

# P25 Complaints Management Procedure



## 1. Purpose

Quality Innovation Performance Certifications Pty Ltd [QIP Certifications] is committed to providing our clients with best practice complaints handling mechanisms. The company understands that a good complaints process will build trust in our brand, help us to respond effectively to our clients, and improve our services and our business management practices.

Our complaints management procedure is there to:

- Make it easier for people to make a complaint;
- Make it easier for QIP Certifications to deal with complaints;
- Help QIP Certifications improve its services;
- Give the community confidence in QIP Certifications.

## 2. Scope

This procedure applies to all QIP Certifications staff and contractors and to all client complaints and the way they are handled.

Examples of a client complaint include:

- A decision or failure to make a certification decision, including a failure to provide reasons for the decision in writing;
- Making a certification recommendation, including non-compliances and notifiable issues;
- Actions or omissions made by an auditor or audit team, or an employee in the course of an audit cycle;
- Complaints that are:
  - fixed quickly;
  - Made verbally;
  - Made anonymously.

This procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints about the conduct or performance of board member;
- Complaints about corruption;
- Public interest disclosures;
- Complaints covered by a separate review or appeal processes.

## 3. Referenced Documents

APP	<i>Australian Privacy Principles 2014</i>
PY 10	Complaints and Appeals Policy
P07	Appeals Management Procedure
F29	Complaints and Appeals Register
F28	Complaints Report

Table 1-Referenced Documents

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## 4. Workplace Health & Safety

1	Stressors experienced by staff when dealing with complaints, in particular complex appeals and unreasonable complaints.
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## 5. Terms and Definitions

Affected Person	Someone who is seems to be directly affected by an action or inaction of the company, its employees and its contractors.
CB	Certifying Body
CO	Complaints Officer
Complaint	A formal expression of dissatisfaction with QIP Certifications personnel, contractors, services, decisions and/or clients. Note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A minor issue dealt with and resolved through the daily working processes is not required to be actioned through this procedure;</li> <li>AGPAL Group Legal Counsel must be consulted in any case where the legal representative of a 2nd or 3rd Party raises a complaint, appeal or feedback.</li> </ul>
Consumer	Primarily, a person who is receiving / has received a service / support from the client being audited in the last 12 months. Consumer may also mean family member/s or an unpaid primary carer or advocate of that person using the service. Also known as “client”, “participant”, “service user”, “person using/accessing services” etc.
EM	Executive Manager
QIP Certifications	<i>Quality Innovation Performance Certifications Pty Ltd</i>
QMR	Quality Management Representative

Table 2-Terms and Definitions

## 6. Procedure

### 6.1. Welcoming Complaints

QIP Certifications will have a publically available, clear and simple message for all clients about how to make a complaint. An easy read brochure explaining how to make a complaint is available and reviewed annually with client and stakeholder consultation to ensure that it meets client and business requirements.

Information available for clients will include:

- How to make a complaint or provide feedback;
- Where to make the complaint;
- When to make the complaint;
- What information the complainant needs to provide us with;
- Our process for handling complaints;
- The time periods associated with our complaints handling process;
- Options for review, appeals or redress;

- How the client can obtain feedback and information on the progress of their complaint.

## 6.2. Our Complaints Process

### 6.2.1. The Complaints Model

Our complaints model is a step by step way to receive record, assess, review, respond and report on complaints. It recognises that complaints can be made at various times and in various ways, to audit teams, to the Complaints Officer (CO) who will be the Quality Management Representative (QMR) or to the Executive Manager (EM) and / or Board Chair.

1. Complaints are initially managed and resolved by the CO. The CO can refer a complaint to the EM and / or the Board Chair depending on the seriousness of the complaint.
2. Unresolved complaints are referred to the EM and / or the Board Chair for review and response.
3. People who are not happy with the way the company has handled their complaint will be provided with a process of appeals information and can contact JAS- ANZ or the HSQF Team at the Department of Communities, Queensland for assistance. The CO will provide up to date information to the complainant as requested.

## 6.3. Working with vulnerable consumers

### 6.3.1. Vulnerable Consumers

Sometimes people are described as vulnerable consumers because of their characteristics or demographics, including:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Level of education;
- Race/ethnicity (Harrison and Chalmers, 2013).
- Temporary and short term situations which might include:
  - Grief;
  - Stress;
  - Fatigue (Harrison and Chalmers, 2013).
- Other factors which might contribute to vulnerability:
  - Low income consumers being influenced by materialism they see in the media;
  - Lack of access to things like healthcare or retail facilities.

