

External Complaints Procedures

Version 1.1
5 December 2016

Summary

These procedures are intended to be read by NSW SES members ('members') along with our *External Complaints Policy*. Members should firstly check our *Complaints Management Framework*, to see if these procedures deal with the particular concern that has come to their attention.

The Procedures set out the process and timeframes which all members must follow when they are involved in any stage of external complaints ('complaints') handling.

The five-stage process includes:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| 1. Receive complaints | | Refer to record- |
| 2. Acknowledge complaints | | keeping requirements |
| 3. Assess and investigate complaints | | and specific role |
| 4. Provide reasons for decisions | | responsibilities for |
| 5. Redress and close complaint | | each stage. |

Complaints may be handled at one (or more) of three different levels. Members are to follow the five-stage process above, across the three levels:

Level 1 (preferred) - local management action frontline complaint handling with an early resolution, preferably at first contact (between the member and the complainant).

Level 2 – internal (Probity & Standards Unit) review and/or complaint handling and investigation.

Level 3 – external review of complaints and/or complaints handling.

Confidentiality

All members handling a complaint must keep confidential the identity of those involved as well as the complaint details.

Support and Advice

For support and advice on the Procedures or involvement in the complaints process, refer to 7. *Support and Advice, Appendix 1 – Support Services* and *Appendix 2 – Complaint Oversight Bodies*.

The Procedures do not cover (5. *More Information* refers):

- internal grievances, such as interpersonal conflict or other workplace issues
- allegations of misconduct or serious offences
- reports of alleged corrupt or unethical conduct under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*

Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Definitions	3
3. Scope	4
4. Procedure Statement	4
4.1 Three levels of complaint handling	5
4.2 The five key stages of our complaints process	5
4.3 Recordkeeping	6
4.4 Accessible Complaints Process	6
4.4.1 General support	6
4.4.2 Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and the National Relay Service (NRS)	7
4.4.3 Minimum information for anonymous complaints	7
4.5 Complaints coverage	8
4.5.1 Ways complaints may be received	8
4.5.2 Complaints that do not require a response	8
4.6 Level 1 Complaints (frontline handling/early resolution)	8
4.6.1 Stage 1 - Receipt	8
4.6.2 Ways a Level 1 Complaint may be received	8
4.6.3 Receipt of verbal complaints (phone or face-to-face)	9
4.6.4 Registration of complaints	9
4.6.5 Stage 2 - Acknowledge	9
4.6.6 Advice to complainants	9
4.6.7 Acknowledgement process	10
4.6.8 Stage 3 – Assess and Address	11
4.6.9 Respond Flexibly	11
4.7 Considerations to determine how complaints will be managed	12
4.7.1 Ways complaints may be addressed	14
4.7.2 Communicating progress with complainants	14
4.7.3 Stage 4 – Provide Reasons for Decisions	15
4.7.4 Advice to complainants and Probity & Standards	15
4.7.5 Stage 5 – Redress and Close	15
4.7.6 Referral for internal (Probity & Standards) review by a member	15
4.8 Level 2 Complaints (Probity & Standards/formal investigation)	16
4.8.1 Stage 1 – Receipt	16
4.8.2 Stage 2 - Acknowledge	16
4.8.3 Stage 3 – Assess and Address (Review and/or Investigate)	16
4.8.4 Stage 4 – Provide Reasons for Decisions	16
4.8.5 Stage 5 – Redress and Close	17
4.8.6 Referral for external (oversight bodies) review by Senior Manager, Probity & Standards	17
4.9 Level 3 Complaints (external review and/or investigation)	17
5. Report and Analyse Complaints Data	17
6. More information	18
7. Support and advice	18
Appendix 1 – Support Services	20
Appendix 2 – Complaint Oversight Bodies	21
Document Control Sheet	22

1. Purpose

The *External Complaints Procedures* details the process for handling complaints and should be read in conjunction with the *External Complaints Policy* and used with the *External Complaints Supporting Documentation*.

The Procedures ease the burden of complaints handling on its members by providing a clear way forward in responding to complaints.

Compliance with these procedures will mitigate against the risks of complainant dissatisfaction; unnecessary escalation of complaints; loss of trust by complainants and the general public; and, external oversight agency criticism.

Compliance with these procedures is mandatory for all members.

