

AS 10002:2022



STANDARDS
Australia



Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ)



AS 10002:2022

This Australian Standard® was prepared by QR-015 Complaints Handling. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 16 March 2022.

This Standard was published on 25 March 2022.

The following are represented on Committee QR-015:

- Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association
- Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Australian Financial Complaints Authority
- Consumers Federation of Australia
- Office of the NSW Ombudsman
- Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals
- University of Newcastle

This Standard was issued in draft form for comment as DR AS 10002:2021.

Keeping Standards up-to-date

Ensure you have the latest versions of our publications and keep up-to-date about Amendments, Rulings, Withdrawals, and new projects by visiting:

www.standards.org.au

ISBN 978 1 76113 703 7

Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ)

Originated in Australia as AS 4269—1995.
Revised and redesignated as AS ISO 10002—2006.
Jointly revised and redesignated as AS/NZS 10002:2014.
Second edition 2022.

© Standards Australia Limited 2022

All rights are reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without the written permission of the publisher, unless otherwise permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

Preface

This Standard was prepared by the Australian members of the Joint Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand Committee QR-015, Complaints Handling, to supersede, AS/NZS 10002:2014.

This document is based on but not equivalent to ISO 10002:2018, *Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations*.

The objective of this document is to provide guidance on complaint management within all types of organizations, including the planning, design, implementation, operation, maintenance and improvement of a complaint management system.

This document enables consistency in the effective treatment of complaints, particularly in a global marketplace.

Properly handled complaints result in improved organizational reputation, regardless of the organization's size, location or sector.

Implementation of the guidance set out in this document can —

- (a) provide a complainant with access to an open and responsive complaints process;
- (b) enhance an organization's ability to manage complaints in a consistent, systematic and responsive manner;
- (c) enhance an organization's ability to identify trends, eliminate causes of complaints and improve the organization's operational effectiveness;
- (d) encourage and support staff to improve their skills in complaint management;
- (e) provide a basis for the ongoing review and analysis of the complaint management system, the management of complaints, and any process improvements made; and
- (f) reduce the likelihood of complaints developing into ongoing disputes.

Organizations may wish to use the complaint management system in conjunction with customer satisfaction codes of conduct and external dispute resolution processes.

The major changes in this edition include:

- (i) Modifications and additions to the definitions.
- (ii) Revision of [Appendix E](#).
- (iii) Revision of [Appendix F](#).
- (iv) Revision of [Appendix H](#).

The term “informative” is used in Standards to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. An “informative” appendix is only for information and guidance.

Contents

Preface	ii
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Application	1
3 Normative references	2
4 Terms and definitions	2
5 Guiding principles	3
5.1 Enabling complaints	3
5.1.1 People focus	3
5.1.2 Ensuring no detriment to complainant	3
5.1.3 Visibility and transparency	4
5.1.4 Accessibility	4
5.1.5 No charges	4
5.2 Managing complaints	4
5.2.1 Responsiveness	4
5.2.2 Impartiality and fairness	4
5.2.3 Equity	5
5.2.4 Privacy and disclosure	5
5.2.5 Communication	5
5.3 Managing the parties	5
5.3.1 Conduct of parties	5
5.3.2 Work health and safety	5
5.3.3 Complaint involving multiple parties	5
5.3.4 Empowerment of staff	5
5.4 Accountability, learning and prevention	6
5.4.1 Accountability	6
5.4.2 Continuous improvement	6
5.4.3 Prevention of ongoing disputes	6
6 Complaint-management framework	6
6.1 Introduction	6
6.2 Commitment	6
6.3 Policy and procedures	7
6.4 Responsibility and authority	7
6.4.1 General	7
6.4.2 Governing bodies	8
6.4.3 Chief executive	8
6.4.4 Manager responsible for complaint management	8
6.4.5 Operational managers	9
6.4.6 Staff handling complaints	10
6.5 Staff awareness	10
7 Planning and design	10
7.1 System	10
7.2 Review process	10
7.3 Procedures	11
7.4 Resources	11
7.5 Integration with public relations and media activities	11
7.6 Training	11
8 Operation of the complaint management system	11
8.1 Communication	11
8.2 Providing support in the making of a complaint	12
8.3 Early resolution	12