Sometimes stressful situations themselves are the reason the consumer is complaining about our services (for example, using a lawyer in relation to a divorce) so it is particularly important that we are prepared for potentially vulnerable consumers.

### 6.3.2. Our Obligations

As a certifying body (CB) we are obliged to comply with some state and national guidelines and regulations in order to protect vulnerable consumers. This includes where a complaint cannot be

resolved through our own complaints or appeals processes, the complainant is given information and advised to escalate their complaint to the relevant government body and/or JAS-ANZ.

It is important to check the relevant guidelines which might relate to high risk sectors (e.g. Mental Health organisations, medical centres or hospitals) during the complaint assessment process.

### 6.3.3. Assessment and Assistance

It is important to have an assessment process to ensure that we know whether the consumer is vulnerable or not, and therefore whether they need extra help.

This might mean asking a few more questions when you first start dealing with a consumer, for example, about whether:

- They have any special needs;
- They need an interpreter;
- They have any current assistance.

When assisting these consumers, whether through initial contact with them or after they have made a complaint, it is important to keep in mind that sometimes a small change can make a big difference for them.

For example:

- Sending a short follow-up email summarising key points of a meeting;
- Organising a face to face meeting with their preferred advocate present.

## 6.4. Receiving Complaints

Consumers can make a complaint in the following ways:

- By telephone or in person;
- By email or online, via QIP Certification's website;
- In writing, addressed to the Complaints Officer;
- Anonymously.

If a complaint is made on a person's behalf, the Complaints officer will check that the person is happy for QIP Certifications to respond directly to their representative.

### 6.4.1. Assisting Consumers to make a Complaint

- The Complaints officer will assist each complainant to make a complaint, and tell them what information they need to provide.
- The Complaints officer will make sure that if a person needs an interpreter, or has communication difficulties the appropriate interpreter service or communication partner (e.g. Auslan or ACS) is contacted to assist them with their complaint lodgement.

### 6.4.2. Acknowledging a complaint

- The CO will let people know they have received their complaint within two days (48 hours);
- The CO can let people know they have received their complaint verbally or in writing, depending on the requested method of reply;

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- Acknowledgements will tell people how long it will take to handle the complaint and contact details for the officer dealing with the complaint;
- The original contact person will remain the central point of contact unless the complaint escalates.

## 6.4.3. Recording Complaints

All complaints will be recorded in the *F29 Complaints and Appeals Register*.

The Complaints and Appeals register includes:

- The complaint reference number;
- The name of the person making the complaint;
- The date and time the complaint was first received;
- What the complaint is about;
- The outcome of the complaint;
- Date and time the complaint was finalised;
- All action required and the date the company will take action.

All written complaints will be referred to the CO. The CO will arrange for the complaint details to be recorded in the *F29 Complaints and Appeals Register*.

All verbal complaints will be recorded by the receiving officer and passed on to the CO. Details of the complaint will be entered in the complaints register. If a verbal complaint is complex, the CO can ask the person to put their complaint in writing or, where possible a meeting.

The CO will create a full record of how the complaint is managed on the *F28 Complaints Report*

The complaint record will include:

- The complaint reference number;
- The name and contact details of the person making the complaint;
- Date and time the complaint was received (and how the complaint was received);
- What the complaint is about;
- Information collected and considered by the CO;
- All actions taken to fix the problem;
- The complaint decision and the reasons for the decision;
- The final response communicated to complainant;
- The date and time the complaint is finalised.

## 6.5. Assessing each complaint

### 6.5.1. Investigation process

Each complaint will be viewed on its merits and looked at carefully to define:

- What the complaint is about;

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- How it will be managed, including deciding if it is urgent;
- If any extra information needs to be gathered.

The CO needs to look closely at:

- Whether the complaint involves any action or inaction by staff or a contractor;
- Whether person making the complaint is directly affected;
- Whether the complaint is worth investigating (is it an unreasonable complaint?);
- Whether the person making the complaint has a right to appeal the company's decision;
- What the person wants QIP Certifications to do to fix the problem.

Anonymous complaints will be accepted and dealt with like any other complaint.

Important considerations include:

- How serious the complaint is;
- How much information is provided;
- Whether the company is able to properly investigate the complaint.