2. Definitions

Term	Definition
Complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An expression of dissatisfaction made by a member/s of the public ('complainant') about our services, members and complaints handling, which requests or legally requires a response. May be made either direct to NSW SES or through an external party (for example: a relative, friend, advocate, solicitor, welfare worker, other government agency, or Member of Parliament). May be made either orally or in writing (including online). May be anonymous if the Minimum Information Requirements for Anonymous Complaints is met. A complaint covered by these procedures can be distinguished from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o internal grievances, allegations of misconduct, and public interest disclosures (Section 5. <i>Related Internal Documents</i> lists the relevant procedures). o opinions or comments made as feedback, or, service requests.
NSW SES	New South Wales State Emergency Service.
Policy	A document that sets out the way particular issues are to be addressed or particular decisions are to be made. Policies also set out the principles or values that govern how the NSW SES is to function. Compliance is mandatory.
Alias	A made up name to protect a person's real name/identity.

Term	Definition
Feedback	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made to or about us, our services or complaints handling, where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Grievance	A clear, formal written statement by an individual member about another member or a work-related concern.
Service request	Requests for action, services, assistance, explanation of policies, procedures and decisions; inquiries about our functions; or, reports of failure to comply with laws which relate to responsibilities of the NSW SES.
Procedural fairness	Involves decision-makers informing members of the case against them or their interests, giving them a right to respond, not having a personal interest in the outcome and acting on the basis of logically probative evidence.
External oversight Agencies	Includes but is not limited to the NSW Ombudsman, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Public Service Commission (PSC), NSW Treasury and the Audit Office of NSW.

3. Scope

These procedures apply to all members involved in any part of the complaints process. This includes our interactions with people making complaints to or about us, as well as the information we provide them about the process, progress and outcome/s of their complaint.

Internal grievances, allegations of misconduct and serious offences, and public interest disclosures are not covered by these procedures (*6. More Information* refers).

4. Procedure Statement

All members may at some stage receive complaints, provide information or advice, and/or make and communicate decisions regarding complaints received.

It is important that members deal with complaints in a fair and courteous manner which respects complainants' rights to: express their dissatisfaction; privacy; information about our complaints process; and, reasons for decisions.

This should be done in accordance with these procedures and other documents (*6. More Information*).

4.1 Three levels of complaint handling



Complaints may be handled at one (or more) of three different levels, depending on the nature (seriousness) of the complaint, the preference the complainant may express, and the ability a member to handle the complaint.

Level 1 is our preferred level for members to resolve complaints:

Local management action frontline complaint handling with an early resolution, ideally at first contact (between the member and the complainant).

Most complaints will initially present as Level 1 complaints, where the complainant expresses their dissatisfaction directly to a local member.

4.2 The five key stages of our complaints process

All members will follow the following five-stage complaints process regardless of which of the three Level/s a complaint is handled at:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Receive complaints2. Acknowledge complaints3. Assess and investigate complaints4. Provide reasons for decisions5. Redress and close complaint | Refer to record-keeping requirements and specific role responsibilities for each stage. |
|--|---|

4.3 Recordkeeping

Important: the requirements below apply to any instruction to file, store or handle complaints records in these procedures.

Members handling (receiving, creating or sending) complaints-related records, both paper copies and electronic copies must ensure that its physical security and its confidentiality is safeguarded at all times.

This includes keeping and maintaining such records in the following way:

- all complaints documentation (complaint forms, emails, letters, supporting information, file notes) to be saved electronically AND filed in hard copy files AND noted on the Complaints Register;
- the date documentation is received by a member to be stamped or marked (at time of receipt). Saved/printed emails to include sender date/details;
- all records stored in a locked cabinet, secure area and computer-based file only accessible by members on a need-to-know basis – including files, folders, computer spreadsheets, information contained on whiteboards or any other complaint related material;
- all files to be clearly and consistently labelled by complaint number and open or closed complaint files, so that complaints records can be readily reported on, noting next point below;
- At no time is the identity of the complainant, subject member/s or any other person associated with the complaint to be included in any document title or records management system (e.g. TRIM);
- meetings where complaints are discussed to be held in locations where conversations cannot be overheard;
- appropriate methods to deliver confidential correspondence are used, for example, personally handed to a member by the Region Controller, Local Controller, Unit Controller or Director/Manager, or using secure mail;
- computers accessible to all staff are not used for complaints without taking precautions; and
- complaints are not recorded in phone log books or in other shared locations.