8.4	Record of complaint.....	12
8.4.1	General.....	12
8.4.2	Frontline staff.....	13
8.5	Tracking of complaint.....	13
8.6	Acknowledgement of complaint.....	13
8.7	Managing the complaint.....	13
8.7.1	Initial assessment of complaint.....	13
8.7.2	Addressing the complaint.....	14
8.7.3	Communicating with the complainant.....	14
8.8	Closing the complaint, review and record keeping.....	15
8.9	Implementation of recommendations and remedies.....	15
9	Maintenance and improvement.....	15
9.1	Collection of information.....	15
9.2	Analysis and evaluation of complaints.....	15
9.3	Satisfaction with the complaint management system.....	16
9.4	Monitoring the complaint management system.....	16
9.5	Auditing of the complaint management system.....	16
9.6	Management review of the complaint management system.....	16
9.6.1	Purpose of review.....	16
9.6.2	Inputs to review.....	17
9.6.3	Outputs of review.....	17
9.7	Continual improvement.....	17
	Appendix A (informative) Guidance for small organizations.....	18
	Appendix B (informative) Guidance on accessibility.....	20
	Appendix C (informative) Data collection, analysis and reporting for complaint information.....	23
	Appendix D (informative) Impartiality and fairness.....	27
	Appendix E (informative) Unreasonable conduct by complainants.....	29
	Appendix F (informative) Responsibilities of management, employees and complaint management personnel.....	33
	Appendix G (informative) Dispute prevention and management.....	35
	Appendix H (informative) Three level model of complaint handling.....	38
	Appendix I (informative) Effective apologies.....	41
	Appendix J (informative) Options for redress.....	43
	Appendix K (informative) Implementing a root cause analysis system for complaints: A guide to investigating, preventing and reporting.....	45
	Appendix L (informative) Information to collect on a complaint form and usage of information.....	51
	Appendix M (informative) Continual monitoring.....	53
	Appendix N (informative) Audit.....	56
	Appendix O (informative) Role of information in reducing complaints.....	57
	Bibliography.....	60

Introduction

This document is compatible with AS/NZS ISO 9001 and AS/NZS ISO 9004:2011 and supports the objectives of these Standards through the effective and efficient application of a complaint management system. It may also be used independently of them. This document is not intended for certification or for contractual purposes.

AS/NZS ISO 9001, *Quality management systems—Requirements*, specifies requirements for a quality management system that can be used for internal application by organizations for certification or for contractual purposes. The system for complaint management described in this document can be used as an element of a quality management system.

AS/NZS ISO 9004:2011, *Managing for the sustained success of an organization—A quality management approach*, provides guidance on continual improvement of performance. This can further enhance the organization's performance in complaint management and increase the satisfaction of customers and other interested parties. It can also facilitate continual quality improvement based on feedback from complainants and other interested parties.

NOTES

Australian Standard®

Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ)

1 Scope

This document provides guidance on complaint management within all types of organizations, including the planning, design, implementation, operation, maintenance and improvement of a complaint management system.

This document emphasizes that active commitment at the organization's highest level is essential for effective complaint management (see [Clause 6.2](#)).

This document seeks to facilitate —

- (a) enhanced public confidence in the organization by creating an environment that encourages feedback and complaints, and sees complaints managed in a timely and fair manner;
- (b) recognition of the needs and expectations of complainants;
- (c) an open, accessible and effective complaints process;
- (d) a system that can be used by the organization to analyse, evaluate and audit complaints and their outcomes in order to deliver quality improvements;
- (e) a mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization's complaint management practices and outcomes; and
- (f) accessibility of channels that can be used to make complaints, including social media channels such as facebook and twitter.

NOTE 1 There is no expectation that organizations seek to identify complaints made on third party social media accounts or channels.

NOTE 2 Guidance on complaint management for small businesses is given in [Appendix A](#).

NOTE 3 Statutory obligations may apply for the organization, as well as best practice guidance set out by the relevant external review accountability and regulatory bodies.

