



**Consumer and
Business Services**

Complaints, compliments and feedback policy



Government of South Australia
Attorney-General's Department

1. Introduction

Consumer and Business Services

Consumer and Business Services (CBS) is a division of the South Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department. CBS is comprised of the former Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) and the Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner (OLGC).

CBS ensures that laws affecting consumers, traders and businesses in South Australia are fairly and effectively administered. CBS provides a diverse range of services to support the everyday activities of South Australian citizens including consumers, traders or businesses.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to document CBS' position in relation to complaints, compliments and feedback received about our services. The intended audience of this document is CBS customers, external stakeholders and other interested parties. CBS staff should also be aware of the principles outlined within this policy.

The policy outlines:

- Why customer feedback is important and valued by CBS
- The scope of the policy
- The guiding principles which shape this policy
- Management of customer feedback
- Pathways available for reviewing or escalating your feedback.

2. Why customer feedback is important

CBS is committed to providing the best service it can in every interaction, without discrimination. This is outlined in more detail in our CBS [Customer Service Charter](#).

CBS encourages and welcomes complaints, compliments and general feedback about our services. By maintaining a culture whereby the feedback provided by customers is listened to and valued, CBS remains in a position to continually grow and develop as an agency.

Complaints provide an opportunity to resolve an issue identified with our services and provide learning opportunities to assist CBS in refining its processes. Compliments allow CBS to recognise what is working well. This knowledge can then be reapplied to other areas within CBS to create further improvements and refinements to the service that we provide. As such, CBS is dedicated to actively incorporating feedback, whether it is positive, negative or neutral, into its processes to improve customer service performance and efficiency. Without feedback, CBS would lose an opportunity for self-assessment and growth.

Our guiding principles, outlined below, describe CBS' commitment to remaining open, responsive and respectful of all customer feedback received.

3. Scope

Who needs to comply with this policy?

This policy applies to all members of CBS staff. This policy does not apply to statutory officers or authorities.

What is covered by this policy?

This policy relates solely to feedback received about CBS from its customers and external stakeholders. Customer feedback collectively includes: complaints, compliments and general feedback.

Definitions

Complaint:	An expression of dissatisfaction made to CBS relating to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
Compliment:	Positive feedback about CBS relating to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint. It may recognise a skill, behaviour or activity of CBS as a whole, a particular Business Unit, or an individual staff member.
General Feedback:	Opinions, suggestions, or expressions of concern made about CBS, its services, staff or its handling of a complaint, where there is no explicitly or implicitly expected response or resolution.

What is not covered by this policy?

This policy does not apply to enquiries or requests for service such as:

- Any enquiry seeking information or explanations on CBS' policies or procedures
- Any request for service or action which forms the core business of CBS' services or
- Consumer complaints against businesses and traders in Australia.

This policy does not apply to disagreements or grievances regarding:

- Government policy
- Any formal decision which has a prescribed avenue of appeal
- Judicial decisions
- Internal complaints from CBS staff or a panel selection process.

Misconduct and corrupt practices

Matters concerning the conduct and practice of public officers and public authorities in South Australian public administration, specifically corruption, misconduct and maladministration should be reported via the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption at icac.sa.gov.au.

4. Guiding principles

CBS is committed to the following key principles:

- **Visibility** – CBS will provide information about the ‘how and where’ to provide customer feedback. This policy will be provided online to the public and staff.
- **Accessibility** – Customers can easily submit feedback through a variety of methods which offer flexibility and convenience (see section 6). Persons with language barriers and persons with hearing or speech impediments will be accommodated through assistive technology / services.
- **Responsiveness** – All customer feedback will receive timely acknowledgement including confirmation that CBS has received the feedback. CBS will provide a response within the required 10 working day response target.
- **Objectivity and fairness** – CBS will respond to customer feedback in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner with a view to resolution where applicable.
- **Customer focused** – A customer-focused approach will be adopted and the rights of customers to disagree with us will be respected and supported by promoting an open, responsive, non-confrontational and friendly process.
- **Ensure no detriment** – No fees will be charged to submit customer feedback. CBS will not discriminate against a customer or treat them adversely because of particular feedback provided which may challenge CBS to review its existing processes.
- **Accountability** – CBS will undertake regular monitoring of customer feedback and ensure Business Unit managers and Senior Executives are made aware of data relating to customer feedback, including numbers, the nature of feedback and trends.
- **Confidentiality** – Personally identifiable customer information will be available where necessary, but only for the purposes of addressing the feedback within CBS. Our customer’s information will be actively protected from disclosure, unless consent to disclosure is expressly provided. *See below: Privacy principles.*
- **Continual Improvement** – CBS will analyse customer feedback and, where appropriate, implement changes to help us grow and improve our standard of customer service and overall performance.

