

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

Date	Custodian
October 2015	General Manager Corporate Services
November 2017	General Manager Corporate Services
September 2018	General Manager Corporate Services
December 2018	General Manager Corporate Services
September 2021	General Manager Corporate Services
October 2024	General Manager Strategy and External Relations
November 2024	General Manager Strategy and External Relations
January 2025	General Manager Strategy and External Relations

1. PURPOSE

This procedure supports the Complaints Management Policy and details how complaints will be managed by the organisation, who will be involved in that process and their roles. They have been developed for people who are considering making a complaint and for staff responsible for responding to a complaint.

Complaints are recognised as a valuable source of feedback. Diligent and prompt attention to complaints can help the organisation to identify the needs of our clients and stakeholders, understand operational issues, increase client satisfaction and improve Ports North performance.

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Directors, employees and contractors.

This procedure does not cover:

- **Staff grievances** – to be managed in accordance with Ports North Enterprise Agreements.
- **Privacy complaints** – complaints concerning breaches of privacy are to be managed in accordance with the Right to Information, Information Privacy and Privacy Act Policy and Procedure.
- **Public interest disclosures** – to be managed in accordance with the Ports North Public Interest and Whistleblower Disclosure Policy and the Ports North Public Interest Disclosure Management Program.

3. DEFINITIONS

Complaint – An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about Ports North, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Complainant – An individual who has made a complain about Ports North

Reputation issue - A reputation issue is a topic that attracts community or key stakeholder interest at a level where they are likely to engage in public debate. Issues can attract complaints, or compliments to related organisations. Generally, an issue can be managed to minimise business disruption or create goodwill through changing perceptions and ideas.

Feedback – Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to or about Ports North, its products, services, staff or its handling of a complaint.

Complaints Management System – Encompasses all aspects of the policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by Ports North, for the management of complaints.

Complaints Officer – Is the General Manager of the business unit area responsible for the matter that is the subject of the complaint. The Complaints Officer may assign responsibility to an Investigating Officer from within their team and is responsible for ensuring that the complaint is thoroughly investigated, closed out with the complainant and the outcomes of the investigation communicated to the Chief Executive Officer and the General Manager Strategy and External Relations.

Complaints Register – A recording system that captures details of all complaints and their resolution.

Investigating Officer – The person responsible for carrying out an investigation of a complaint as directed by the Complaints Officer.

4. GUIDANCE ON WHAT A COMPLAINT IS

A complaint is defined as *“an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about Ports North, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.”*

A complaint also typically contains the following:

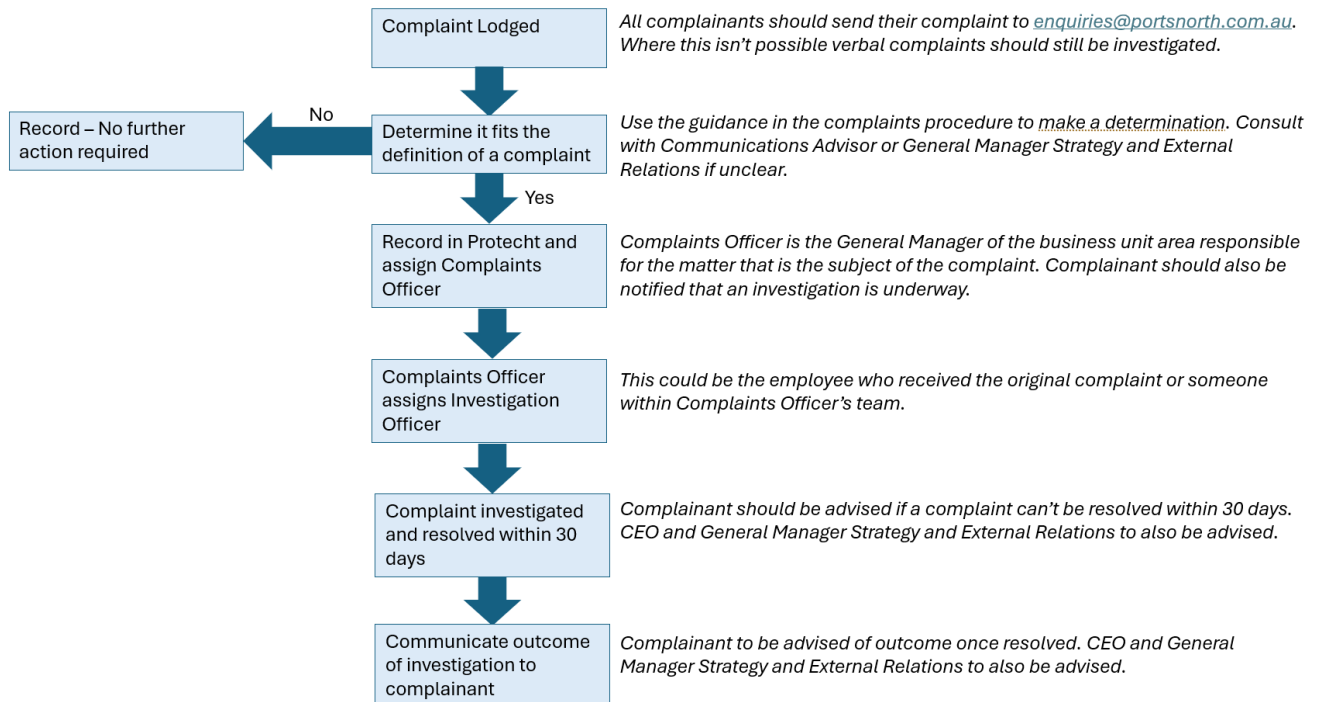
- The tone is critical
- The response or resolution cannot be offered immediately, requires permanent change and/or significant action
- The complainant is demanding retribution or compensation

