

# Policy Document

## WA Electoral Commission

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### Complaints and Feedback Policy

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#### Purpose:

The Western Australian Electoral Commission (WAEC) conducts WA's State Parliamentary elections, local council elections and other statutory and non-statutory elections. We are also responsible for maintaining the State Electoral Roll and promoting community awareness of the electoral process.

We welcome feedback – both positive and negative – about our service delivery as it gives us an opportunity to improve. Where you believe we do not meet an appropriate standard of service, we appreciate the time you take to inform us. We are committed to treating complaints seriously and responding to them promptly.

This policy explains WAEC's approach to complaints and feedback handling and sets out the features of our complaint management framework.

#### Scope:

This Policy applies to all WAEC staff (as well as Returning Officers and Returning Officer Liaison Officers) responsible for receiving and managing complaints and feedback.

#### Policy details:

This Policy establishes a clear complaints and feedback handling approach that is transparent, confidential, fair and contributes to WAEC's commitment to deliver accessible, efficient and high-quality electoral services.

The Policy contributes to the WAEC's capacity to manage feedback, enhance our ability to identify trends and encourage all staff to improve their skills when receiving feedback.

#### **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is a statement of dissatisfaction related to products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint where you are seeking a response.

What is not a complaint:

- An initial request for a service or action
- Requests for information or explanations
- A complaint or grievance received from a staff member
- Public Interest Disclosure matters

## **What is feedback?**

Feedback is a compliment, criticism, comment or suggestion made about products, services or staff where a response is not expected.

## **Key Principles:**

### **Accessibility**

We are committed to making our complaints and feedback management process accessible. Where possible, our staff will provide you with assistance to make a complaint or feedback, including talking you through completion of our online complaint form.

### **Confidentiality**

We handle your personal information in line with our *Privacy and Information Security Policy*. Further information can be found on page 7 under Information Privacy.

### **Transparency**

We are committed to being transparent through all stages of the complaints and feedback management process. When we respond to a complaint in accordance with our assessment process, refer page 4.

### **Objectivity and fairness**

We manage feedback with integrity and impartiality and treat all parties with respect and fairness. All complainants will have the opportunity to respond and seek an internal review of our response to a complaint. Internal reviews will be undertaken by staff that are independent from the original decision.

### **Efficiency**

We are committed to managing complaints and feedback as efficiently as possible. We will provide complainants with updates on the progress of their complaint.

## Complaints and feedback handling process:

### How to make a complaint or provide feedback

Complaints and feedback must be submitted through our online feedback submission form (webform). If required, our staff can help you make a written complaint or provide written feedback. Please call 08 9214 0400 for assistance.

Our webform for submitting complaints and feedback can be found here:

[www.elections.wa.gov.au/complaints](http://www.elections.wa.gov.au/complaints)

In order to complete the feedback submission webform, you will need to provide us with:

- Your name;
- Your contact details;
- Details of your feedback or complaint;
- Desired outcome; and
- Any supporting documents.

You may submit the form anonymously, but this will limit our ability to seek further information if we need to investigate the issue.

### What we do and don't respond to

We acknowledge all complaints and feedback, however we will not have the capacity to resolve certain issues.

Complaints and feedback that do fall within our responsibilities:

- Refer to a process, policy or service that is administered by us, including the actions and behaviours of staff.
- Allege an offence relating to the *WA Electoral Act 1907*.
- Alleged offences within Part 4 of the *Local Government Act 1995* in relation to a Local Government where the Electoral Commissioner is responsible for conducting the election.

Some complaints fall out of our responsibilities. We may refer your complaint to another agency if the complaint:

- Alleges a breach of a Local Government Code of Conduct, these may be referred to the CEO of the local government.
- Alleges a criminal offence, these may be referred to the WA Police.
- Alleges a complaint under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918*, we refer these to the *Australian Electoral Commission*.

We will advise you if the complaint is referred externally.

## How do we resolve complaints and respond to feedback

### Step 1: Receipt – We identify and log the complaint or feedback

- a) Is complainant dissatisfied with the agency?
- b) What are they dissatisfied about?
- c) Do they expect a response?
- d) Log the complaint or feedback.
- e) Refer the complaint if it falls outside the agency's area of responsibility.

### Step 2: Acknowledge – We let the complainant know we have received the complaint or feedback

- a) Explain complaint process.
- b) Explain how long it is likely to take to resolve.
- c) Provide a case number.