This document is not intended to change any rights or obligations of the organization as set out by such statutory or regulatory requirements.

2 Application

The complaint management system described in this document is suitable for use as one of the processes of a quality management system.

This document is intended to provide guidance to organizations of all sizes and in all sectors.

Although the principles in this document will have general application, in designing a complaint management system, each organization will need to take into account the following:

- (a) The value the organization seeks to derive from complaints in order to improve its operations.
- (b) Financial, operational and organizational requirements.
- (c) The number, demographics and characteristics of the organization's customers.
- (d) The nature and breadth of the organization's interactions with the public.
- (e) The number and type of complaints the organization receives.

- (f) Input from staff and other interested parties.
- (g) Making a range of communications channels available in order to meet customer requirements.
- (h) Making sure there is a process to identify and respond to customers' needs with appropriate communication options, for example translation services, TTY, etc.

This document is not applicable to disputes referred outside the organization for resolution or for employment related disputes including grievances.

3 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

4 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

4.1 characteristics

feature or quality belonging to a person, place, or thing, which serves to identify them

4.2 complainant

person, organization or their representative (including clients, consumers, service users, and customers) making a complaint

4.3 complaint

expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, 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

Note 1 to entry: There is no expectation that organizations seek to identify complaints made on third party social media accounts or channels.

4.4 complaint management system

encompasses all aspects of the policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by an organization for the management of complaints

4.5 demographics

statistical data relating to the population and particular groups within it, including socio-economic information expressed statistically, such as employment, education, income and other factors

4.6 disputes

unresolved complaints escalated internally or externally, or both

4.7 feedback

opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to or about the organization, its products, services, staff or its handling of a complaint

Note 1 to entry: Organizations may choose to manage such feedback as a complaint.

4.8

governing body

person or group of persons that has the ultimate responsibility and authority for an organization's activities, governance and policies to which top management reports and by which top management is held accountable

Note 1 to entry: Not all organizations, particularly small organizations, will have a governing body separate from top management.

Note 2 to entry: A governing body can include, but is not limited to, a board of directors, committees of the board, supervisory board, or trustees.

4.9

social media

online social networks used to disseminate information through online social interaction

4.10

unreasonable conduct

<by complainants> any behaviour by a person which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the people involved in the complaint process

Note 1 to entry: See [Appendix E](#) for more information regarding unreasonable conduct by complainants.

4.11

vulnerability

state of being especially susceptible to detriment due to circumstances including disability, age, literacy levels, gender, trauma, and stress

5 Guiding principles

5.1 Enabling complaints

5.1.1 People focus

Everybody has the right to complain.

The organization should adopt a people-focused and proactive approach to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints. It should demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing any issues raised within a reasonable timeframe.

The organization should seek clarification on whether feedback or general concern is intended to be handled as a complaint, where appropriate.

People making complaints should be treated with respect.

The organization should actively involve the complainant in the complaints process as far as practicable and appropriate in the circumstances.

Complaints lodged without contact information, where it appears the complainant wants to retain anonymity, should be exempt from active involvement. Organisations should only address the content of such complaints where sufficient information enables them to do so.

5.1.2 Ensuring no detriment to complainant

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

5.1.3 Visibility and transparency

The organization should ensure that information about how and where a complaint can be made to or about the organization is well-publicized.

5.1.4 Accessibility

The organization should ensure that its complaint management system is accessible to everyone, including people who may require assistance.

The organization should provide support to people to make a complaint if needed.

The organization should acknowledge that a person or organization can request that another person or organization assist or represent them to make and progress their complaint. The organization should accept complaints from authorized representatives of complainants.

Information about the various ways complaints can be made and the types of support available to people should be easily accessible to the public.

NOTE See [Appendix B](#) and refer to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines for further guidance about accessibility.

5.1.5 No charges

A complainant should not be charged a fee to complain.

5.2 Managing complaints

5.2.1 Responsiveness

The organization should promptly acknowledge each complaint received, within three working days of receiving it if possible.

The organization should assess complaints and give appropriate priority in accordance with the urgency of the issues raised.

Complainants should be advised, as soon as practicable, where the organization is unable to deal with either part or all of their complaint.

