

## **Department of Finance, Services and Innovation**

### **Guidelines for managing procurement complaints and compliments**

#### **Overview**

At its meeting of 14 May 2013 the NSW Procurement Board (the board) endorsed a set of guidelines for the management of procurement complaints. The underlying principle of these guidelines was that:

*“Consistent with the Government’s transition to a more devolved method of procurement, complaints should be resolved at agency level, if possible, without the need to escalate such complaints to the NSW Procurement Board or elsewhere”* (see page 1 of Appendix 1).

The board also acknowledged the benefits to agencies of having a sound prevention strategy to minimise the incidence and cost of managing complaints. An effective complaints management process is seen as demonstrating an organisation’s commitment to conducting their procurement in an honest, fair, accountable, and transparent manner. Reporting requirements may also be established with the board to appraise the board on the number, nature, outcomes, and response times for complaints so that any systemic issues may be identified and remedied in a timely manner.

The above mentioned guidelines recognised that procurement activity varies from agency to agency so responsibility falls to the Chief Procurement Officers (CPOs) to configure a process for managing complaints that is appropriate to their respective agency or cluster. Given that the Department of Finance, Services and Innovation (DFSI) has in effect two CPOs, one at a Corporate Services level for managing procurement across the department and the other, the Executive Director NSW Procurement (NSWP) for establishing and managing whole-of-government arrangements, these guidelines have been established on a joint basis and reflect each party’s responsibilities under this dual arrangement, including incidence reporting.

#### **Objective**

All procurement complaints received by DFSI are to be managed in accordance with the guidelines endorsed by the board. In particular, attention is drawn to the nine points under “Developing an effective complaints management process for procurement” (see page 2 of Appendix 1).

NSW Procurement’s website ProcurePoint will be updated to provide a link to the DFSI Procurement Complaints Policy and provide advice on the availability of other complaints mechanisms e.g. the Ombudsman and how allegations of a corrupt conduct or criminal nature should be referred to the relevant authorities for investigation.

## **What is a customer complaint under these guidelines?**

NSWP's customer complaint management system covers complaints about the following issues:

- divisional policy published administrative procedures
- administrative decisions
- non-statutory fees and charges
- actions of employees or agents
- quality of service
- timeliness of service
- accuracy of information provided
- accessibility of services.

Complaints received in respect of DFSI procurement matters will be recorded and referred to the DFSI CPO for attention.

The following are not considered customer complaints under these guidelines:

- requests for information about policies or procedures
- complaints dealt with under the DFSI policy
- complaints about NSW Government procurement policy
- complaints about fraud and corruption, which are dealt with under DFSI's Code of conduct and comprehensive guide to reporting corrupt conduct, maladministration and serious and substantial waste of public money.

## **What is a customer compliment under these guidelines?**

Under this policy a compliment has been defined as an expression of praise, admiration or satisfaction with regard to DFSI's customer service, performance, services, or way of doing business. Compliments should relate to a specific occasion or matter and be attributed to an individual staff member, team, or service that provide 'best practice'. A compliment may be expressed as:

- satisfaction or happiness with a service
- staff going 'above and beyond' to provide excellent service
- the client feeling valued
- good complaint-handling service.

**Complaints and compliments can be made via the following avenues:**

**Online feedback form** <http://procurepoint.nsw.gov.au>

**Phone:** 1800 NSWBUY (1800 679 289)

**Fax:** 02 9372 8687

**Email:** [nswbuy@finance.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nswbuy@finance.nsw.gov.au)

**Or mail to:**

Complaints and Compliments Officer  
NSW Procurement Service Centre  
L11 West, McKell Building  
2-24 Rawson Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

**Recording of procurement complaints and compliments**

Details of all DFSI procurement complaints and compliments received are referred to the NSWP Service Centre for logging and tracking through to resolution see process maps at Tab A. It is proposed to distinguish between the two potential avenues of investigation by using “DFSI complaints” for complaints of a corporate nature and “NSWP complaints” for those relating to NSWP whole-of-government arrangements.

**Complaints handling**

Should an allegation not be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant they still have recourse to escalate the allegation or complaint to the Chief Executive, DFSI, the board, or other relevant authorities. In such cases where it is decided to refer the matter to the board, there is a need to provide copies of all correspondence along with any other relevant material.

Wherever practicable, DFSI procurement complaints are to be investigated and a response issued within 20 days of receipt. In cases where the nature or complexity of the issue necessitates additional time, the investigating officer is to seek an appropriate time extension from the responsible director.

**Procurement complaints and compliments reporting**

Under the new arrangements it is planned to prepare a summary of all NSWP compliments and complaints for the NSWP Leadership Team each month.

Also, within six weeks of financial year end, a summary report is to be prepared by the Manager, NSWP Service Centre detailing all DFSI compliments and complaints received during the previous financial year. Arrangements will subsequently be made for details of relevant complaints to be referred to DFSI Procurement Policy Unit for:

- 1) potential referral to board for information along with details of any corrective action taken to address systemic matters identified through the complaints/ issues received; and
- 2) inclusion in the DFSI annual report.