

SOUTH WEST DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The South West Development Commission is committed to providing customers with high quality services to meet their needs.

If customers are not happy with the services we provide, or the way in which they are provided, they have the right to make a complaint, we encourage it so the matter can be investigated and, if deemed necessary, the problem rectified.

Of course we are also appreciative of positive feedback, which will help reinforce the good work of our staff.

The Commission's Customer Feedback Service has been set up to ensure that customer complaints are heard, and dealt with fairly and quickly, and that their rights as a customer are upheld.

OUR POLICY

A complaint is:

- Any expression of dissatisfaction or concern made to an organisation by, or on behalf of, an individual client – including government agencies – group or member of the public, related to the organisation's products or services, or the complaints handling process itself.
- A complaint may be made in person, by phone, fax, email or in writing. The staff member who receives the complaint should document verbal complaints immediately.

We will deal with complaints effectively and promptly without prejudice or bias. At all times we will be honest and fair in our dealings with customers.

If a member of the public complains:

- The person will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times. At the same time, we would expect our staff to be treated with the same courtesy at all times.
- The complaint will be treated in confidence.
- The person will not be victimised or harassed as a result of any complaint made.
- The person will not be discriminated against because of any disability, race, religion, age, sex or sexual orientation etc.
- The Commission will use an official complaints management form to record information in all instances of complaints, for recording purposes. Form attached.
- A Complaints Officer will be appointed to handle complaints and monitor progress and outcome of complaints.

- A complaint identification number will be registered in the format of sequential number/financial year.
- Receipt of a formal complaint will be acknowledged within five (5) working days and the acknowledgement will provide the name of the Commission's contact person.
- If necessary the customer will be contacted by the Complaints Officer by telephone to clarify the details of the complaint.
- We will aim to issue a written response to the complainant (where required) within ten (10) working days of receipt; and provide the following information;
 - information relevant to the complaint
 - adequate reasons for any decisions made
 - any changes that have resulted from the complaint
 - an apology where appropriate and information on where to seek an independent review (ie. Ombudsman), and
 - an acknowledgement of thanks to the complainant.
- If these timeframes cannot be met, a holding response, giving reasons for the delay and a possible response time, will be provided.
- The Commission will keep a systematic record of complaints and feedback to monitor the progress of complaints and identify repetitive complaints for improvement.
- The Commission will publish on an annual basis, the numbers and categories of complaints received.
- We will publish the improvements we have made to our processes as a result of complaints.

ADVICE TO COMPLAINANTS

If you wish to make a complaint there are some simple steps you can take which will help us to help you. Remember, although we welcome complaints as a way of improving our service to you, we also welcome the opportunity to reinforce the good work of staff. If you want to congratulate a particular staff member for his or her efforts, please take the time to tell us.

- Make your complaint as soon as possible. The longer you wait, the less clear facts can become and the harder it can be to find a solution.
- Try to summarise exactly what your complaint is. Don't go into too much detail. If detail is necessary, set out the order that things happened, preferably with dates, and descriptions of incidents, phone calls, letters or meetings.
- Indicate what you think should be done to put things right.
- Politeness always helps. Remember that what you are complaining about may have been an innocent mistake or oversight, which would not normally happen.
- Keep copies of all letters written by you, or to you, and notes on phone calls or meetings. Don't forget to ask who you are speaking to, and their position in the organisation.

AVENUES FOR COMPLAINT

There are three main ways in which you can make a complaint and have it progressed.

- Directly with the staff concerned, often the direct approach is the quickest way of solving a problem.
- The Complaints Officer can take details and advise of the process involved.
- If you are not happy with the way your complaint is being handled, and you have already contacted the Complaints Officer, you have the option of writing directly to the Chief Executive Officer of the South West Development Commission.

What if you are still not satisfied with the outcome?

If you have been unable to resolve the matter with the South West Development Commission and you would like a totally independent and impartial person to assess whether:

- The Commission's actions were lawful, fair and reasonable,
- The Commission followed appropriate procedures, and
- The Commission's decision/action was based on a full and proper consideration of all the facts;

then you may wish to contact the Ombudsman by:

writing to: Ombudsman
PO Box Z5386
St Georges Terrace,
PERTH, WA 6831

telephone: 9220 7555 (metro)
1800 117000 (Freecall country WA only)

fax: 9325 1107

website: www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au

Please note that the Ombudsman will generally not investigate a complaint if you simply disagree with the South West Development Commission's decision or action. You will need to specify in what way you believe the Commission's actions were unlawful, unreasonable or unfair. The Ombudsman will become involved only if you have first tried to fix the matter by dealing with the Commission.

Depending on the nature and complexity of your complaint, the Ombudsman's office may make enquiries on the basis of your telephone call or may ask you to submit your complaint in writing or by filling in a complaint form. The Ombudsman can make recommendations to the South West Development Commission as a result of a complaint but cannot give directions to the Commission. The Ombudsman's service is free and available to all customers.

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