Below are some examples to help you determine whether you have received a complaint:

Complaint	Not a Complaint
I want to complain about the pollution coming from some cruise ships that enter the Port of Cairns. The latest ship was emitting an unreasonable amount of smoke. It is surely against regulations, and it's disgusting you let these vessels operate so close to the Great Barrier Reef. I will continue to complain and will notify AMSA of any polluting ships. What are your standards? They are clearly unsatisfactory and need to be more rigorous. What will you do to ensure this doesn't happen again?	I noticed there was a lot of smoke emitting from a cruise ship that entered the Port of Cairns. Is this normal? It just doesn't look very nice to see that coming into our city.
I was running on the boardwalk and a truck had his pipe going across the pathway. There were no signs or warning cones and I tripped and fell. You need to make sure this doesn't happen again. I have serious safety concerns and I wonder how many other safety issues you have? What will you do if I sustain a long-term injury?	I was running on the boardwalk and a truck had his pipe going across the pathway. There were no signs or warning cones. Someone may have easily tripped and I am concerned someone could be hurt in the future. Perhaps you could provide a safety barrier?
I would like to lodge an official complaint against Ports North for not allowing boat owners to berth with third-party insurance. You need to explain why this is an issue when my insurer says there is no risk to you. You are discriminating against boat owners and patronising local businesses. I hope I get a resolution that does not deny me from access to the marina. I will be speaking with the Mayor and local media.	Can you provide me details about the insurance requirements at the marina? I heard you require comprehensive insurance which doesn't seem very fair. My insurer says there is no risk to you. I would really like to stay at your marina and I'm hoping you have a reasonable approach to insurance requirements.

5. COMPLAINT PROCESS

An overview of the process to follow once a complaint is lodged is provided below:



6. LODGING A COMPLAINT

All complaints should ideally be received in writing (including by hand delivered form or letter, mail and email) so that all aspects of the complaint can be accurately investigated. The Complaint Registration Form (Attachment 1) provides an outline of the type of information that is required when lodging a complaint.

Any Ports North employee may receive a complaint. In addition to seeking a formal record from the complainant, the employee must advise the Complaints Officer and record the complaint in Protecht immediately for actioning and record keeping. Additionally, any employee may direct the complainant to the Complaints Officer, considering if it is a reasonable and manageable to request the complainant to do so:

Complaints Officer
Ports North
PO Box 594
CAIRNS QLD 4870

Or via email to: enquiries@portsnorth.com.au.

All complaints must include:

- the complainant's name and contact details;
- full details of the event, date and place concerning the complaint;

and where possible should include:

- the names of others who may have witnessed or have information relating to the complaint;
- any other evidence supporting the complaint;
- the desired outcome.

While anonymous complaints are not encouraged, they are accepted. Complainants are encouraged to provide as much information as possible which may be of assistance when investigating the complaint. It should be noted however, that anonymous complaints may be more difficult to investigate and a resolution to the complaint might be difficult to obtain.

If a complainant has limited capacity, they may authorise a third party to lodge a written complaint on their behalf.

No fee will be charged to lodge a complaint.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION OF A COMPLAINT

Acknowledgement

All complaints will be acknowledged upon receipt as soon as possible and within three business days (where possible). The acknowledgement should note the complaint has been received, sent to the appropriate business unit for investigation and that a resolution should be expected within 30 days unless otherwise notified. The complaint will be immediately forwarded to the Complaints Officer in the business unit area responsible for the matter that is the subject of the complaint. A copy of the acknowledgement will be retained for record keeping purposes.

Investigation

Each complaint will be assessed by the Investigating Officer. Depending on the nature of the complaint, other specialist advice, such as legal counsel, may be required.

The investigation should be robust enough to adequately inform and defend a resolution.

