COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Document Information

Date approved/effective:	18 August 2025
Date last reviewed:	30 June 2026
Endorsed by:	Senior Leadership Group
Policy Custodian:	Enabling and Support Service
Review date:	Three years from date of effect/last review

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1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION
Complaint	Any dissatisfaction with PTG service, program, or policy that the complainant would like resolved in accordance with this policy.
Complainant	The person making the complaint or person on whose behalf the complaint is made.
Informal complaint	A concern that can be resolved quickly by frontline staff without escalation.
Formal complaint	A complaint that requires assessment, investigation, or formal escalation.
Feedback	Comments, opinions where a response is not necessarily expected or required.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 This policy provides a framework for Public Trustee and Guardian (PTG) staff to manage complaints in a consistent, fair, and timely manner. It outlines procedures for receiving, assessing, investigating, and resolving complaints, and promotes continuous improvement in service delivery.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This policy applies to all PTG permanent and temporary officers employed under the Public Sector Management Act 1994. The policy also applies to casual employees who work at PTG.

3.2 The policy does not apply to:

- Staff grievances (handled through HR)
- Reports of fraud or misconduct (refer to Fraud and Corruption Control Policy)

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

4.1 This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- Complaints Handling SOP

5. POLICY STATEMENT AND PRINCIPLES

5.1 PTG is committed to a complaints process that is easy to use, respectful, and transparent.

5.2 PTG will:

- Treat all complainants with respect and fairness.
- Make the complaints process accessible and easy to understand.
- Take ownership of complaints and work towards early resolution.
- Communicate clearly and keep complainants informed.
- Resolve complaints as quickly as possible.
- Use complaint information to improve services.
- Ensure complainants are not disadvantaged for making a complaint.

6. COMPLAINTS LEVELS AND ESCALATIONS

6.1 Complaints are categorised into four level based on complexity and impact. Each level has a designated officer or team responsible for resolution.

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/TEAM
Level 1 (Minor)	Straightforward issues that can be resolved quickly	Client Service Officers (CSO) resolve at first contact
Level 2 (Moderate)	Issues requiring more attention or follow-up	Escalated to team leader
Level 3 (Complex/Serious)	Complaints involving multiple parties, sensitive matters, or requiring investigation	Investigated by Senior Leaders or Enabling and Support Service Team
Level 4 (Critical)	High-risk or systemic issues, or those requiring external oversight	May involve CEO or external agencies (e.g. Ombudsman)

7. LODGING A COMPLAINT

7.1 Complaints can be made in writing (email, letter, online), by phone and in person. Complaints can be submitted through various channels and should include sufficient detail to enable effective resolution.

7.2 Complaint may be made by a third party (such as a family member or advocate). Consent must be obtained before sharing information where required.

7.3 Anonymous complaints will be accepted where there is enough information to act, noting that a response may be limited.

7.4 When receiving a complaint, staff should seek the following details to ensure the matter can be appropriately assessed and resolved:

- Full name and contact information of the complainant.
- A clear description of the issue or concern
- Names of any individuals involved (if known)
- Date and location of the incident (if applicable)
- The outcome or resolution the complainant is seeking.

7.5 Staff will assist a person to make a complaint where needed, including writing the complaint on their behalf and confirming accuracy.

7.6 PTG will support access to the complaints process by:

- Providing interpreter services where required
- Assisting people with disability or communication barriers
- Allowing support persons or advocates
- Providing information in plain language where possible

7.7 Written or electronic complaints will be acknowledged within 5 business days using the Complaint Acknowledgement Letter - Template.

7.8 All complaints must be documented in the Compliant Handling File Note - Template and recorded in accordance with PTG's Records Management Policy.

7.9 Complaints must be entered into the PTG Complaint Register for tracking and reporting purposes.

7.10 Complaints alleging criminal or corrupt behaviour may be referred to the AFP or handled as a Public Interest Disclosure (PID) as appropriate.

