

Complaints Management Policy

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contents

1. Policy statement	1
2. Policy objective	1
3. Risk appetite statement	1
4. Policy scope	1
5. Policy content	2
5.1 Complaint management principles	2
5.2 Complaint management process	2
5.2.1. Receiving complaints	2
5.2.2. Acknowledging complaints	2
5.2.3. Assessing complaints	2
5.2.4. Determining further action or investigation	3
5.2.5. Responding to the complainant	3
5.2.6. Addressing issues identified	3
5.2.7. Complainant dissatisfaction with complaint handling	3
5.3 Unreasonable conduct by a complainant	3
5.4 Confidentiality	4
5.5 Monitoring and reporting on complaints, and continual improvement	4
6. Roles and responsibilities	4
7. Definitions	5
8. Related policies	5
9. Contact point	5
10. Review	5
Document information	6
Document history	6

1. Policy statement

The Audit Office of New South Wales is a statutory authority, established under the *Government Sector Audit Act 1983*, that conducts audits for the Auditor-General. These audits help parliament hold government accountable for its use of public resources.

The Audit Office is committed to providing a quality service to its stakeholders: the Parliament of New South Wales, the agencies and local councils we audit, and members of the public.

The Audit Office is dedicated to living our values in the way we conduct our work, and the work we deliver for the Parliament of New South Wales.

This Policy outlines our approach to complaints made about the Audit Office. It is developed and maintained in line with Australian Standard on Complaint Handling AS10002:2022 and the NSW Ombudsman's Effective Complaint Management Guidelines (2024), as well as general good governance principles.

2. Policy objective

In recognising that, from time to time, stakeholders may be unsatisfied with our work or our staff, this Policy outlines the mechanism to manage complaints received about the Audit Office.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide staff and stakeholders with information on what constitutes a complaint in relation to the Audit Office, and how we handle complaints made to us about our work and our staff. This includes the principles we will adopt in handling complaints, and our complaints management process. This Policy also includes avenues for review of our management of a complaint, and documents how we may use and report on outcomes of our complaints management process.

3. Risk appetite statement

The Audit Office is committed to the fair, timely and effective management of complaints made about our work or our staff. We have a low risk appetite for ineffective management of complaints which may threaten our reputation and the achievement of our strategic objectives. This informs our approach to the management of complaints.

4. Policy scope

This Policy applies only to complaints about the Audit Office.

A complaint is made when a person expresses dissatisfaction about Audit Office services or staff, where a response or resolution is implicitly or explicitly expected. This can include complaints about how we have completed our audit work, complaints about the actions of our staff, or complaints related to privacy.

Generally, a complaint *does not* include:

- a request for a service
- a formal or informal request for information (see the Audit Office [Information Guide](#))
- feedback received via stakeholder surveys
- feedback or opinions about entities we audit (see how to [Provide information or suggest a future audit topic](#) via our website)
- a public interest disclosure, which is a specific type of report about serious wrongdoing that is made by a public official (see the [Audit Office's public interest disclosure policies](#))
- staff grievances about workplace or employment-related matters (which are handled in accordance with the Audit Office's Grievance Policy)
- suggestions, negative feedback, compliments or other enquiries made about the Audit Office, including via social media or professional networking platforms.

These types of correspondence are not covered by this Policy.

5. Policy content

5.1 Complaint management principles

The Audit Office is committed to the following principles when handling complaints.

1. **Respectful treatment:** complainants will be treated with fairness, courtesy and respect, and can complain without fear of detriment.
2. **Information and accessibility:** we will provide information on our complaints handling process and make it easy for stakeholders to make a complaint about us.
3. **Good communication:** complainants will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint, the outcome of their complaint, and the reasons for our decisions.
4. **Taking ownership:** an appropriate member of staff will take on, assess and respond to complaints.
5. **Timeliness:** complainants will be provided with a timeframe in which a response can be expected and will be informed of any changes to this.
6. **Transparency and accountability:** we will monitor and regularly report internally on complaints to support our continual improvement, and we will include information on complaints in our publicly available annual report.

5.2 Complaint management process

5.2.1. Receiving complaints

Complaints about the Audit Office can be made by webform through our website, by email, by mail and by telephone (see contact details below). The Audit Office may consult with the correspondent to better understand their issues and to determine how to best respond to their correspondence. The inclusion of contact details will be important to facilitate this.

Make a complaint about the Audit Office via the following methods.

Email: governance@audit.nsw.gov.au

Mail: Audit Office of New South Wales, Attn: Governance
 GPO Box 12
 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Telephone: + 61 2 9275 7100

The Audit Office will accept and assess anonymous complaints, however anonymity may limit the Audit Office's ability to seek further information to assess the complaint adequately. It will also limit our ability to inform the complainant of the outcome of our assessment and, where appropriate, the outcome of any review we have undertaken.

5.2.2. Acknowledging complaints

Complaints about the Audit Office will be acknowledged within three business days of receipt (except over the Christmas close down period).

5.2.3. Assessing complaints

Complaints about the Audit Office are assessed within the Governance unit, with oversight from the relevant director. Complaints are allocated to other areas of the business as appropriate for input, comment or advice to assist in the assessment.

5.2.4. Determining further action or investigation

The content of the complaint is assessed and, where required, further information may be sought from the complainant. Other areas in the business may be consulted and further investigation may be undertaken.

Complaints relating to the Audit Offices' handling of personal or health information will be assessed by privacy officers within the Governance unit.