4.4 Accessible Complaints Process

4.4.1 General support

All complainants should be offered support and any practical assistance required to make their complaints – members are to provide or arrange such assistance. Consideration should be given to the additional needs of children and

young people, the elderly, people with a disability, people of diverse cultural and linguistic (language) background/s, and people with literacy difficulties.

For example, referral to and working with an interpreter service or a personal interview where details of a complaint can be written down on the complainant's behalf by a member.

Members will accept anonymous complaints as long as the information given meets the standard of *4.4.3 Minimum Information for Anonymous Complaints*.

4.4.2 Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and the National Relay Service (NRS)

Where a complaint is received verbally and it is apparent that the complainant speaks a language other than English and/or has difficulty speaking or understanding English, members must:

- advise the complainant to contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) themselves on 131 450.
- Also provide the complainant at that time with the phone number and email address to be used by the TIS when assisting a complainant in making their complaint. Email: complaints@ses.nsw.gov.au Phone: 4251 6111 (NSW SES Operations Centre) or 4251 6661 (Senior Manager, Probity & Standards, Monday-Friday).

The National Relay Service (NRS) is a free service which can be accessed by or arranged for complainants. Our website contains all contact details for the NRS. 'Speak and Listen' users can Phone: 1800 555 727 and 'Internet Relay' users can use: internet-relay.nrscall.gov.au/

4.4.3 Minimum information for anonymous complaints

If a complainant wishes to stay anonymous (no name or identifying details recorded), a member must explain to the complainant that we value their complaint and need certain information so that we can deal with the complaint properly. The member should then collect the following information from the complainant:

- contact information for the complainant (phone number, email or postal address).
- first name or alias only may be provided OR the complainant may name a support person/representative they wish us to liaise with
- also clarify with the complainant which of our member/s they are happy to access this information
- issues raised by the complainant and the outcome/s they want
- any other relevant information
- any additional support the person making a complaint requires
- the requirements of these Procedures apply to anonymous complaints

4.5 Complaints coverage

As a member of NSW SES, you may from time to time become aware that someone is dissatisfied with:

- Decisions made by our members;
- Conduct of our members, including the quality of service provided; or,
- NSW SES practices, policies and procedures.

4.5.1 Ways complaints may be received

All members must respond to any complaints they receive from a member of the public or their representative, advocate or support person, which may include:

- Direct contact made with you face to face or by phone
- Contact made with your supervisor, Region Controller, Manager or Director
- Contact made with the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards via:

Email	Phone	Mail
complaints@ses.nsw.gov.au	02 4251 6111	Senior Manager, Probity & Standards People and Development Directorate NSW SES State Headquarters PO Box 6126 WOLLONGONG NSW 2500

Important: As all complaints should be handled locally by the member concerned first (unless it is inappropriate or too serious a complaint to do so), this means that some complaints will be received by Unit Controllers, Local Controllers, Region Controller or Directorates as a referral by the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards.

4.5.2 Complaints that do not require a response

Members need not respond to complaints sent “for information only” where it is clear that a response is not sought or expected, or legally required.

4.6 Level 1 Complaints (frontline handling/early resolution)

4.6.1 Stage 1 - Receipt

4.6.2 Ways a Level 1 Complaint may be received

All complaints should be handled at the local level first, however, there are a number of ways complaints may be made and points they may be received at.

4.6.3 Receipt of verbal complaints (phone or face-to-face)

Members must treat verbal complaints just as seriously as written complaints, and:

- Take down in writing the details of the complainant and their complaint in the complainant's own words, as far as possible, and,
- check with the complainant that the details of the complaint taken down accurately reflect his/her concerns. This may involve reading the details back to the complainant or providing him/her with a printed copy.

4.6.4 Registration of complaints



At first contact OR day of receipt of complaint

Important: We will record each complaint and its supporting information, both verbal and written complaints – even when a complaint has been resolved at the outset.

The member will record the following details on the **Complaint Form** (refer *Supporting Documentation*):

- the contact information of the complainant (or a nominated support person)
- the date of the complaint
- issues raised by the complainant and the outcome/s they want
- any other relevant information
- any additional support the person making a complaint requires
- the complaint number, in the format: YYYYMMDDexternal_complaint_00001 (the local Complaint Register should be checked to determine the next number to be used)
- information in the above points should be transcribed into the *Complaint Form* from complaints letters received, for easy access to key complaint information.