The organization should deal with complaints efficiently. Where set timeframes cannot be met, internal escalation systems should be used.

The organization should actively manage the expectations of complainants. This includes advising complainants about —

- (a) the complaint process;
- (b) the expected timeframes for its actions;
- (c) their likely involvement in the process; and
- (d) the possible or likely outcome of their complaint, where practicable.

5.2.2 Impartiality and fairness

Each complaint should be managed in an impartial and unbiased manner.

NOTE See [Appendix D](#) for further information about impartiality and fairness.

Conflicting interests should not interfere with, or be reasonably perceived to interfere with the management and outcome of complaints. For example, the organization's complaint management

system should provide avenues for review of the complaint outcome by people other than the original decision maker.

Where appropriate, the organization should defer actions that may have significant detrimental impact on the complainant until their complaint (or review) has been finalized.

5.2.3 Equity

All complaints should be addressed in an equitable manner and in accordance with the organization's complaint management policy.

The organization's complaint management policy should address the issue of how to manage the conduct of complainants who act unreasonably.

NOTE See [Appendix E](#) for guidance on how to identify and manage unreasonable conduct by complainants.

5.2.4 Privacy and disclosure

Personally identifiable information about any individual should only be used in compliance with all relevant privacy laws and ethical obligations when managing a complaint.

5.2.5 Communication

To facilitate early resolution, frontline staff and staff handling complaints should have access to clear and simple information to inform their effective communication with complainants.

5.3 Managing the parties

5.3.1 Conduct of parties

The organization should implement policies or guidelines, or both, that make clear the behaviour expected of both its staff and complainants.

NOTE See [Appendix E](#) for guidance on how to identify and manage unreasonable conduct by complainants.

5.3.2 Work health and safety

The organization should develop, adopt and implement appropriate policies, procedures and practices to ensure the health and safety of its staff involved in complaint management, including identity protection if needed.

5.3.3 Complaint involving multiple parties

When a complaint involves multiple organizations, consideration should be given to options for coordinating communication with the complainant. Subject to privacy and confidentiality obligations, communication and information exchange between the organizations should be pre-arranged, where practicable and appropriate, to facilitate investigation and response to a complaint.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas within the organization, responsibility for communicating with the complainant should be coordinated between the areas involved.

5.3.4 Empowerment of staff

The organization should ensure that staff are properly empowered to implement its complaint management system as relevant to their role.

The organization should encourage staff feedback as being a valuable source of insight into problems with the organization, its products, services or the complaint management system.

NOTE See [Appendix F](#) for guidance on the responsibilities of management, employees and complaint handling personnel.

5.4 Accountability, learning and prevention

5.4.1 Accountability

The organization should ensure that accountability for the operation of its complaint management system is clear.

5.4.2 Continuous improvement

Responding to and learning from complaints should be an essential part of an organization's commitment to continual quality improvement.

The organization should have systems and processes in place to collect and act on staff feedback about complaints, given it is a valuable source of insight. This includes risk management policies and whistleblower policies.

NOTE See [Appendix O](#) for information on the role complaint data plays in improving organization's processes.

5.4.3 Prevention of ongoing disputes

The organization should develop and implement systems that minimize the possibility of complaints escalating into ongoing disputes.

NOTE See [Appendix G](#) for guidance on how to avoid disputes arising and how to manage those that have arisen.

6 Complaint-management framework

6.1 Introduction

All organizations should implement a complaint management system that includes appropriate policies and procedures, clear lines of responsibility, and appropriate delegations.

When establishing and reviewing its complaint management system, the organization should consider —

- (a) any statutory or regulatory requirements;
- (b) the value the organization seeks to derive from complaints to improve its operations;
- (c) financial, operational and organizational requirements;
- (d) the number, demographics and characteristics of the organization's customers;
- (e) the nature and breadth of the organization's interactions with the public;
- (f) the number and type of complaints the organization receives; and
- (g) input from staff and other interested parties.

6.2 Commitment

Active interest in and support of effective complaint management by the organization's governing body (or equivalent), chief executive, senior management and management generally is needed. This

commitment should be reflected in the development, adoption, implementation and promotion of policy and procedures for the management of complaints.