7.11 Complaints about the conduct of a CSO will be referred directly to their supervisor in the first instance. The CSO will be informed about complaint and the outcome in writing or verbally.

7.12 Systemic or procedural issues identified through complaints will be addressed accordingly.

8. TIMEFRAMES

8.1 PTG aims to resolve complaints with 10 business days of receipt. In complex cases (level 2-4) progress update will be provided to complainant. Final responses should be issued using the Complaint Response Letter – Template.

8.2 Requests for internal review of complaint responses will be completed within 28 business days.

9. WITHDRAWAL OF COMPLAINTS

9.1 Complainants may withdraw their complaint at any time. To ensure proper documentation, withdrawals should be submitted in writing or via electronic communication (e.g. email).

10. UNREASONABLE CONDUCT

10.1 PTG is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its staff by managing unreasonable complaint conduct. PTG considers conduct unreasonable, whether it is a 'one off' or ongoing, if it involves one or more of the following:

- **Unreasonable persistence:** where the complaint continues to persist with issues even though they have been finalised, refusing to accept a final decision and sending excessive amount of correspondence/contact.
- **Unreasonable demands:** complainants insisting on outcomes that cannot be provided or outcomes that are not possible.
- **Unreasonable lack of cooperation:** complainants providing disorganised, excessive, or irrelevant information, or not providing information requested.
- **Unreasonable arguments:** complaints that are trivial, illogical, or not evidence based.
- **Unreasonable behaviours:** acting aggressively or rudely, being abusive or threatening.

10.2 In the above circumstances, PTG's response may alter or limit contact from the complainant. This can include restricting who the complainant can have contact with, what issues they can raise with PTG, and when, where, and how they make contact.

10.3 All restrictions have a set timeframe and will be regularly reviewed. Complainants on a contact restriction have the right to request an internal review of restriction decisions. The ACT Ombudsman can be contacted by the complainant if they have concerns about the handling or management of the restriction.

11. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

11.1 PTG complies with the Information Privacy Act 2014, Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), Freedom of Information Act 1987, and Territory Records Act 2002.

11.2 All complaint information is handled confidentially and securely.

12. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

12.1 PTG will use complaint data to improve services by:

- Monitoring trends and systemic issues
- Reporting to senior leadership
- Implementing service improvements

13. REVIEW AND ESCALATION OPTIONS

13.1 If a complainant is dissatisfied with PTG's response, they may pursue further review through internal or external avenues:

- Request an internal review by the Public Trustee and Guardian.
- Contact the ACT Ombudsman
    - Online: ACT Ombudsman compliant form
    - Phone: (02) 5117 3650
    - Post: GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601
    - In person: Level 5, 7 London Circuit, Canberra City
- Contact the ACT Human Rights Commission (HRC)
    - Online: HRC complaint form
    - Phone: (02) 6205 2222
    - Email: hrcintake@act.gov.au
- Apply for review through the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT)
    - Online: Appeal an ACAT decision - ACAT

14. ENQUIRIES

14.1 Enquiries about this Policy can be directed to Enabling and Support Services Team.

DETAILS

DOCUMENT PROPERTIES	APPROVAL DETAILS
Policy Name:	Complaints Handling Policy
Custodian:	Public Trustee and Guardian
Approved by:	Senior Leadership Group
Responsible Branch:	Enabling and Support Services

AMENDMENT HISTORY

VERSION	ISSUE DATE	AMENDMENT DETAILS	AUTHOR	APPROVED BY
1.0	17 January 2018		Andrew Taylor, Public Trustee and Guardian	Andrew Taylor, Public Trustee and Guardian
2.0	18 August 2025	Timeframes, complaints levels and escalation process clarified.	Enabling and Support Services	Senior Leader Group
3.0	30 June 2026	Unreasonable conduct clarified	Enabling and Support Services	Senior Leader Group