

Inspector-General of Aged Care – Complaints Handling Policy

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1. Introduction

The Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care (the Office) supports the Inspector-General of Aged Care to exercise independent oversight of the Government’s funding, regulation, and administration of the aged care system.

The Office is committed to resolving complaints about its conduct fairly, efficiently, and effectively. Importantly, the Office does not investigate individual complaints related to aged care.

We apply the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness in investigating and responding to complaints.

We welcome feedback from members of the public and other external stakeholders. Through this policy, we demonstrate our commitment to actively seek and use feedback received via complaints to improve the way we do things.

2. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- put in place an open and transparent complaint handling system
- establish our timeframes for resolving complaints
- set out the processes we will use to resolve complaints
- specify the key performance indicators to which we will hold ourselves accountable
- ensure complaints are handled fairly and objectively.



3. Scope

The Office considers and resolves complaints relating to:

- the services we provide and are responsible for
- the behaviour and conduct of our staff, contractors and subcontractors.

Internal matters relating to human resource management and work health safety are not covered by this policy as they are dealt with through separate processes.

The Office does not consider and resolve complaints about other entities including their actions, decisions or performance of their functions. Complaints about the services provided by other government bodies, providers of aged care or other aged care related matters should be directed to the responsible party.

4. Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about our products, services or staff that requires a response or resolution. A complaint can also be about our handling of a complaint.

5. Who can make a complaint?

Anyone who has been affected by a decision or action (including a failure to make a decision or take action) can make a complaint.

We accept and respond to anonymous complaints, however, if we are unable to contact a complainant for additional information we may be unable to resolve the complaint.

6. Principles

This policy is based on seven principles.

Commitment

We are committed to resolving complaints and have a culture that recognises a person's right to complain. We value complaints and recognise them as being part of our business.

Accessibility

People with a range of needs can easily complain and staff actively assist them to navigate the complaints process.

Transparency

We make it clear how to complain, where to complain and how the complaint will be handled. We provide explanations and reasons for decisions and ensure that our decisions are subject to appropriate review processes.

Objectivity and fairness

Complaints are dealt with courteously, impartially, within established timeframes and are assessed on merit.



Privacy

Complaint information is handled according to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the requirements set out in the Australian Privacy Principles. Information about our personal information handling practices (including in relation to complaint information) is outlined in the Inspector-General of Aged Care's Privacy Policy (Privacy Policy). The Privacy Policy must be adhered to when referring complaints to an external agency, organisation or third party. Complaint data is de-identified if reported on more widely. Records relating to actions taken under the policy are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Accountability

We are accountable internally and externally for our decision making and complaint handling performance.

Continuous improvement

Acting on, learning from and using complaint data helps us identify problems and improve services.

7. How to make a complaint

Complaints must be received in writing. A person can submit a written complaint through:

- Email: complaints@igac.gov.au
- Mail: Inspector-General of Aged Care
PO Box 350
WODEN ACT 2606

8. Complaints handling process

Overview

We take a four-tiered approach to complaint handling, as follows:

- Frontline resolution: frontline staff receive the complaint, assess it, and resolve it immediately, if possible.
- Investigation: if frontline staff are not able to resolve the complaint, it will be referred to an officer for investigation.
- Internal review: if the complainant is aggrieved with the process or outcome of the frontline resolution/investigation, they can request an internal review.
- Access to external review: if the complainant is aggrieved with the process or outcome of the internal review, we inform them of any available external review options.

Procedures

Frontline resolution:

We will acknowledge all complaints within 5 working days of receipt.

- Frontline staff will receive the complaint.
- Frontline staff will clarify the complaint and the outcome the complainant is seeking.
- Frontline staff will assess the complaint to determine how it should be dealt with.



- If the Office of the Inspector-General of Aged Care is not the appropriate organisation to respond to a complaint, staff will assist the complainant to identify the organisation best placed to assist them with their concerns.

Investigation:

- If frontline staff cannot resolve the complaint, it will be assigned to an officer for investigation.
- The officer handling the complaint will advise the complainant who the contact person is and how long it will take to respond to the complaint.
- Complaint handling staff will aim to resolve all complaints within 28 days.
- If it takes longer than 28 days to resolve a complaint, the contact person will contact the complainant prior to or at this time and explain why.
- The officer responsible for handling the complaint will write to the complainant to advise them of the outcome. The outcome letter will contain reasons for the decision made and the contact information for the responsible officer.
- The officer handling the complaint may contact the complainant to discuss the outcome of their complaint prior to sending the outcome letter.

Internal review:

- If the complainant is aggrieved with the management or outcome of their complaint, they can request an internal review.
- A request for internal review must be made no later than 28 days following notice of the outcome of the complaint being given.
- When seeking an internal review, the complainant must clearly state what they would like reviewed and why they disagree with the response/decision provided.
- An internal review will be completed by a staff member who was not involved in the original decision.
- Internal reviews will aim to be completed within 28 days of receipt.
- An outcome letter signed by the officer conducting the internal review will be provided to the complainant at the conclusion of an internal review.
- The outcome letter will advise the complainant of any avenues of external review available in relation to the matter, such as the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

9. Record keeping

All complaints are recorded in our complaint database. We analyse our complaint data to improve our services.

We record the following information for each complaint:

- the complainant's details (if known)
- how the complaint was received
- a summary of the complaint
- the complainant's desired outcome (if known)
- the agency officer responsible for handling the complaint
- any action taken, including contact with the complainant, response times and the outcome
- when the complaint was finalised
- any recommendations for improvement, and who is responsible for implementing them.



10. Relevant legislation and policies

- Commonwealth Ombudsman's Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling
- Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002-2022 Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations
- *Inspector-General of Aged Care Act 2023*
- APS Values
- APS Code of Conduct
- Privacy Policy
- Public interest disclosure procedure
- Conflict of interest policy