The CO's assessment of each complaint will be recorded in the *F29 Complaints and Appeals Register*.

## 6.6. Complaints Regarding a Certified Client

If QIP Certifications receives a complaint about a certified client, the CO, or person receiving the complaint will respond and record the complaint in the same manner as stated in this procedure. In addition to this and when investigating the complaint, the CO will:

- Examine the complaint and consider the effectiveness of the client's management system;
- Refer the complaint, if found to be valid, to the certified client at an appropriate time;
- Ensure that information about the source of the complaint (e.g. complainant, regulators etc) is treated as confidential and not disclosed to the client that the complaint was made about;
- Determine, together with the certified client and the complainant, whether and to what extent the subject of the complaint and its resolution will be made public.

## 6.7. Reviewing complaints

### 6.7.1. Quick and efficient process

Complaints will be dealt with quickly and efficiently and will also be handled in a fair and objective way.

When dealing with a complaint, the CO will:

- Talk to the person making the complaint to check whether they understand all the issues;
- Gather and consider all relevant information about the complaint;
- Identify and consider relevant laws, policies and procedures;
- Give anyone affected by the complaint a fair hearing before the complaint is decided;
- Decide what can be done to fix the problem;

QIP Certifications can fix the problem by:

- Apologising;

- Offering a refund or financial compensation;
- Changing its decision;
- Changing its policy, practice, procedure;
- Fixing misleading or inaccurate records;
- Offering help, providing further information or referring the complaint to someone who can help.

## 6.8. Responding to complaints

### 6.8.1. The response process

The CO, EM or Board Chair will tell the person making the complaint what it decides within 15 working days of the complaint being received.

QIP Certification's final response can be provided verbally, but should be confirmed in writing within 20 working days of receiving the complaint.

If the final response cannot be provided within this time, the CO will let the person know how their complaint is progressing and when they can expect a response.

The final response will include:

- The company's decision and the reasons for the decision;
- Contact details for the officer handling the complaint;
- Information about the right of appeal.

## 6.9. Unresolved complaints

*See also P07 Appeals Management Procedure*

### 6.9.1. Disputes

All further disputes of a complaints' final response will:

- Escalate immediately to the Board Chair;
- Be reviewed by the EM to consider all the facts and events surrounding the initial complaint;
- The EM will give a written update to the Board Chair;
- The EM will contact the complainant directly to discuss the nature of the dispute and seek a solution with the Boards approval;
- The EM will then communicate with the Board Chair and seek approval for the suggested solution;
- The EM will then communicate with the complainant in writing within 5 working days offering the agreed solution;
- In the event of further conflict, the matter will then be investigated by an independent Appeals Panel  
–*See P07 Appeals Management Procedure*

## 6.9.2. Escalation of the dispute to an Appeal and resolution by an external body

In the event of a failure to resolve a dispute by the Appeals Panel the client is supported to appeal to the external accreditation body JAS ANZ and / or the HSQF division of the Department of Communities. Queensland.

Information on the right of appeal and the name of the external bodies is supplied to the client by the CO in the initial letter of complaint acknowledgement.

## 6.10. Complaints Reporting

The EM and Board Chair will receive a report quarterly from the CO.

The internal report will:

- Identify and analyse complaint trends, significant issues and review that the complaints process is operating effectively;
- Include any recommendations for improvement;
- Monitor how the company will implement accepted recommendations and opportunities for improvement from all complaints feedback.

## 6.11. External Reporting

QIP Certifications Annual report will contain the following information about the complaints and appeals process:

- A statement about how the process is working, including an assessment of the company's performance in resolving complaints under this procedure;
- The number of all complaints made, resolved and unresolved during the financial year;
- The number of complaints unresolved from the previous financial year.

## 7. Privacy Complaints

### 7.1. Preliminary steps

#### 7.1.1. What is the complaint about?

The CO will determine if the complaint is about company, staff or contractor handling of a consumer's information.

If the determination is:

- YES:
  - The complaint will be treated as a privacy complaint (go to 7.1.2)
- NO:
  - Follow the usual complaints management process.

#### 7.1.2. Who does the information belong to?

The CO will check that the personal information involved in the complaint is the personal information of the person who is making the complaint.

If the determination is:



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- YES:
  - Go to 7.1.3.
- NO:
  - Clarify the complainant's authority to act for the person whose personal information the complaint is about.