The organization and management should be held responsible for establishing and maintaining a positive complaint management environment that encourages feedback and complaints.

Management commitment should also be demonstrated through the provision of adequate resources, including training and support for staff handling complaints.

The organization should provide assistance for people who have difficulty making a complaint.

6.3 Policy and procedures

The organization should establish an explicit complaint management policy setting out its commitment to the effective management of complaints.

This policy should be supported by procedures detailing how complaints will be managed by the organization, who will be involved in that process and their roles.

The organization should ensure that complainants are aware of the entire complaint management process, including whether there is an external body the complainant can go to if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the organization's management of it.

The organization's complaint management policy and procedures should be accessible to and known by all staff within the organization.

The policy should also be widely accessible to the public.

When establishing and reviewing its complaint management policy and procedures, the organization should consider —

- (a) any relevant statutory and regulatory requirements;
- (b) financial, operational and organizational requirements; and
- (c) the input of complainants, staff and other interested parties.

NOTE See [Section 8](#) for information regarding operation of the complaints management system.

6.4 Responsibility and authority

6.4.1 General

Responsibility for the organization's complaint management system lies with various parties, including —

- (a) the chief executive (or equivalent head of the organization);
- (b) the manager responsible for complaint management;
- (c) operational managers; and
- (d) the staff handling complaints.

The involvement of all levels within the organization ensures appropriate support for, and delivery of, the organization's complaint management system.

NOTE See [Appendix F](#) for further information about the roles and responsibilities of staff in the complaint management process and [Clause 5.2.2](#) for information on impartiality.

6.4.2 Governing bodies

The governing body should be responsible for:

- (a) the Complaint Management Policy (the Policy) for the organization, including review of the Policy as given in the governing body's policy review schedule.
- (b) Ensuring at least quarterly reports are received by the governing body about —
 - (i) internal and external dispute resolution (EDR) complaint volumes;
 - (ii) average response timeframes;
 - (iii) number of open complaints, in total and by status, with reference to the life cycle of the complaint;
 - (iv) percentage of open complaints within the stated timeframes, which may include 30, 60, 90, 180, or 365 days;
 - (v) identification and rectification of systemic issues; and
 - (vi) media associated with any individual complaint or systemic issue.
- (c) Ensuring adequate funding and resourcing is allocated to manage complaints, address systemic issues and, if necessary, recall or cease production of associated products or discontinue associated services.
- (d) Providing appropriate reporting and disclosures to relevant regulators and agencies.

6.4.3 Chief executive

The chief executive should be responsible for the following:

- (a) Ensuring that a governing body-approved complaint management policy, supported by procedures and objectives are established within the organization.
- (b) Ensuring the promotion of awareness of the complaint management policy and procedures and cultivating a people-focus throughout the organization.
- (c) Ensuring that information about the complaint management policy is easily accessible to members of the public and is communicated in a manner that is easy to understand.
- (d) Appointing a complaint management manager with clearly defined responsibilities and authority.
- (e) Ensuring that there is a process in place for timely and appropriate notification to senior management of any significant complaints or systemic issues identified through complaints.
- (f) Ensuring that there is a process for regular reporting to the governing body, internally and externally as required about complaint management generally.
- (g) Ensuring that complaints are managed effectively.

NOTE Where internal audit committees are established, reviewing the complaints management process should be part of their scope.

6.4.4 Manager responsible for complaint management

The complaint management manager should be responsible for the following:

- (a) Establishing a process of performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

NOTE [Appendix C](#) gives further guidance on data collection, analysis and reporting.

- (b) Reporting to senior management on the operation of the complaint management system.
- (c) Reporting to senior management on significant complaints and systemic issues or trends identified through the receipt of complaints and service problems, with recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- (d) Identifying and allocating resources needed for an effective and efficient complaint management system.
- (e) Reporting to staff and other relevant stakeholders about issues of concern identified through the complaint management system.
- (f) Implementing and maintaining the complaint management system, including —
 - (i) recruitment and training of appropriate staff;
 - (ii) implementation of appropriate technology;
 - (iii) provision of adequately documented complaint management guidance for all staff;
 - (iv) setting and meeting key performance indicators; and
 - (v) other needs, including system reviews.
- (g) Implementing internal and external escalation procedures for unresolved complaints and disputes.

