Complaints management guide

***Complaints management guide***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Date** | **Comments** |
| v1.5 | November 2018 | Published |
| v1.6 | July 2025 | Minor updates made – highlights:* DHPW corporate branding
* Machinery-of-government changes
* Hyperlinks verified and updated or removed
* Document date updated
* New version history log and ‘Administration’ section added
* Updated document title
* Removed or updated contextual policy information
* Edits for improved clarity
 |

**The State of Queensland (Department of Housing and Public Works) 2025.**



[http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en](https://www.arthritis.org.au/)

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Australia Licence. You are free to copy, communicate and adapt this work, as long as you attribute by citing ‘Complaints management guide, State of Queensland (Department of Housing and Public Works) 2025’.

**Contact us**

We are committed to continuous improvement. If you have any suggestions about how we can improve this document, or if you have any questions, contact us at [betterprocurement@hpw.qld.gov.au](https://disabilityawareness.com.au/).

**Disclaimer**

This document is intended as a guide only for the internal use and benefit of government agencies. It may not be relied on by any other party. It should be read in conjunction with the Queensland Procurement Policy, your agency’s procurement policies and procedures, and any other relevant documents.

The Department of Housing and Public Works disclaims all liability that may arise from the use of this document. This document should not be used as a substitute for obtaining appropriate probity and legal advice as may be required. In preparing this document, reasonable efforts have been made to use accurate and current information. It should be noted that information may have changed since the publication of this document. Where errors or inaccuracies are brought to attention a reasonable effort will be made to correct them.

**Administration**

Version 1.6 of this document replaces all previous versions of this document and takes effect immediately.

Table of Contents

[Purpose 4](#_Toc204671945)

[Context 4](#_Toc204671946)

[Principles 4](#_Toc204671947)

[Preventing complaints 4](#_Toc204671948)

[Managing complaints about procurement 5](#_Toc204671949)

[General approach 5](#_Toc204671950)

[Complaints management system 5](#_Toc204671951)

[Official misconduct 5](#_Toc204671952)

[Complaints about non-compliance with international trade obligations 6](#_Toc204671953)

# Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to assist Queensland Government agencies to prevent and manage complaints about procurement activities. Also included is information about how to develop procedures for management of procurement-related complaints.

# Context

The Queensland Procurement Policy (QPP) requires agencies to ensure there are complaints management policies in place which specifically address procurement.

An effective complaints management system is integral to providing quality customer service. It helps to measure customer satisfaction and is a useful source of information and feedback that can improve services. Often customers are the first to identify things that are not working properly.

Implementing effective complaints management systems within Queensland public sector agencies:

* improves agencies’ internal complaints handling
* reduces recurring complaints
* improves standards of service to the community
* raises standards of decision-making.

## Principles

In managing complaints about procurement, agencies should align their approach with the principles outlined in the [Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework](https://www.qld.gov.au/contact-us/complaints-process):

1. Customer focused – people should be able to make a complaint via clear and accessible agency complaint management systems, with complainants respected and responses addressing all issues raised.
2. Timely and fair – complaint handling processes are clear, impartial and confidential, with timely acknowledgements and responses.
3. Clear communication – there are clear and communicated expectations and standards for all parties involved in a complaint.
4. Accountable – agency roles and responsibilities for complaint management are clear and publicly available.
5. Improving services – complaints improve existing, and inform new, quality services, with complaint management systems helping agencies prevent potential ongoing disputes.

# Preventing complaints

Preventing complaints from occurring saves both agency and supplier time and valuable resources. Many complaints originate from a lack of understanding on the part of buyers and suppliers and/or poor communication between them. Some suggestions to support buyers in preventing complaints are listed below:

* ensure that officers dealing with suppliers possess a high level of interpersonal skills, including verbal and written communications skills
* ensure that a thorough analysis of the relevant supply market is undertaken
* build effective relationships with suppliers
* liaise with local suppliers and provide opportunities for local suppliers to offer to government
* treat suppliers in an ethical and impartial manner
* ensure that clear specifications are developed
* ensure that negotiations with suppliers are well planned and executed
* ensure that there is effective contract management
* provide regular performance feedback to the supplier
* provide debriefing sessions for suppliers who have been unsuccessful in tendering for government business.

# Managing complaints about procurement

## General approach

Suppliers, members of the public and procuring agencies have the right to make a complaint about any Queensland Government procurement process. This includes making a complaint about:

* the ethical conduct of government suppliers
* government procurement and other QPP-related complaints.

For more information on the general approach to managing these types of complaints, please refer to the [Make a procurement complaint Business Queensland webpage](https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/marketing-sales/tendering/supply-queensland-government/procurement-complaint).

Complainants should be made aware that unless there has been a breach of the contract between the agency and the successful offeror, the contract cannot be overturned, as it is a legally binding document.

For complaints where allegations of official misconduct or corruption against government officers are made, refer to the below section on official misconduct.

## Complaints management system

Most agencies have established a single system for managing all complaints, which is not restricted to complaints raised by suppliers or members of the community about the conduct of agency procurement activities. Where a separate procurement management system or database is not established, the agency’s system must have the capability to identify procurement-related complaints.

In developing a complaints management system, ensure it aligns with the [Queensland Public Service Customer Complaint Management Framework](https://www.qld.gov.au/contact-us/complaints-process).

In the first instance, complainants should be encouraged to seek resolution through the area managing the procurement process.

# Official misconduct

The Chief Executive of each agency has a statutory obligation to report any matters concerning allegations of corrupt conduct in relation to procurement to the Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland (CCC) as required by the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*. Each agency should develop a formal policy that details the procedures for reporting alleged official misconduct and corrupt conduct to the CCC.

Where applicable, the following Australian Government organisations may also deal with complaints about procurement:

* Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, regarding contraventions of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cth)
* Australian Securities and Investments Commission, regarding contraventions of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

Examples of official misconduct in procurement include accepting money or benefits in exchange for helping someone win a contract; knowingly making false documents to cover what is essentially a personal purchase; or misuse of confidential information to give advantage to one supplier over another, even where there was no personal benefit to the officer involved.

# Complaints about non-compliance with international trade obligations

The Queensland Government has agreed to observe a number of international agreements (Agreements) which affect government procurement. These are listed on the Australian Government [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website](https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/trade-agreements).

In complying with the Agreements, the Queensland Government will afford suppliers in other participating countries access to procurement opportunities no less favourable than domestic suppliers.

One of the provisions within the Agreements is ‘domestic review’. This enables a supplier to raise complaints about a procurement activity where they believe the Agreements have not been properly observed by the procuring agency.

Complaints relating to compliance with free trade agreements should first be referred to the agency concerned. The fact that a supplier has raised a complaint must not prejudice the supplier’s participation in ongoing or future procurement activities.