Privacy principles

CBS is bound by the State Government Information Privacy Principles. CBS will collect, use, disclose and store personal information in a manner that meets community expectations and reflects the current South Australian Government information privacy principles. A copy of the State Government Information Privacy Principles can be found on the State Records of South Australia website archives.sa.gov.au.

5. How customers may provide feedback

Methods available to provide CBS with feedback include:

1. Online cbs.sa.gov.au/contact-us
 - Please select 'Contact Us'
 - Select "I would like to: Compliment, complain or give feedback about a service provided by CBS"; and
 - select the appropriate type of feedback

2. Email CBSregservices@sa.gov.au

3. Post Please send your correspondence to the following address:
Customer Feedback
Consumer and Business Services
Regulatory Services
GPO Box 1719
Adelaide SA 5001

4. Telephone 131 882

Discuss your customer feedback with a member of our friendly CBS staff.

5. In person Customer Service Centre
Ground Floor, 91 Grenfell Street
Adelaide SA 5000

The CBS Customer Service Centre is the first point of contact for enquiries and customer feedback.

Accessibility and assistance

For customers who do not have English as their first language or customers who are hearing impaired or mute, the Australian Government provides the following services:

- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS): call 131 450
- National Relay Service (Speak and Listen): call 1300 555 727
- National Relay Service (TTY users): call 133 677
- Internet relay users can make an online call at: relayservice.gov.au

Customers using these services can request to be put through to CBS via telephone on **131 882** to provide customer feedback or to make an enquiry.

6. Management of customer feedback

How CBS handles Complaints

1. *Complaint received*

All complaints received by CBS are logged in an internal online system along with the details of the complaint. This creates a unique file and file number for referencing.

The complaint is then sent to the appropriate Business Unit manager for assessment.

2. *Complaint acknowledged*

For complaints received online through the website or via email, an acknowledgment email is sent automatically, within the hour.

For complaints received via letter, an acknowledgment letter is sent promptly within two business days.

3. *Complaint assessed*

The appropriate manager will review the complaint and firstly determine whether it does relate to CBS or whether the complaint should be referred to another agency.

Assuming CBS is the appropriate agency, the manager will analyse the issue and seek to address the issues personally or delegate to another senior staff member.

4. *Complaint resolved and closed*

CBS aims for the resolution of a complaint to be outcome-focused. We will endeavour to find flexible or alternative solutions to meet our customers' expectations while using the available technologies to assist in a prompt resolution.

Outcome based actions may include a letter or phone call explaining and clarifying CBS processes, an explanation of why the issue occurred, an apology, an undertaking to update and improve processes or other appropriate resolutions.

Every complaint must have an outcome recorded which explains:

- How the issue was assessed;
- What action was taken to address the issue / what was the response to the customer; and
- If applicable, what steps were taken to correct the problem and ensure it is not repeated (noting that not all complaints will be justified and/or rational).

5. *Response provided*

CBS will provide a response to the customer, either via email, letter or telephone, within 10 working days to address the complaint.

CBS respects the wishes of any customer who elects to not be contacted.

6. *Option for Review*

A customer who makes a complaint will be given information about the process for having their complaint reviewed or escalated if they are not happy with the outcome or the handling of the matter. There is more information on this process in section 7.

How CBS handles Compliments

CBS welcomes compliments and values them as an important form of feedback. We send an acknowledgment letter to all customers who provide a compliment.

Compliments about individual staff members are passed on to the applicable staff member and their manager.

If a compliment relates to a particular business unit, the manager may send out a group email congratulating the business unit as a whole or raise the compliment at a meeting.

If a compliment relates to CBS as a whole, the Senior Executive Group may wish to publish the compliment in the CBS internal newsletter update.

How CBS handles General Feedback

General Feedback or 'suggestions' are also recorded in CBS' internal recording system and given a file number, alongside complaints and compliments. Feedback, which asks CBS to consider making certain changes to its operations, is greatly valued by CBS and we will provide an acknowledgment letter.

If the person providing general feedback does not wish to be contacted, then CBS will respect those wishes. However, in any case, CBS will take feedback on board and carefully consider the proposed ideas presented regardless.

Timeframes

Upon receipt of your letter, email or website submission, CBS will promptly send a written acknowledgement of your feedback.

CBS aims to provide a response within 10 working days either via email, letter or telephone. However, if your feedback is of significant complexity, it may take longer to receive a response. At minimum, we will provide an update within 10 working days, advising that the feedback is still undergoing assessment and consideration.

