

Accessible complaint processes

The process for making a complaint and investigating it should be easy to access and understand. Information about the process should be available in a variety of forms of communications, formats and languages appropriate to the needs of all members of the diverse Western Australian community.

Receiving complaints

Complaints and related correspondence during an investigation should be accepted in a number of different ways including in person, over the phone, and in writing via email, fax and letter. Access should be provided to translating and interpreting services for non-English speaking people to assist them to make a complaint.

Complainants who require additional assistance

Organisations should pay particular attention to ensuring that their complaint handling system is accessible to members of the public that may require additional assistance or different approaches such as people with disabilities, people living in regional and remote areas, Indigenous Australians, children and young people, and people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Organisations should consider taking the following actions:

Indigenous Australians	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If your organisation has high numbers of Indigenous clients, appoint an Indigenous liaison officer to improve access to your organisation's services and complaint handling systems.• Identify people in regional and remote locations who can assist with cultural communications.• Provide training for complaint handling officers in cultural awareness and cross-cultural communications.• Adapt your complaint handling process to meet cultural requirements of Indigenous people such as less formal meeting arrangements and be aware that communication with remote areas may take longer.• Accept complaints from representatives and translation services on behalf of non-English speaking Indigenous complainants.
People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a text telephone (TTY) service for people with a hearing impairment.• Make websites accessible to people using screen readers and, if necessary, make publications and correspondence available in Braille, large print or audio formats for people with sight impairment.• Ensure offices are accessible to wheelchairs and to people with mobility impairment.• Ask people if they have any special requirements for access or communications.• Offer assistance to help complainants with reading or writing difficulties to formulate and lodge complaints.• Accept complaints on behalf of people with intellectual impairment from representatives.
People in regional and remote areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a toll-free phone number for making phone enquiries and complaints from regional areas.• Provide hard copy information such as brochures and posters in areas with limited online access.• Be aware that communication with remote areas may take longer.

Children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make information about your organisation's services and how to provide feedback/make complaints accessible online and in locations regularly visited by young people such as schools, colleges and libraries. • Make information about your complaints process simple and clear, provide it in an age appropriate format, and respond to complaints promptly. • Use Complaint Handling Officers who are trained and experienced to adapt their communications skills when talking to and corresponding with young people. • Ensure the young person is aware of the nature and limitations of your organisation's services. • Accept complaints on behalf of children and young people from representatives such as parents, guardians and teachers. • Establish if the young person making the complaint requires any further assistance due to a disability, being located in a regional area, coming from a linguistically or culturally diverse background or being an Indigenous Australian, and offer appropriate assistance. • For further guidance, see the Commissioner for Children and Young People's Complaints Guidelines.
People from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make information about your services and the complaint handling process available in alternative languages. • Encourage complainants to use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), which provides a free, national 24 hour telephone interpreting service, publicising the contact number as part of your complaint handling process information and accept complaints through TIS. • Allow complainants to bring people with them who can translate for them in meetings. • For further guidance, see the Office of Multicultural Interest's Language Services Policy.

Tracking complaints

An effective complaint handling system should be able to provide information on the demographic make up of complainants. This allows analysis of feedback and complaints information to be used to:

- determine whether the complaint process is accessible and appropriate for various customer groups;
- enable an assessment of differing service delivery needs for people from a range of backgrounds; and
- identify and implement improved practices for particular customer groups including people with disabilities, people living in regional and remote areas, Indigenous Australians, children and young people, and people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

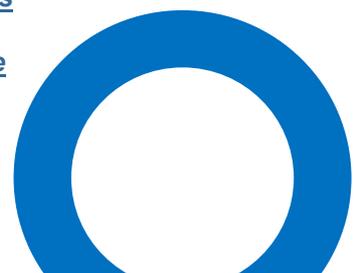
Resources

Other Ombudsman Western Australia Publications

The following Ombudsman Western Australia publications provide further details that may be useful in the development of complaint handling systems and for staff involved in handling complaints:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective handling of complaints made to your organisation – An Overview • Complaint handling systems Checklist • Guidance for Complaint Handling Officers • The principles of effective complaint handling • Conducting administrative investigations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation of complaints • Procedural fairness • Dealing with unreasonable complainant conduct • Remedies and redress • Good record keeping |
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For further information about the role of the Ombudsman and guidance for complaint handling, visit our website at www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au.



Ombudsman Western Australia

PO Box Z5386 St Georges Terrace Perth WA 6831

Phone 08 9220 7555 • Freecall (free from landlines) 1800 117 000 • Fax 08 9220 7500 • Interpreter 131 450

National Relay Service Quote 08 9220 7555 • TTY 133 677 • Voice-only (speak and listen) 1300 555 727 • SMS Relay Text 0423 677 767

Email mail@ombudsman.wa.gov.au • Website www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au