6.4.5 Operational managers

Where applicable within their area of responsibility, operational managers should be responsible for the following:

- (a) Ensuring that the complaint management system is implemented.
- (b) Liaising with the organization's complaint management manager.
- (c) Ensuring that staff are aware of the organization's complaint management system and the benefits of receiving complaints.
- (d) Ensuring that information about the complaint management system, including the policy and procedures, is easily accessible to staff.
- (e) Ensuring that the organization's complaint management system is easily accessible to the public.
- (f) Reporting to the complaints manager or senior management, or both, on actions and decisions made by staff relating to complaint management.
- (g) Ensuring that monitoring of the complaint management system is undertaken and recorded.
- (h) Ensuring that complaints are recorded and corrective action is taken to prevent a problem from reoccurring.
- (i) Ensuring that complaint management data are available for review by senior management.

6.4.6 Staff handling complaints

All staff that handle complaints should —

- (a) be appropriately trained in complaint management and the implementation of complaint management procedures relevant to their role, including specific training on the following:
 - (i) Receiving and managing complaints from people experiencing vulnerability who may need assistance.
 - (ii) Cultural awareness.

NOTE See [Appendix B](#) for guidance on making the organization's complaint management system accessible.

- (b) be able to identify and effectively respond to people's support and communication needs and preferences;
- (c) treat complainants in a respectful and courteous manner;
- (d) follow all complaint management reporting requirements determined by the organization; and
- (e) follow the organization's complaint management policy and procedures.

6.5 Staff awareness

Organizations should ensure that all staff —

- (a) are aware of the organization's complaint management system;
- (b) are aware of the value of complaints to the organization and, therefore, the importance of complaints being dealt with effectively;
- (c) are aware of their roles, responsibilities and authorities in respect of complaints;
- (d) are aware of what procedures to follow and what information to give to complainants; and
- (e) know how to recognize complaints, and be proactive in responding promptly and appropriately to expressions of dissatisfaction in accordance with the organization's complaint management procedures.

7 Planning and design

7.1 System

The organization should plan and design an effective and efficient complaint management system that is impartial and fair, and is reasonably seen to be impartial and fair.

The organization's complaint management system should allow for the sharing of complaint data with relevant organizations (including suppliers that are involved with the complaint), to enable improvements.

NOTE Relevant legal and privacy obligations may apply regarding the sharing of complaint data.

7.2 Review process

An effective complaint management system should provide three levels of escalation.

NOTE See [Appendix H](#) for further information on the three level review mode.

The aim of the organization should be to have the majority of complaints appropriately addressed by frontline staff, i.e. at level one of the three level model given in [Appendix H](#).

Complainants who are dissatisfied with how frontline staff have addressed their complaint or its outcome should have the option of escalating their complaint to a person or area other than frontline staff, i.e. at level two of the three level model given in [Appendix H](#).

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint, they should have the option to seek a review by an appropriate external complaint management mechanism or body, i.e. at level three of the three level model given in [Appendix H](#).

7.3 Procedures

The organization should ensure that procedures are developed and made available to staff to provide guidance on how complaints should be managed following the organization's complaint management policy.

7.4 Resources

The organization should continually review the adequacy of resources provided to staff managing complaints. This includes —

- (a) the number of staff managing complaints against the number and nature of complaints received and finalised;
- (b) the appropriateness of training provided to complaint management staff;
- (c) the clarity of complaint management procedures provided to staff managing complaints;
- (d) the simplicity of the organization's complaint management documentation;
- (e) the sufficiency of the specialist support provided to staff handling complaints;
- (f) the adequacy of materials and equipment, including computer hardware; and
- (g) finances.

7.5 Integration with public relations and media activities

The organization should ensure that its communication, public relations and media activities are informed by its complaint management policy, processes and outcomes.