The member will register the complaint, even if resolved at first contact, in the local **Complaints Register**.

Important: It is important to register the complaint and file any documents, to ensure that Probity & Standards unit and oversight agencies can appropriately monitor the existence and progress of complaint.

4.6.5 Stage 2 - Acknowledge

4.6.6 Advice to complainants

Following receipt of a complaint, members must explain (or ask an interpreter to explain) to complainants:

- our receipt of their complaint

- our intention to respond to their complaint OR advice of where such issues or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate)
- our complaints handling process (or external referral)
- expected timeframes for our actions, including any expected delay
- their likely involvement in the process
- the name and contact details of the member handling their complaint
- possible or likely outcome/s of their complaint

Members will also advise a complainant as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our timeframes for responding to a complaint and the reason for our delay.

How members must provide the acknowledgement and advice listed above (verbally or written), is specified in *4.6.7 Acknowledgement process* below.

4.6.7 Acknowledgement process

A member who receives a complaint is responsible for its acknowledgement as per the following process and timeframes:

Acknowledgement of verbal complaints (phone or face-to-face) – resolved at first contact



At first contact - verbal acknowledgement (during first conversation)

Members do not need to prepare written acknowledgement of a verbal complaint that is resolved locally at first contact.

Acknowledgement of verbal complaints (phone or face-to-face) – not resolved at first contact so referred to Controller/Director**



2 working days (from first contact) - verbal acknowledgement

**Members who need to refer a complaint to the Controller, Manager or Director after attempting to resolve the complaint OR first contact resolution is not appropriate due to the complaint circumstances, must:

- provide the Unit Controller, Local Controller, Region Controller, or Manager/Director the phone number for the complainant
- Complaints Register – update date/details of advice provided/to whom

Unit Controllers, Local Controllers, Region Controllers, Directors or Managers who have had a verbal complaint referred to them for resolution, must:

- ensure the procedures in *4.6.1 Stage 1 – Receipt* have been completed
- make contact with the complainant
- further update Complaints Register - details of contact and outcome

Local resolutions of verbal complaints within 2 days by Unit Controllers, Local Controller, Region Controllers, Directors and Managers require verbal (not written) acknowledgement.

Acknowledgement of written complaints (hand delivered) – resolved at first contact



Two (2) working days (from first contact) - written acknowledgement

Must be acknowledged by the member the written complaint is handed to OR if resolved at the time the complaint is delivered by the member who resolves the complaint:

- prepare and send the complainant an *acknowledgement letter* – including a brief description of the resolution/outcome (refer *Supporting Documentation*)
- update Complaints Register – date letter sent

Acknowledgement of written complaints (email or mail) - referred by Senior Manager, Probity & Standards for local resolution

Complaints received by the Senior Manager Probity & Standards, through complaints@ses.nsw.gov.au



24 hours (from first contact) - emailed acknowledgement

Complaints received by the Senior Manager Probity & Standards, through SHQ – PO Box 6126, Wollongong NSW 2500



Seven (7) days (from first contact) - written acknowledgement

The Senior Manager, Probity & Standards or delegated member will (before forwarding on to relevant Region/Unit/Local Controller/Directorate for an individual member to attempt resolution):

- prepare and send the complainant an *acknowledgement email* or *acknowledgement letter* (refer *Supporting Documentation*)
- Probity & Standards Complaints Register – date email sent

4.6.8 Stage 3 – Assess and Address

4.6.9 Respond Flexibly

Members should act to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. This includes adopting flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for complainants and/or their representatives.

Members will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

4.7 Considerations to determine how complaints will be managed

Members will consider the following when assessing a complaint received:

- how serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- how the person making the complaint is being affected
- the risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed
- whether the involvement of other agencies is required for a resolution
- whether the seriousness of the complaint warrants referral to the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards (including those requiring oversight body referral)

Contact the complainant to clarify complaint and gather other information



7 days (from first contact) – phone if possible/if not, by email. Set a meeting if preferable to a phone or emailed conversation. Goal = two-way clear, respectful, informative communication.

Members will refer to the following 'TIPS' for communicating with complainants.

TIPS...

