



What does quality mean and why do we need it?

The Ombudsman promotes an organisational culture that values quality and is committed to continuous improvement. From quality comes recognition of the value of our services, fulfilment of Parliament's expectations, and public satisfaction.

Quality means for us:

- Being **fair** and **impartial**, observing procedural fairness in all of our work;
- Being **consistent** in our responses and decisions, ensuring accuracy and courtesy;
- Being **rigorous** and ensuring our decisions are supported by appropriate evidence;
- Being **responsible** and making appropriate and proportionate recommendations and suggestions that consider both costs and benefits and unintended consequences;
- Being **efficient** and focussing on key issues and undertaking our work in a timely way at least cost; and
- Being **responsive** and courteous in our communication and keeping agencies and complainants informed.

Assessing quality

Our quality standards for complaint handling are:

1. All relevant key issues are identified at the earliest possible stage and irrelevant issues are not pursued.
2. All communication is courteous, respectful, appropriate to the recipient and accurate.
3. Complainants and agencies are kept informed of the progress of complaints.
4. Priority, high risk or sensitive cases are appropriately escalated.
5. The conduct of the investigation demonstrates an understanding of applicable law and agency policies, is impartial and does not take into account irrelevant considerations.
6. Complaints are handled consistently across the office and comply with relevant policies and guidelines, style guides and templates.
7. Requests for information from the agency are clear, relevant and do not impose an unreasonable burden on the agency.
8. Investigation timeframes are met and reasons for delay are recorded.
9. Letters and reports are written in plain language and provide reasons for decisions.
10. Record keeping and data entry into Resolve is accurate and complete.
11. Proposed remedies and administrative improvements are practical and proportionate, taking into account the impact on the agency, the costs and benefits of the proposed remedies and unintended consequences.

A Quality Framework

The purpose of a quality framework is to assist us in achieving our goals and objectives and ensure the quality of the results. Quality should be embedded in all our processes and practices. We want quality in what we do individually, as well as an organisation collectively.



Quality Processes for complaint handling

The processes in place to support consistent quality complaint handling include:

- Appropriate delegations;
- Appropriate allocation of files;
- Mentoring/development of staff;
- Initial screening of files by the Director, Access and Resolution; and
- Appropriate lines of communication up to the point of approval.

Quality Assurance for complaint handling

The additional mechanisms available to support consistent quality complaint handling have been grouped into two categories comprising of quality checks, which are mechanisms to improve quality for the current investigation prior to taking final action, and quality monitoring, which are mechanisms to improve quality for future investigations and take place 'after the event'.

Quality checks

- Peer reviews, delegated officer approval and strategic reviews;
- Complainant/agency response to a preliminary view;
- Case meetings; and
- Monitoring of high risk or old cases.

Quality monitoring

- Greens;
- Customer satisfaction surveys;
- Independent case reviews;
- Quality audits; and
- Complainant requested reviews.