7. Review process

Our review process for escalating customer feedback

If you have submitted a complaint, or received a response from CBS and you are still dissatisfied with the issue or the way the complaint was handled, you may request for the complaint to be reviewed. This request can only be made formally via letter or email.

Please note that there is no right to a review **within CBS**. The review process is discretionary. However, CBS will endeavour to honour all reasonable requests for review.

The review process involves the following steps:

1. In the first instance, the matter will return to the Business Unit manager who will re-consider the issue and review the details provided.
2. If the issue remains unresolved, it may then be referred to the General Manager, Regulatory Services, CBS. Regulatory Services is independent of the other service-based business units.
3. If the issue remains unresolved, it may be escalated to the director of the relevant business unit for review or to the Commissioner, CBS, for final review.
4. If the issue still remains unresolved by CBS, you will be advised of your option to escalate your grievance to Ombudsman SA - an independent, free service available to both residential and business customers. The Ombudsman can assist with concerns regarding CBS' processes used to make decisions and determine if they are fair, reasonable and lawful. The contact details for the Ombudsman are available in Section 11.

8. Unreasonable conduct

Managing unreasonable conduct

CBS is committed to being accessible and responsive to all persons who provide feedback. At the same time, our success depends on:

- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible;
- the health, safety and security of our staff; and
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all feedback we receive.

If a person behaves unreasonably in their dealings with us, this conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work.

CBS reserves the right to take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively affects us and we will support staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

Vexatious, malicious or fraudulent complaints

CBS may elect not to review or provide a response to complaints which are considered to be vexatious, malicious or fraudulent. A complaint may fall into this category if it appears, on reasonable assessment, to be baseless, without merit or intended to cause harassment or undue expense to CBS.

9. Reporting

Records and Reporting

Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Reporting System

CBS utilises an online records keeping system known as the Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Register (CCF Register). It is a priority to record data as soon as possible and as accurately as possible. CBS records:

- Customer details
- Complaint, compliment or feedback details
- How would the customer like the issue resolved
- Does the issue relate to a previous issue or a group of previous issues
- If so, CBS can link the issues together

All data recorded is done so in accordance with the State Government Information Privacy Principles. Confidentiality of customer information is paramount and is only shared internally for the purposes of resolving an issue.

Annual reporting requirements

CBS is required to report the number and type of complaints each year, as per section 3.22 of *DPC Circular 13: Annual Reporting Requirements*.

Monthly reporting

Regular analysis of reports enables trends to be monitored, the quality of customer service to be measured and improvements to be made to our systems. The Regulatory Services section of CBS provides a monthly monitoring report to the Commissioner and Senior Executive Group. The monthly report outlines:

- The number of complaints, compliments and feedback received;
- any issues arising from complaints and feedback, especially complaint trends and systemic issues; and
- any formal requests received to have a complaint reviewed.

When reporting on feedback data, CBS will endeavour to make note of any internal or external factors that could have impacted the period under review. Potential factors could include: changes to legislation or applicable policies, organisational structures or responsibilities, resources or systems.

10. Reference Materials

- *Annual report 2016/17, Ombudsman SA* (case study considerations)
- *Effective complaint handling guidelines, 3rd Edition, New South Wales Ombudsman, February 2017.*
- *Complaint Management Framework, Ombudsman SA, March 2016*
- *Feedback, complaints and compliments management Policy, Guidelines and Standards, Attorney General's Department, November 2015*
- *Complaint Management in the South Australian Public Sector, DPC Circular 039, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, July 2015*
- *An Audit of State Government Agencies' Complaint Handling, Ombudsman SA, November 2014*
- *Guidelines for complaint management organisations, AS/NZS 10002, Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand, 2014.*

11. Consumer and Business Services and other useful contacts

Consumer and Business Services

- Website cbs.sa.gov.au
Email CBSRegServices@sa.gov.au
Mail GPO Box 1719 Adelaide SA 5001
Phone 131 882
In person Ground Floor, 91 Grenfell Street, Adelaide, SA 5000
Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm (except public holidays)

Ombudsman SA

- Website ombudsman.sa.gov.au
Email ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au
Mail PO Box 3651 Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5000
Phone (08) 8226 8699 or 1800 182 150 (Toll Free)
In person Level 9, 55 Currie Street Adelaide SA 5000

The Independent Commissioner Against Corruption

- Website icac.sa.gov.au
Email admin@opi.sa.gov.au
Mail GPO Box 11066, Adelaide, SA 5001
Phone (08) 8207 1777
In person Level 1, 55 Currie Street, Adelaide SA 5000