Complaints which include information which shows or tends to show corrupt conduct involving the NSW public service will be referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) under section 11 of the ICAC Act 1988.

5.2.5. Responding to the complainant

Where contact details have been provided, the Audit Office aims to provide a response to the complainant advising of the outcome of their complaint within four weeks of receiving the complaint. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be advised, and a revised timeframe will be provided.

The Audit Office commits to being transparent with complainants, within the context of the statutory secrecy provisions which govern our work and that limit what information we can communicate when it relates to our audit functions.

5.2.6. Addressing issues identified

The Audit Office seeks to take timely and meaningful action in response to issues raised in a complaint and/or the findings of an investigation. For example, where the need for changes to Audit Office policies or processes is identified, these will be implemented in a timely manner. Where a process or policy has not been adhered to, appropriate corrective and preventative actions will be implemented.

5.2.7. Complainant dissatisfaction with complaint handling

If a complainant is not satisfied with the way we have responded to their complaint, they may seek to request an internal review. Where requested, reviews will be conducted by the Executive Director, Quality, Improvement and Performance, or another member of the Office Executive who was not involved in the original matter.

An internal review will consider whether the complaint was handled in accordance with this Policy, and the complaint management principles, as well as any other relevant policies and procedures, or legislative requirements. It will also consider if any additional actions or reviews are required. The outcome of an internal review will be documented and shared with the complainant.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal review, or is otherwise dissatisfied with how we have dealt with their complaint, they have the option of pursuing their complaint with another appropriate agency, such as the NSW Ombudsman.

5.3 Unreasonable conduct by a complainant

From time to time, complainants to the Audit Office may be characterised by difficult, challenging, or complex behaviours. This may include being overly persistent, overly demanding, uncooperative, overly argumentative, or engaging in unacceptable behaviour.

In these instances, the Audit Office will be guided by the NSW Ombudsman's 2021 managing unreasonable conduct by a complainant guidelines. Actions may include modifying or limiting the correspondence channels available to that complainant, and/or advising the complainant that we will no longer respond unless substantively new matters are raised.

5.4 Confidentiality

All complaints will be dealt with confidentially and personal information will be managed in accordance with the Information Protection Principles in the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*. For further information refer to the Audit Office's [Privacy Management Plan](#).

5.5 Monitoring and reporting on complaints, and continual improvement

Complaints about the Audit Office are tracked centrally by the Governance unit in the Governance, Risk and Compliance (GRC) system. This information is monitored so that trends or patterns can be identified.

In line with our focus on transparency and accountability, information relating to complaints about the Audit Office is reported quarterly to the Office Executive and to the Audit and Risk Committee. More broadly, insights gained through complaints are used to drive improvements to Audit Office processes.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Auditor-General – overall responsibility for the Audit Office having an effective framework for complaints management and overseeing internal accountability for implementing improvements based on information and insights from complaints.

Office Executive – monitoring the operations of the Audit Office's complaints management framework, and advising the Auditor-General on strategic matters with respect to the framework; in certain circumstances, members of the Office Executive may lead internal reviews around the management of a specific complaint.

Executive Director, Quality, Improvement and Performance – overseeing the implementation of the complaints management framework by the Audit Office's Governance unit; conducting internal reviews of complaints as requested by the complainant.

Director, Legislation and Assurance – leading the Governance unit's function for managing and maintaining the Audit Office's complaints management framework, and making key decisions around the response, escalation and referral of complaints.

Governance unit – responsible for:

- maintaining the Audit Office complaints management framework, including the policy and procedures for managing complaints, and providing advice to members of the public and other stakeholders on these
- receiving, assessing and managing complaints about the Audit Office, including determining or providing advice on the most appropriate course of action in line with this Policy and complaint management principles
- appropriately referring complaints within the Audit Office (and externally if required) for action, and ensuring that an appropriate and timely response is provided to the complainant
- where relevant, monitoring and supporting the implementation of identified corrective actions or improvements to processes in response to complaints
- maintaining and managing complaints data to ensure that insightful information and analysis is reported to the Office Executive and the Audit and Risk Committee, and is prepared for external reporting
- assessing and advising the Office Executive on the effectiveness of the complaints management framework and identifying opportunities for continual improvement.

All staff – responsibility to comply with the Policy as relevant to their role or a responsibility for the management of a particular complaint in line with this Policy.

7. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply.

Complaint – an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the Audit Office relating to its services, staff or the management of a complaint, or private information where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complainant – a person or organisation making the complaint.

Staff – includes all Audit Office employees (that is persons employed under the Award conditions or on executive contract), and contingent workers. Contingent workers are staff who are employed through a recruitment agency.

8. Related policies

- Information Guide
- Internal Public Interest Disclosures Policy
- Privacy Management Plan
- Grievance Policy
- Statement of Business Ethics

The most current versions of these and most other Audit Office policies are available to the public on our [website](#), and also to staff via the intranet.

9. Contact point

The Director, Legislation and Assurance is the contact point for all enquires relating to this Policy and may be contacted at governance@audit.nsw.gov.au.

10. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if significant new information, legislation or organisational change warrants an update.

Document information

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3.0	March 2025	Review and significant update to the Policy to align with the new Australian Standard on Complaint Handling, and the new guidance material provided by the NSW Ombudsman. Also updated to reflect the new Audit Office Policy Framework and organisational changes.
