

Feedback about our service delivery policy



Version 1 – April 2022

Purpose

1. This document sets out the office of the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (the NHPO)'s policy for handling feedback about how our services were delivered.
2. The public and health practitioners who have used our services have a right to raise any feedback about these services. Feedback may relate to:
 - a process, procedure or policy we use
 - the conduct of a staff member
 - problems with how we handled a matter (such as delay or how we communicated).
3. As an office that handles complaints, we understand the unique value of hearing feedback, particularly concerns or suggestions for improvement, about how a matter was handled to continuously improve.
4. We also accept applications for a review of a decision made by our office. These applications are handled in line with our internal review policy and procedure.
5. Please note we have used the term 'feedback' to describe dissatisfaction with how we handled a matter. We use the term 'feedback' not 'complaints' in this policy to reduce confusion. This is because most people who are dissatisfied with how our services have been delivered initially engaged with us to make a 'complaint' about another entity.

What to expect

6. Our values guide everything that we do, including our commitment to accepting and responding to feedback about how our services are delivered. Our office is independent, courageous, collaborative, respectful and fair.
7. We will do our best to acknowledge receipt of feedback within three working days and connect the person who provided feedback with the staff member who will manage their matter within 10 working days.
8. For more information about what to expect when engaging with us, please read our service charter, which is also available on our [website](http://www.nhpo.gov.au/service-charter): <www.nhpo.gov.au/service-charter>.

How to provide feedback

9. Feedback can be provided:
 - by phone on 1300 795 265 (a translating and interpreting service is available via 131 450). Our office hours are 9:00am to 5:00pm AEST, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays). A voicemail service is also available
 - by email at complaints@nhpo.gov.au
 - by post to National Health Practitioner Ombudsman, GPO Box 2630, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001.
10. We request that the 'feedback about our service delivery' form is included when emailing or posting feedback to our office. We can provide the form directly, or it can be downloaded from our [website](http://www.nhpo.gov.au) at www.nhpo.gov.au.

How we handle concerns

11. We handle all feedback in line with our service charter and organisational values.
12. We generally progress feedback through three stages: assessment, investigation and resolution.

Assessment

13. A staff member will be assigned to assess the concerns raised. Depending on the nature of the feedback, the assigned staff member may be the original case owner or a different staff member, such as a manager.
14. Our first step when we receive concerns is to carefully consider the most appropriate way to assist the person to achieve what they are seeking from providing feedback.
15. The assigned staff member may:
 - speak to the person who provided the feedback about alternative ways to achieve their goals, such as applying for an internal review of a decision
 - refer the person to an alternative organisation that may be better suited to addressing their feedback. For example, concerns about our office's jurisdiction and role likely need to be directed to Health Ministers.
 - decide to investigate the feedback. An investigation is used to gain further understanding into the issues raised and to analyse and comprehensively consider the concerns raised.
 - decide not to take any further action. This may be because there is evidence that the feedback was provided with the intent to cause harm to an individual involved, or where there was no substance or information to support the claims that have been made.
16. The staff member will communicate the outcome of their assessment with a thorough explanation of why they made the decision.
17. Most feedback can be considered, with an appropriate resolution reached, at the assessment stage (without progressing to an investigation).

Investigation

18. If the staff member decides to investigate the feedback provided, they will identify issues of concern, and collect information about these issues from all available sources. This may include asking questions or requesting more information from those involved.
19. The staff member will then review the available information to decide whether the way our office handled a matter was:
 - fair and reasonable
 - in line with our service charter.
20. Feedback is generally investigated within three months. However, if complex concerns are raised, this may take longer.

Resolution

21. After the staff member has investigated the feedback, they will generally speak with those involved to discuss their findings, and based on this, how best to resolve the matter. This may involve our office:
 - offering an apology to the person who raised the concerns
 - better explaining to the person why a certain procedure or policy was followed
 - providing an explanation of why an error occurred, and the steps taken to prevent it happening again
 - speeding up the management of a delayed matter
 - reviewing or updating a process or policy
 - taking disciplinary action against a staff member
 - deciding that the handling of a matter was reasonable, or the services sufficiently delivered, and take no further action.
22. The staff member will communicate the outcome of their investigation in writing with a thorough explanation of why they made the decision.

Review of decisions

23. If a person is not happy with a decision we have made or actions we have taken in response to their feedback, we recommend raising this dissatisfaction directly with the staff member who managed the matter. They may be able to quickly and effectively address concerns raised and consider new information related to the matter.
24. There is no avenue for appeal or review of a decision regarding feedback about our service delivery.

Privacy

25. We collect and use information in line with our privacy policy. We:
- use the information gathered as part of our consideration of the feedback to manage, address or resolve issues or concerns raised
 - may disclose feedback (either in data or a case study or story) in a de-identified format to the public.

Recording feedback

26. All feedback is recorded in our case management system.
27. We record the following information:
- the details of the person who provided the feedback (and any details of those authorised to represent the person)
 - when and how we received the feedback
 - descriptions of the feedback
 - the issues raised (such as customer service or communication)
 - the person's desired outcome (if known)
 - the staff member responsible for handling the matter
 - any action taken, including all contact and response times
 - all correspondence, including emails and information provided by those involved
 - the outcome of the matter, including any recommendations for service improvement
 - any other information relevant to the matter, such as links to other concerns the person has raised, or notes about the handling of the matter
 - when the matter was finalised.
28. Please contact our complaints and FOI team with any further questions about how we record feedback (refer to 'How to raise concerns' for contact information).

Reporting

29. We regularly report on our complaint handling work, including the number of internal review applications and feedback about our service delivery that we have received.
30. We also explain any service improvements we have made because of feedback raised with us in our annual report.

Policy review

1. The Ombudsman and Commissioner will review this policy every three years in consultation with staff and relevant stakeholders.

Version	1.0
Responsible work area	Complaints and FOI team
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Date/s modified	N/A
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To receive this document in another format phone 1300 795 265, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or [email our complaints team](mailto:complaints@nhpo.gov.au) <complaints@nhpo.gov.au>.

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