The CO will not go ahead without a proper written authority as to release any information. To continue may mean a risk of wrongful disclosure and the company may be in breach of the *Australian Privacy Principles 2014* (APP)

## 7.1.3. What is the complaint about?

Does the complaint involve any of the following?

- Collection of personal (including sensitive) information (APP 3)
- Use and/or disclosure of personal information (APP 6);
- Accuracy of personal information (APP 10);
- Security of personal information (APP 11);
- Refusal to give access to personal information (APP 12);
- Refusal to correct personal information (APP 13);
- Other APP issues;
- Other interferences with the complainant's privacy. There are a number of other privacy interferences that are covered by the Privacy Act or subject to investigation by the Commissioner. For more information on what the Privacy Act covers and/or what the Commissioner can investigate see our Rights and responsibilities webpage;
- Unsure, if you are not sure, go back to the complainant and seek further information.

If the complaint is not one to which the *Privacy Act* applies or the Commissioner can investigate, the CO and the EM must consider whether the company can deal with the matter under the organisation's usual complaint handling procedures.

## 7.1.4. Contacting the complainant

The CO, after clarifying the complaint to the EM's satisfaction, will contact the complainant within 24 hours to advise:

- Our understanding of the conduct complained about;
- Our understanding of the privacy obligations at issue, for example the particular APPs (if appropriate);
- That the organisation/agency is conducting an investigation (if appropriate);
- The name, title, and contact details of the staff member handling the complaint;
- How that staff member is independent of the person/s responsible for the alleged conduct;
- A request that the complainant outline what they expect as an outcome;
- When you will contact the complainant again.

## 7.2. Investigating Privacy Complaints

Matters to consider when investigating can include:

- Did the alleged conduct actually occur;
- Which privacy obligation/s may be relevant and why;
- Does it appear that the conduct complied with the organisation's privacy obligation/s (taking into account any exceptions or exemptions under *the Privacy Act* or other legislation);
- If it appears the organisation has not complied with their obligations, consider whether the complainant's requests regarding outcomes can be met;
- Examples of outcomes may be:
  - An apology;
  - A change in procedure;
  - Improvement of security safeguards;
  - Payment of compensation for loss or damage suffered.

## 7.3. Communication

### 7.3.1. How to Respond to the Complaint

The CO will respond to the complaint in a clear and appropriate manner:

- If possible, call the complainant first and then follow up in writing providing your response to the complaint;
- Include details about the information you have relied on in developing the response;
- Include an invitation for the complainant to reply to your response and if appropriate, the offer of a meeting or discussion;
- Include an apology if you did not comply with the relevant privacy obligation/s and consider whether any additional outcomes may be appropriate.

### 7.3.2. Manage the Complainants Reply

The CO will review the complainants reply and review with the EM.

The CO will then:

- Assess any reply or further information from the complainant;
- If you initially found that the organisation did comply with its privacy obligation/s, does the complainant's response alter your view;
- Consider if an external mediator may be helpful to resolve the matter.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome, refer the complainant to the independent Appeals Panel (if it deals with privacy issues) or, if the Appeals Panel is unable to deal with the privacy complaint refer the matter to the OAIC [6.8].

## 7.4. Continuous Improvement

The CO and EM will consider any systemic issues raised by the privacy complaint and develop possible controls such as:

- Privacy training;
- Amendment of policies, forms and/or collection notices;
- Providing additional accessible information;
- Improve security and storage measures;
- Steps to improve data accuracy.

The CO will make a recording of all changes made and the EM will conduct an evaluation of all changes within 12 months, including all future privacy complaints and outcomes.

The metrics of any privacy complaints will be externally recorded in the QIP Certifications' Annual Report.

## 7.5. Finalisation of the complaint

When finalised, the record of the complaint and the investigation and outcome will be stored securely (APP 11) and in accordance with QIP Certification's record keeping requirements.

In the event that a client is unsatisfied with the outcome of a complaints the person managing the complaints shall advise the client of the alternate avenues to complaints resolution including but not limited to:

- JAS-ANZ;
- Complaints Resolution and Referral Service

## 8. Revision History

Revision	Effective Date	Section	Change Description
1	27/11/2018	All	Initial document release.
2	21/06/2019	All	Changes made to whole document to updated to ISO 17065 and 17021 parts 1 and 3
3	7/08/2019	All	Additional wording added in response to JAS-ANZ Document review
4	29/11/2019	6.6	New section added regarding complaints about certified clients as per IA Report 0002.