- ✓ Try not to react by becoming defensive or reactive
- ✓ Listen to the complainant and give them the opportunity to explain the issues and express feelings – people appreciate the chance to be heard
- ✓ Do not offer solutions before the complainant has had an opportunity to finish what they have to say and explain what they want (active listening)
- ✓ Complainants may be vulnerable and need support and encouragement to speak out
- ✓ Offer the opportunity to have an advocate or support person present at meetings
- ✓ Find out what outcome the complainant would like at the beginning of the process, eg to have their views heard – this can lead to faster resolution and better management of expectations
- ✓ A sincere, timely apology can de-escalate a situation

4.7.1 Ways complaints may be addressed

After assessing a complaint, decide how to manage it and take action



14 days (from first contact) - local resolution of complainant's issue/s

- give the person information they are seeking or an explanation about an issue
- gather information from the member, Unit/Local Controller/Region/Directorate, or on subject matter that the complaint is about, to establish the facts about the complaint
- manage the resolution of the complaint in a swift, fair, impartial, equitable and discrete/confidential manner
- referral to the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards if necessary
- wherever possible, Region Controllers are encouraged to provide a mentoring role and guidance to Unit/Local Controllers in relation to an issue being managed by the Unit/Local Controllers.

Requirements for Controllers and Managers speaking with members who are the subject of a complaint

- explain the complaints and resolution process to the member
- provide the member with appropriate support
- inform the member of any claims or allegations concerning him/her, with sufficient information to properly respond
- instruct the member not to discuss the matter with others, with the exception of seeking welfare-related assistance
- consider having the member/s sign relevant documentation (e.g. file notes) to indicate its accuracy.

4.7.2 Communicating progress with complainants

Members will keep the complainant up to date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint in the most appropriate way and as per 4.7.3 *Stage 4 - Provide Reasons for Decisions*.

File Notes - regular progress updates



Regularly throughout the complaint resolution process – using the most appropriate means

The member handling the complaint will record on file notes:

- the receipt of any new information
- any phone conversations
- any interviews
- any outcomes or decisions

4.7.3 Stage 4 – Provide Reasons for Decisions

4.7.4 Advice to complainants and Probity & Standards

Following consideration of the complaint and the issues raised, we will provide written advice then verbal explanation about our decisions on the following

 14 days (from first contact)
--

Advice to complaints will include:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action we took
- the reason/s for our decision
- the remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal (Probity & Standards) review, external review or appeal.

If in the course of investigation, we make any adverse findings about a particular individual, we will consider any applicable privacy obligations and exemptions under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and any applicable exemptions, before sharing our findings with the complainant.

Complaints Register – note above points and date of advice sent to complainant.

Advice to Probity & Standards will include:


An *External Complaint Outcome Report* (refer *Supporting Documentation*) to be submitted to Probity & Standards, to enable them to analyse complaints data.

Complaints Register – note date *External Complaint Outcome Report* submitted.

4.7.5 Stage 5 – Redress and Close

4.7.6 Referral for internal (Probity & Standards) review by a member

Local member referral of a complaint to the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards (Level 1 to Level 2)

 14 working days (from first contact) – written
--

A referral of a complaint to the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards due to members having been unable to resolve a complaint locally, requires the Unit Controller, Local Controller, Region Controller or Director to:

- submit an *External Complaint – Escalation to Professional Standards* form
- Complaints Register – note date form submitted/how

When a complaint has been escalated, the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards will liaise and keep records as appropriate, considering the *External Complaints Policy*, the *Procedures*, relevant legislation and any other requirements.

Important: Referral to Level 3 (external review) will only be made by the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards. *LEVEL 2 Stage 5 – Redress and Close* procedures refer.

4.8 Level 2 Complaints (Probity & Standards/formal investigation)

4.8.1 Stage 1 – Receipt

The Senior Manager, Probity & Standards will consider the most appropriate way to record and register the receipt of a complaint escalated/referred to him/her in accordance with 4.3 *Recordkeeping* and the procedures under 4.6.1 (*Level 1 Complaints – frontline handling/early resolution*) *Stage 1 – Receipt*.

4.8.2 Stage 2 - Acknowledge

The Senior Manager, Probity & Standards will consider the most appropriate way to acknowledge a complaint escalated/referred to him/her, considering 4.6.5 *Level 1 Complaints – frontline handling/early resolution*) *Stage 2 – Acknowledge* and the advice already provided to the complainant by the frontline member referring the complaint.