Where the complaint is likely to trigger significant reputational risks (e.g. the complainant is a key stakeholder or is likely to make their complaint public through traditional or social media), advice should be sought from the Communications Advisor and/or General Manager Strategy and External Relations.

Resolution

The complaint should be resolved within 30 days, where possible and the outcomes of the resolution recorded in Protecht. If these timeframes cannot be met, the Complaints Officer should contact the complainant to advise them of a new expected timeframe.

The recommended resolution should consider:

- Fair treatment of all Ports North complainants, customers and stakeholders
- Potential improvements to operations and / or processes
- The possible reputational impact of the resolution
- Whether compensation to the complainant is appropriate

In some cases, the resolution may not affect any change, in which case the complainant's dissatisfaction should be acknowledged, and current procedures and processes reinforced.

8. COMMUNICATION

The Complaints Management Policy and Procedure will be communicated to employees following review and will be available to employees on the Ports North intranet. The Policy and Procedure will also be discussed at Management meetings following any reviews.

This Policy and Procedure will be available at all times to members of the public on Ports North's website at www.portsnorth.com.au/about-us/release-of-information/ and will be drawn to the attention of complainants in the email acknowledgement, following the lodgement of a complaint.

Ports North encourages feedback from staff and the public and recognises that this can be a valuable source of insight into the problems with the organisation, its products, services or the complaint management system.

Where a complaint involves multiple organisations or multiple areas within the organisation, a single point of contact should be established for the complainant which would likely be either the Complaints Officer or the Investigating Officer.

9. RECORD KEEPING

The Complaints Officer and Investigating Officer will be accountable for ensuring complete and accurate recording of all material relating to an investigation. Once the complaint is finalised the complete complaint file should be retained in the Complaints Register.

To maintain confidentiality, access to the Complaints Register and associated documentation will be restricted to relevant Ports North employees.

10. CONDUCT OF THE PARTIES

All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence. Personally identifiable information about an individual should only be disclosed or used in compliance with relevant privacy laws and ethical obligations. This includes the protection of the identity of staff members involved in complaint management, if required.

Ports North will take all reasonable steps to ensure that complainants are not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them or on their behalf.

Each complaint should be managed in an objective and unbiased manner by all officers involved in complaints management.

Complainants will be treated with respect.

Where Ports North staff are the subject matter of a complaint, they will be treated respectfully, objectively and fairly by:-

- Ensuring confidentiality;
- Informing them of any complaint about their performance;
- Giving them the opportunity to explain the circumstances and allowing them appropriate support; and
- Keeping them informed of the progress of the investigation and the outcome.

11. REPORTING

Responding to and learning from complaints is an essential part of Ports North's commitment to continual quality improvement. Complaints should encourage change and improvement to the services we provide.

The General Manager Strategy and External Relations will consider the nature of complaints reported in the Complaints Register (along with other sources of internal and external feedback and opinion) to inform business improvement strategies.

The Complaints Register also informs Annual Reporting requirements, where Ports North must disclose the number of complaints received each year.

12. INTERNAL REVIEW

If the nature of the complaint is serious or a complainant is dissatisfied with how the matter has been dealt with by Ports North staff, the complaint may be dealt with at a more senior level. If either of these scenarios apply, a complainant may request that a more senior member of staff review the decision or the outcome of the investigation of the complaint.

13. EXTERNAL REVIEW

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint and response by Ports North, they may request a review of the complaint to be undertaken by:

General Complaints:

The Queensland Ombudsman:
GPO Box 3314, BRISBANE QLD 4001
Telephone: (07) 3005 7000
Online: ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Complaints relating to electricity or water charges:
Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland
PO Box 3640, SOUTH BRISBANE BC QLD 4101
Telephone: 1800 662 837
Online: ewoq.com.au

Attachment 1

Complaint Registration Form

Your Details:

First Name:	Surname:
Address:	
Email:	Mobile/Phone:

Type of Complaint: Noise ☐ Waste ☐ Dust ☐ Odour ☐ Pollution ☐ Electricity ☐ Personnel ☐ Services ☐

Other (please specify): _____

Details of Complaint:

Location:	Date:	Time:

This complaint must be lodged in writing by forwarding it:

By mail: General Manager Strategy and External Relations, Ports North, PO Box 594, CAIRNS QLD 4870

By email: enquiries@portsnorth.com.au

Ports North Office Use Only:

Complaints Officer:	Date completed:
Outcome:	
Further action taken:	
Comments:	

Date/Details

Complaint made	Acknowledgement letter sent	Issue resolved	Entered on Complaints Register	Further action?

The information contained in this form is to be used for the purpose of administration. Information may be disclosed to government agencies or other parties if required by law or necessary for the purpose of continued port operations or administration. Ports North ensures that your personal information is collected, stored, accessed, altered, used and disclosed in accordance with the Right to Information / Information Privacy Policy and the Information Privacy Act 2009.