### Step 3: Assess – We conduct further assessment and triage the submission

- a) Categorise the submission.
- b) Triage the submission.

### Step 4: Resolve – We investigate, refer, and resolve the complaint.

- a) Determine whether complaint can be resolved early or with minimal further assessment or enquiries being made.
- b) Investigate if required.
- c) Refer to relevant subject matter expert or external stakeholder if required.
- d) Consider potential resolutions.

### Step 5: Response – We communicate the outcome and provide:

- a) A summary of what the complaint or feedback was about.
- b) What actions were taken to assess or investigate each element of the complaint.
- c) What information and evidence were considered.
- d) Reasons for decisions, findings or conclusions.
- e) Any resolutions.

## Complaint withdrawal

You can withdraw your complaint at any time, however we may continue to investigate. To withdraw or follow up an existing matter, you can email [feedback@waec.wa.gov.au](mailto:feedback@waec.wa.gov.au). Please include your case number.

## Public Interest Disclosures

If you have a concern about the conduct of WAEC or a person associated with the Commission, you may choose to make a disclosure under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003*. You can make a disclosure by accessing the PID lodgement form on our website. However, some concerns may be better or more quickly resolved by making a complaint rather than a public interest disclosure.

### How long it will take us to respond to a complaint or feedback

Complaints and feedback will be resolved within the timeframes that apply to the levels of complexity defined in the table below. Timeframes are taken from the time of complaint or feedback receipt by the Commission. Some complaints may require further investigation resulting in a longer resolution timeframe. If complaint resolution will exceed the timeframes below, you will be notified.

Category	Description	Timeframe	
		Acknowledgement	Resolution
Feedback	Any feedback which may include compliments, criticisms, or suggestions.	3 business days	5 business days
Simple	Non-complex complaint with a low impact that can be managed at first point of contact.	3 business days	5 business days
Complex or Sensitive	Complaint that may occur more frequently and relates to issues that are/have potential to become serious in nature. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unacceptable behaviour of WAEC staff; or</li><li>• Minor breaches of policy or legislation.</li></ul>	3 business days	7 business days
Urgent or Priority	Complaints relating to matters that may be serious or are otherwise urgent and require prioritisation. These complaints may require a formal investigation. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Incident or safety concern;</li><li>• Complaints that arise on election day;</li><li>• Significant misconduct;</li><li>• Serious breach of legislation or policy;</li><li>• Privacy breach; or</li><li>• Issue of significant public interest.</li></ul>	1 business day	3 business days
Internal Review	Review of any complaint response as requested by the complainant.	3 business days	15 business days

## **Unreasonable complaint conduct**

We may decide to stop responding to you if your conduct becomes unreasonable. The following examples are deemed to be conduct which can be considered unreasonable:

- **Unreasonable persistence** – If you refuse to accept a final decision and persist with issues despite advice they have been fully considered and no further action will be taken.
- **Unreasonable demands** – Insisting on outcomes that are unattainable, changing the objectives of the process or demanding to have a matter dealt with in a particular way.
- **Unreasonable lack of cooperation** – Providing disorganised, excessive, or irrelevant information, an unwillingness to consider other viewpoints or a refusal to define issues of concern.
- **Unreasonable arguments** – Irrational cause and effect arguments, holding conspiracy theories unsupported by evidence or illogically interpreting facts or laws.
- **Unreasonable behaviour** – Extreme anger, aggression, threats, or other violent conduct. For example, making threats of harm to self or others, making baseless attacks on the intentions, motivations, ethics or conduct of complaint handlers or use of abusive language.

## Monitoring, evaluation and review:

### Internal review

A complainant has the right to seek an internal review of our response to their complaint if they are dissatisfied.

A request for internal review should be made on our complaints webform and include the following details:

- The case number;
- Complainant's name;
- Details of review request;
- Contact Details; and
- The expected outcome.

### How we conduct reviews

The internal review process is undertaken following the same steps outlined in our complaints process from 'Receipt' to 'Response'.

WAEC staff who were not involved in the original complaint process or response will conduct the review. Staff will be provided with details of the review request and aim to acknowledge the request within three working days and provide a response within 15 working days. If the response is expected to take longer than 15 days, we will contact the complainant to provide the expected timeframe.

### Information privacy

We keep a record of all complaints and feedback we receive and reviews undertaken. We handle all personal information collected for the purpose of managing a complaint or conducting a reassessment in accordance with our *Privacy and Information Security Policy*, *WA Electoral Act 1907* and the *Local Government Act 1995*.

