

Court Services Complaints and Other Feedback Policy

Date of issue 1 September 2022

Objective This policy sets out the approach for managing complaints and other feedback about Court Services. The objective is to improve client satisfaction by managing complaints promptly, fairly and effectively.

Purpose The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Court Services:

- meets the minimum Department of Communities and Justice standards for handling complaints;
- responds as quickly and effectively to resolve complaints as possible; and
- utilises the information from complaints and feedback to improve services and implement service improvements.

Scope This policy applies to all complaints and feedback received about the standard of service, policies, procedures, costs, buildings/facilities, or staff of Court Services.

This policy does not apply to complaints about judicial officers (judges or magistrates), the judicial registrar of the District Court or small claims assessors. These complaints are managed through the following avenues:

- A concern about the outcome of a court matter can only be addressed through appellate processes.
- A concern about a decision made by a registrar exercising the powers of a court conferred by legislation/judicial direction. Requests for review of such decisions should be referred to a judicial officer.
- A complaint about the conduct of a judicial officer can only be addressed through the Judicial Commission of NSW.
- A complaint about the conduct of a small claims assessor or the judicial registrar of the District Court can only be addressed through the Attorney General of NSW.

Court Services

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, policies/procedures, costs, or staff of court services.
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Court Services	Includes Local Courts, District Courts, Office of the Sheriff, Drug Courts, Children’s Courts, Coroners Courts and Dust Diseases Tribunal.
Feedback	Can be in the form of a complaint, a compliment or suggestion.

Policy Statement

- Court Services applies the six whole-of-government commitments to effective complaint handling set out below and the NSW Ombudsman’s three levels of complaint handling (tiered approach).
- In accordance with the tiered approach, complaints should be resolved by frontline service staff wherever possible, and in consultation with a supervisor or manager if required.
- Complaints may require escalation or referral to a more appropriate authority in certain circumstances.
- The NSW Ombudsman is excluded from investigating conduct related to courts and court like bodies. Complainants who remain dissatisfied following an internal review of a complaint about a court or court like body should not be directed to escalate the complaint to the NSW Ombudsman.
- Clients can be advised to make enquiries with the Independent Commission Against Corruption or the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission, if appropriate.
- Court Services is committed to responding to resolving complaints in accordance with the Department’s standard service level agreement. Such timeframes include:
 - acknowledging complaints within two business days from receipt.
 - resolution within 20 business days (where possible).
 - informing complainants when there has been an escalation of the complaint or when a timeframe is unable to be met.
- Court Services will aim to ensure that equitable access to the complaint/feedback processes are available to people with a disability and to people who have difficulty speaking and/or understanding English.
- Court Services does accept anonymous complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

Effective Complaint

Handling Commitments

Respectful Treatment	We treat all complainants with courtesy, respect and act with integrity. Complaints and feedback are handled in a fair, objective and unbiased manner. No unfair treatment or detriment will result from having complained.
Information and Accessibility	We make it easy and accessible for complainants to make a complaint and we can help with this process.
Good communication	We promptly acknowledge receipt of a complaint or feedback and provide updates at regular intervals and advise if there are any delays in resolving the complaint.
Taking ownership	The staff who manage complaints are appropriately trained and skilled. The complainant will be advised where the complaint or feedback is transferred to another person or team.
Timeliness	We do our best to deal with complaints in a timely manner. Differing levels of seriousness, urgency and complexity of complaints received are acknowledged and will be taken into consideration in the management of the complaint. Unavoidable delays in dealing with complaints will be communicated to the complainant with reasons as to the delay.
Transparency	All complaints are recorded and reported on as part of a commitment to continuous improvement. Data includes the number of complaints received and finalised, issues raised and improvement action taken.

Tiered approach The tiered approach to complaint handling involves the following levels:

1. Level one: - resolution by frontline staff
2. Level two: - internal review
3. Level three: - external review

Avenues for making a complaint or providing compliments, suggestions.

There are a number of avenues to provide feedback about Court Services. These include:

- in person (at a court location/sheriff centre);
- by telephone;
- writing a letter or email;
- online using the Feedback Assist tool (see below).

Contact details:

Telephone: 1300 679 272

Email addresses and court locations can be found on the Department of Communities and Justice website:

www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/

The email address for Office of the Sheriff is cou@justice.nsw.gov.au.



This Feedback Assist Icon appears on the right hand side of the 'Courts and Tribunals' homepage section of the Department of Communities and Justice website, the 'contact us' and 'feedback and complaints' pages.

Relevant legislation

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)*
- *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- *State Records Act 1998*

Document Information

Title	Court Services Complaints Policy		
Owner	Court Services, Department of Communities and Justice		
Version history	V	Date	Reason for amendment
	1	27 June 2018	New policy template. Policy aligned with revised Department of Justice policy and procedure
	2	13 November 2020	Biennial review
	3	22 October 2021	<i>Updated to clarify role of NSW Ombudsman and complaints about registrars making decisions with delegated powers.</i>

	4	1 September 2022	Biennial Review
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