

Service Charters

Achieving a Just & Secure Society



The Attorney-General's Department Service Charter and associated complaints handling policy have been in operation since June 1998. The departmental charter is supplemented by charters covering International Child Abduction, Child Support and Civil Procedure (ICACSCP) and the Trade Measures Review Secretariat (TMRS).

Apart from the departmental areas covered by their own specific service charter and the Australian Protective Service, the Attorney-General's Department has limited direct dealings with members of the public.

The general departmental service charter continues to be provided to new recruits at induction. The departmental and ICACSCP charters are able to be viewed on the Department's homepage, *Window on the Law* <http://law.gov.au>. The TMRS charter is able to be viewed on <http://www.law.gov.au/tmro>. All charters of the Department are available as hard copy.

The following table sets out the customer service standards contained in each charter and the extent to which they were met during 2000–01.

Charter	Service Standard	Compliance with Service Standard
Attorney-General's Department *	A reply in plain English within 28 days of receipt of complaint, including the name and telephone number of the person dealing with the complaint.	All complaints received a response within 28 days in compliance with standard.
	Personal information only used in accordance with the law.	No misuse of personal information, resulting in a breach of the privacy legislation, has been reported by the Privacy Commissioner for attention.
	Work will be undertaken with care, diligence and sensitivity to the needs of clients.	**
	Strong commitment to accountability and continuous improvement.	**
	Clients will be treated with courtesy, fairness and respect.	**
Staff will act responsively to client needs.	**	

Charter	Service Standard	Compliance with Service Standard
International Child Abduction, Child Support and Civil Procedure	Reply within 28 days of receipt of complaint.	No complaints were received during the reporting period.
	Personal information only used in accordance with the law.	No misuse of personal information, resulting in a breach of the privacy legislation, has been reported by the Privacy Commissioner for attention.
	Correspondence to be a well considered reply in plain English and to include the name and telephone number of the person dealing with the complaint.	**
	Subject to caseload priorities, we will act promptly for clients.	**
	Clients will be treated with courtesy, fairness and respect.	**
	Clients will be referred to the appropriate body if we cannot help.	**
Trade Measures Review Secretariat	Provision of professional and independent support to the Review Officer, ensuring that reviews are conducted in a timely, accurate and fair manner.	No complaints were received during the reporting period.
	Provision of as much access as possible to the review process, ensuring that all interested parties are given the opportunity to have their views considered.	Public notices were published in the <i>Australian Financial Review</i> and all identified parties were notified in writing, inviting an opportunity to provide submissions in relation to the specific matter under review, for each review undertaken.
	Personal information only used in accordance with the law.	No misuse of personal information, resulting in a breach of the privacy legislation, has been reported by the Privacy Commissioner for attention.
	Provision of accurate, concise and well-considered responses in plain English to written correspondence.	No complaints or requests for clarification were received during the period.
	Generally, a written reply within 28 days of receiving your letter will be provided. Alternatively, an interim response outlining the delay and when you can expect a response will be provided.	A written reply within 28 days of receipt of letter was provided in every case.
	Correspondence will include the name and telephone number of the person dealing with your letter.	All correspondence included the name and telephone number of the person dealing with the letter.

* In addition to the departmental complaints handling procedures, the Australian Protective Service also refers to instructions governing complaints handling detailed in Chapter 3 of *General Orders*, and Chapter 9 of System Management Guidelines. These documents supplement the departmental complaints handling process with regard to the specific role of the Australian Protective Service and their client dealings, and can be obtained by contacting the Manager, Investigations and Audit or can be viewed on the Australian Protective Service home page. They also serve to support internal management practices by ensuring that all accountability requirements are met fulfilling statutory obligations as set under the *Australian Protective Service Act 1987*, as well as client management requirements to meet Australian Protective Service accreditation to International Quality Assurance Standards (ISO 9002).

** Qualitative information obtained relating to these performance standards (including complaints data, compliments, and feedback from staff/client focus groups and surveys) indicates that they are being maintained.

Clients of the Department and those of the ICACSCP and TMRS can make a complaint or provide feedback in writing, by email, by telephone or in person. Wherever possible, staff of the Department are encouraged to resolve complaints immediately. However, if a resolution cannot be reached at the time of the complaint, the complaint systems for all three charters require the recording of the following information for investigation and appropriate actioning:

- the Division and officer receiving the complaint;
- the date of the complaint;
- the complainant name, address and contact number;
- how the complaint was made;
- the resolution/decision;
- how the complainant was notified of the resolution/decision and date;
- review of the decision (if required);
- decision/comments/remedial action;
- reviewing officer's name and title;
- appeal rights advised (yes/no).

Of the 15 complaints received by the Department during the reporting period, 13 were directed at the Australian Protective Service. Of these, nine relate to operational issues arising at airports.

One of the two complaints not directed at the Australian Protective Service was referred to the Protective Security Coordination Centre (PSCC) by the National Competitive Neutrality Complaints Office. That Office is satisfied that the appropriate response to the complaint will be the revision of a misleading reference in a publication issued by the Department. In relation to the other of these complaints, also directed at the PSCC, the reviewing authority found the actions which lead to the complaint to have been appropriate in the circumstances and that the complaint was unjustified.

Fourteen of the complaints have been effectively resolved within the reporting period and the remaining complaint is awaiting further input from the complainant.