We may be required to provide personal information and details of a complaint or feedback to another agency where applicable such as the Office of the Information Commissioner or [Ombudsman WA](#). Personal information collected in relation to alleged breaches of the *Electoral Act* may be disclosed to another government agency for the purpose of investigating or prosecuting any offence.

### External Review

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your review, you can contact the Western Australian Ombudsman. The Ombudsman receives, investigates and resolves complaints about State Government agencies.

## Roles and responsibilities:

Role	Commitment	Actions
WA Electoral Commissioner	Promotes a culture that values complaints and feedback and their effective resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report publicly on WAEC's feedback and complaint handling.</li> <li>• Regularly review reports about feedback and complaint trends and issues arising from them.</li> <li>• Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling feedback and complaints.</li> <li>• Encourage staff to be alert to feedback and complaints and assist those responsible for handling to resolve them properly.</li> <li>• Support appropriate recommendations for service, staff and feedback and complaint handling improvements arising from analysis of data.</li> </ul>
Deputy Electoral Commissioner	Manages the WAEC complaint and feedback management framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the feedback and complaints management framework.</li> <li>• Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling feedback and complaints.</li> <li>• Reports to the Corporate Executive on issues arising from feedback and complaints handling.</li> </ul>
Directors	Support the complaint and feedback management framework and their teams in the resolution of complaints and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared responsibility to ensure their teams understand their obligations under this policy.</li> <li>• Encourage their teams to be alert to complaints and feedback and assist those responsible for handling them to resolve them promptly and consistently.</li> </ul>
Staff who handle complaints (Including ROs and ROLOs)	Demonstrate sound complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat complainants with respect.</li> <li>• Assist people to make a complaint if required.</li> <li>• Comply with this policy and related procedures.</li> <li>• Record and track all feedback and complaints received by WAEC.</li> <li>• Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</li> <li>• Implement changes arising from complaints and from the complaint data.</li> </ul>
All staff members including casual election staff	Understand and comply with WAEC's complaint and feedback handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat complainants with respect.</li> <li>• Be aware of WAEC complaints handling policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Help people who want to make a complaint or provide feedback access WAEC's complaint process.</li> <li>• Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</li> </ul>



### **Commitment from staff**

All staff will be aware of WAEC's complaints and feedback procedures and be involved in responding to complaints and feedback from the public. We will aim for an early resolution of complaints by frontline staff. The early resolution of complaints and feedback is an integral part of good customer service and has an outcome focused approach. Feedback or complaints that are serious or complex are to be escalated.

### **Commitment from management**

Senior management is committed to discussing and analysing feedback and complaints. Senior managers will ensure that their staff are empowered and encouraged to improve their skills in responding to feedback from the public. The Corporate Executive will ensure that feedback and complaints is a standing item at meetings where managers will discuss and analyse complaints and feedback received.

## **Reporting:**

Several reports provided by WAEC refer to complaints and feedback received for the purpose of evaluating and identifying improvements to our performance. Those include:

- **Annual Reports**  
Summarises the complaints and feedback we receive and provides an overview of any electoral events that have occurred across the year. The Annual Report is produced after the end of the financial year and tabled in parliament. They are available on the WAEC website.
- **State Election Reports**  
In an election year, a report is produced on the conduct of the election. This report provides the numbers of complaints received in the election and some information on common complaint areas.
- **Local Government Election Reports**  
Following a Local Government Ordinary Election period, a detailed report is created which includes the full results of the elections and a summary of the complaints received.

These reports contain statistical data only and do not include details of individual complaints or feedback submissions.

## **Definitions:**

**Feedback:** A compliment, criticism, comment or suggestion made about products, services or staff where a response is not expected.

**Complaint:** A statement of dissatisfaction related to products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint where you are seeking a response.

**Complainant:** Any person, organisation or their representative who lodges a complaint.

**Complaint Management System:** All policies, procedures, practices, staff and software used in the management of complaints.

**Investigation:** Reviewing an action or activity in response to an urgent or complex complaint. Reviewing a response to a complaint as part of an internal review.

## Relevant policies and procedures:

*Code of Conduct*

*Harassment and Grievance Policy*

*Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Guide*

*Privacy and information Security Policy*

## Relevant legislation and standards:

*Australian Standard; Guidelines for Complaint Management 10002:2022*

*Electoral Act 1907*

*Local Government Act 1995*

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