement to know.

External Review of Complaint

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review of their complaint they have the right to refer matters to the Northern Territory Ombudsman's Office. Complainants must be informed of this option.

Ombudsman For The Northern Territory
12th Floor, NT House
GPO Box 1344, Darwin NT 0801
Tel: 08 8999 1818
Fax: 08 8999 1828
Email: nt.ombudsman@nt.gov.au
Web: www.ombudsman.nt.gov.au

Review of Complaint Management System

The CMS policy and procedures will be reviewed by the Superannuation Office on a regular basis.

References

Ombudsman NT Fact Sheets No.1-14, available electronically at

http://www.nt.gov.au/omb_hcsc/ombudsman/index.htm (accessed at 24 August 2009).

The Queensland Ombudsman, Guide to Developing Effective Complaints Management Policies and Procedures, available electronically at www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au (accessed at 24 August 2009).

The Victorian Ombudsman, Guide to Compliant Handling for Victorian Public Sector Agencies, available electronically at www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au (accessed 24 August 2009).

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General QLD, *Complaint Management Policy*, available electronically at <http://www.justice.qld.gov.au/files/AboutUs/complaintmanagementpolicy07.pdf> (accessed at 24 August 2009).

Definitions

Complainant: any person who lodges a complaint with the Superannuation Office.

Complaint Officer: any employee appointed by the Commissioner of Superannuation to assist in resolving a complaint.

Commissioner of Superannuation: appointed under the *Superannuation Act*.

Complex complaint: involves multiple issues or parties and may require formal investigation.

Standard complaint: involves a single issue or concern and can be resolved by reviewing an action or activity.

Vexatious complaint: a complaint intended to harass, annoy, delay or cause detriment.