4.8.3 Stage 3 – Assess and Address (Review and/or Investigate)



21 days if feasible (from first contact) - resolution of complainant's issue/s

Assessment of complaint and decision/action taken to manage complaint

The Senior Manager, Probity & Standards will consider the following as ways of responding to a complaint that has been submitted or escalated to him/her:

- referral of a complaint back to the subject member or his/her Controller, Region Controller or Director, with advice on how to resolve and handle the complaint;
- review of local complaint handling and/or resolution
- formal investigation of the claims made in the complaint
- referral of complaint to an external oversight body for review and/or investigation

4.8.4 Stage 4 – Provide Reasons for Decisions

The Senior Manager, Probity & Standards will consider the most appropriate medium and content of written and possibly verbal advice to a complainant, regarding reasons for decisions. To be guided by 4.7.3 (*Level 1 – frontline complaints handling/early resolution*) *Stage 4 – Provide Reasons for Decisions*.

4.8.5 Stage 5 – Redress and Close

4.8.6 Referral for external (oversight bodies) review by Senior Manager, Probity & Standards

Probity & Standards referral for external review (Level 2 to Level 3)

Where it is necessary for a complaint to be escalated for review by either the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards or, an external body, members must apply the following steps:

- referral by the relevant member either directly or via their Region Controller, Manager or Director to the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards;
- referral of a matter to the NSW Ombudsman or the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) by the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards should be signed by the Commissioner;
- where appropriate, the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards will provide advice or arrange for criminal allegations concerning offences allegedly committed by a member to be reported to the NSW Police Force;

(It is to be noted that all members are also entitled to report allegations or concerns directly to the NSW Ombudsman, Independent Commission Against Corruption or the NSW Police Force where they consider it appropriate).

4.9 Level 3 Complaints (external review and/or investigation)

Referral of complaint to or from external oversight body – liaison and complaint management by Senior Manager, Probity & Standards



21 days if feasible (from first contact) – referral of complainant’s issue/s and relevant documentation

Important: Where there has been a referral by the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards to an external oversight body, appropriate information and assistance by our members will be coordinated by the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards.

5. Report and Analyse Complaints Data

All members will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way as per 4.3 *Recordkeeping*, so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.

Unit Controllers, Local Controller, Region Controllers and Directors will report quarterly to the Senior Manager, Probity & Standards, on the following:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at first contact
- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified (when quarterly data viewed in the light of previous reporting periods)
- the number of requests received and referred (to Probity & Standards) for internal and/or external review of our complaints management

6. More information

Related internal documents:

- Complaints Management Framework
- External Complaints Policy and supporting documentation*
- Internal Grievances Policy, Procedures and supporting documentation*
- Misconduct and Serious Offences Policy and supporting documentation*
- Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Controller's Guide - Volunteer Membership Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy

*includes flowchart, factsheets, required forms and letter templates

Related legislation:

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
- *Government Information Public Access Act 2009* (NSW)
- *The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW Act)
- *Ombudsman Act 1974* (NSW)
- *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW)
- *Government Sector Employment Regulations 2014* (NSW)
- *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014* (NSW)
- *State Emergency Service Act 1989* (NSW)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW)
- *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* (NSW)
- *State Records Act 1998* (NSW)

7. Support and advice

Procedural Support and advice

Members can get advice and support about anything in this policy from:

- Your supervisor, Manager, Unit Controller, Local Controller or Region Controller
- Senior Manager, Probity & Standards – People & Development Directorate
- Director, People & Development
- Manager, Strategy, Planning and Innovation

Members will provide or arrange all reasonable assistance to those who need help to effectively communicate in relation to a complaint. Assistance may include, for

example, access to an interpreter service or a personal interview during which details of a complaint can be written down on the complainant's behalf.

Personal Support and Advice

While NSW SES intend that these procedures will ease the burden on all involved in a complaint, we acknowledge that both the complaints process and the circumstances which gave rise to a complaint can be difficult to deal with.

We are committed to supporting our members and our complainants throughout the complaints process. Attached at Appendix 1 to these procedures is a contact list of support services where you or a person you are dealing with can get help. *Further Advice and Advocacy – Oversight Bodies*

Attached at Appendix 2 to these procedures is a contact list of complaints oversight bodies with a short statement about their role and functions.