The organization should ensure that there are no inconsistencies between its complaint management policies and procedures and those relating to communication, public relations and media activities.

7.6 Training

The organization should ensure staff are trained in its complaint management policy and procedures prior to undertaking complaint management activities.

Following training, a mentor or buddy system and assessment of competency is recommended to ensure staff are competent to handle complaints effectively and efficiently.

8 Operation of the complaint management system

8.1 Communication

Information about the organization's complaints process should be accessible, written in easy English and provided in a range of formats and languages.

The organization's complaint management policy should be accessible —

- (a) from its website's homepage;
- (b) at its front counter or reception area; and
- (c) in leaflets, newsletters or other relevant media generated by the organization.

Information made publicly available by an organization about its complaint management system should include —

- (i) where complaints can be made;
- (ii) how complaints can be made;
- (iii) when complaints can be made;
- (iv) when acknowledgement of complaints can be expected;
- (v) what information should be provided by the complainant;

NOTE 1 See [Appendix L](#) for further details.

- (vi) the organization's process for handling complaints;
- (vii) time periods associated with various stages in the process;
- (viii) where appropriate, possible options for redress;

NOTE 2 See [Appendix J](#) for the options of redress when managing complaints.

- (ix) the complainant's options for review, both internally and externally; and
- (x) how the complainant can obtain feedback on the status of their complaint.

8.2 Providing support in the making of a complaint

While the primary focus is to implement a complaints process that is accessible, organizations should also be able to identify people who may need assistance or different approaches. Organizations should provide support and practical assistance to such people in order to make a complaint, if needed.

NOTE See [Appendix B](#) for further guidance on how to make the organization's complaint management system accessible.

8.3 Early resolution

Where possible, complaints should be managed and resolved at the first point of contact with the organization.

Training and procedures should be provided to enable early resolution by its staff, including frontline staff.

An assessment should be made as to whether a complaint resolved, at first point of contact, is recorded.

8.4 Record of complaint

8.4.1 General

The organization should make a record of all complaints (see [Clause 8.4.2](#) for guidance about complaints to frontline staff) and assign a unique identifier to each one (see [Clause 4.1](#) for the definition of a complaint).

The record of the complaint should, at a minimum, identify the following:

- (a) The complainant's contact information (where provided).
- (b) Issues raised by the complainant.
- (c) The outcome sought by the complainant.
- (d) Any other information needed to properly respond to the matter.
- (e) Any support requirements needed by the complainant.

8.4.2 Frontline staff

For complaints made directly to frontline staff in circumstances where it is not reasonably practicable for them to record the complaint at the time (such as utility meter readers or public transport operators), the complaint need not be recorded if:

- (a) the complaint is appropriately addressed through immediate discussion, or
- (b) the frontline staff otherwise provides the customer with appropriate contact details for making a complaint to the organization.

Where a complaint has been made to frontline staff and the above does not apply, organizations should endeavour to record all complaint information tabled in [Clause 8.4.1](#) Items (a) to (e). The level of detail recorded may differ depending on the requirements of the organization for record keeping, data collection and analysis.

NOTE See [Appendix C](#) for further guidance on the method of collection and content of data and [Appendix L](#) for guidance on the information to collect on receipt of a complaint. See [Appendix H](#) for guidance on the three level model of complaint handling.

8.5 Tracking of complaint

The organization should track the progress of each complaint until its finalization. Updates on the status of the complaint should be made available to the complainant upon request and at regular intervals, at least at intervals following the pre-set deadlines. Consideration should be given by the organization to the most appropriate medium.

8.6 Acknowledgement of complaint

The organization should acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, within three working days if possible.

Consideration should be given by the organization to the most appropriate medium for communicating with the complainant, taking into account organizational needs and the expressed views of the complainant. For example, using the same medium by which the complaint was made or by a medium requested by the complainant, such as by way of post, phone, email or social media channels.

8.7 Managing the complaint

8.7.1 Initial assessment of complaint

After receipt, the organization should assess whether there is more than one issue raised in the complaint and, if so, whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

To determine how a complaint should be managed, it should be assessed in terms of criteria such as:

- (a) Severity.