Important: Members should consider referring complainants who appear to be experiencing difficulties or who wish for further advice or advocacy, to the external services and/or oversight bodies listed in Appendices 1 and 2. Note: this excludes referral of complaints to oversight bodies – refer *4.7.3 Stage 5 Redress and Close*.

Appendix 1 – Support Services

If you are a NSW SES member and are experiencing personal difficulties, you can get 24/7 free help by calling the following internal hotlines:

- Critical Incident Support Program: 1800 626 800
- Chaplaincy Program: 1800 626 800
- Member Assistance Program (MAP): 1300 361 008

NSW SES members or members of the public can get 24/7 free help by contacting the following external hotlines or websites (refer complainants where they indicate they need help):

- Lifeline on 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au
- Beyondblue on 1300 22 4636 or www.beyondblue.org.au
- Kids Helpline (5-25 years) on 1800 55 1800

Other Information and Support

Indigenous Disability Advocacy Service (IDAS)

Phone: 02 4722 3524 Fax: 02 4722 6126

Email: idas@idas.org.au Web: www.idas.org.au

Blind Citizens Australia

Toll free: 1800 033 660 Phone: 03 9654 1400 Fax: 03 9650 3200

Email: bca@bca.org.au Web: www.bca.org.au

Kids Helpline

Toll free: 1800 55 1800

Web: www.kidshelpline.com.au

Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association

Phone: 02 9891 6400 Toll free: 1800 629 072 TTY: 02 9687 6325 Fax: 02 9897 9402 Email:

madaa@madaa.org.au Web: www.mdaa.org.au

Information and Privacy Commission NSW

Phone: 1800 472 679 Fax: 02 8114 3756

Email: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au Web: www.ipc.nsw.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

Phone: 02 9286 1000 Toll free: 1800 451 524 (outside Sydney metro)

TTY: 02 9264 8050 Fax: 02 9283 2911

Email: nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au Web: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Appendix 2 – Complaint Oversight Bodies

Anti-Discrimination Board

Investigates and conciliates complaints of discrimination, harassment and vilification.

Level 4, 175–183 Castlereagh Street Sydney NSW 2000

PO Box A2122 Sydney South NSW 1235

Toll free: 1800 670 812 (within NSW) TTY: 02 9268 5522 Fax: 02 9268 5500

Email enquiries: adbcontact@agd.nsw.gov.au

Email complaints: complaintsadb@agd.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

Handles complaints of discrimination and breaches of human rights under the federal antidiscrimination legislation, including disability, sex, race and age.

Level 3, 175 Pitt Street Sydney NSW 2000

GPO Box 5218 Sydney NSW 2001

Phone: 02 9284 9600 or 1300 369 711 Fax: 02 9284 9611 TTY: 1800 620 241

Infoline: 1300 656 419

Email: infoservice@humanrights.gov.au Web: www.humanrights.gov.au

NSW Ombudsman

Phone: 02 9286 1000 Toll free: 1800 451 524 (outside Sydney metro)

TTY: 02 9264 8050 Fax: 02 9283 2911

Email: nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au Web: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

Document Control Sheet

Title	External Complaints Procedures
Current Version #	1.1
Directorate	People & Development
Policy Owner	Senior Manager, Probity & Standards
Policy Sponsor	Director, People & Development
Effective date	05 December 2016
Next Review Date	05 December 2018
Rescinds	External Complaints Procedures v1.0
Topic	
Function	Governance, Volunteer management, Personnel management
Key Words	Complaints, external, public, members, support, record, complainant, policy, process, procedures, stages, level, receipt, acknowledge, resolution.

Version History

Version #	Version creation date	Author/Position	Summary of changes
V0.1	10 May 2016	Samantha Maddocks	New document
V0.3	30 May 2016	Policy Officer, SPI	Re-format by Complaint level
V0.4	20 July 2016	A/Policy Officer - Louise Pallier	Incorporated NSW SES VA amendments
V1.0	5 Dec 2016	Manager, Professional Standards	Final
V1.1	May 2023	Policy Team	Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider changed. New provider referred to as Member Assistance Program (MAP), contact number 1300 361 008. Minor administration updates.

Approvals Required for this Document

Name	Title	Date	Version signed off
Gary Bevan	Manager, Professional Standards	2 Dec 2016	V1.0
Kathleen Iacurto	Director, People and Culture	2 Dec 2016	V1.0
Greg Newton	Acting Commissioner	5 Dec 2016	V1.0