

ADO POL.029	MANAGING COMPLAINTS
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Applies to: ADO Board, Legal Practice Committee, volunteers
Specific responsibility: Principal lawyer Executive Director ADO Board

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Policy context: This policy relates to	
Standards or other external requirements	Standard 17 Assessing Client Satisfaction and Managing Complaints (NAS CLC Phase 3)
Legislation or other requirements	<i>Privacy Act 1998 (Cth)</i>
Contractual obligations	NA

POLICY STATEMENT

The Animal Defenders Office (**ADO**) provides free legal advice and services to people who wish to protect animals. The ADO is run entirely by volunteers who donate their spare time to helping people and animals. The ADO does not receive government funding for its services.

The ADO is committed to providing a high-quality customer service despite the constraints on our centre. The ADO is also committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using ADO services or affected by its operations has the right to lodge a complaint or to seek review of a decision of the ADO about a complaint, and to have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability, and transparency.

The ADO will provide a complaints and review management procedure that:

- is simple and easy to use
- is effectively communicated and promoted to all clients and stakeholders
- ensures complaints or requests for review are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements.

PRINCIPLES

The ADO will:

- consider all complaints or requests for review it receives
- treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of the complaint is important to the complainant
- maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution
- ensure advocacy is available to clients who make a complaint and require support

- resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- deal with all complaints and requests for review in a timely manner
- keep parties to the complaint informed of progress of the complaint
- ensure that the Board, Legal Practice Committee members, and volunteers are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing client feedback and complaints
- ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures
- ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the progress of an issue
- ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements.

PROCEDURES

Information for clients and stakeholders

The ADO complaints procedure must be documented on our website.

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and review at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the ADO.

Depending on the availability of resources, the information should be made available to clients with limited access to written English.

Making a complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to:

- the volunteer they were dealing with at the time
- the supervisor of that volunteer
- the ADO's Executive Director
- the ADO's Principal Lawyer
- another member of the ADO's Legal Practice Committee, or
- the ADO Board.

If the complaint is about:

- a volunteer, the complaint will normally be dealt with by their supervisor.
- a senior officer/Director, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Executive Director.
- the Principal Lawyer, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Executive Director or a member of the ADO Board.
- the Executive Director, the complaint will normally be dealt with by a member of the ADO Board.

- a member of the ADO Board, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Principal Lawyer.

Written complaints may be sent to contact@ado.org.au. The Executive Director will be responsible for directing this correspondence to the appropriate person as listed.

Procedure for complaints management

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

1. Processing the complaint:

- registering the complaint
- informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame.

2. Investigating the complaint:

- examining the complaint as far as possible within 28 days, or as soon as practicable, of the complaint being received
- investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond
- informing the complainant in writing within 28 days of the complaint being received, of what is being done to investigate and resolve it and the expected time frame for resolution.

As far as possible, complaints will be investigated and resolved within 28 days of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

3. Resolving the complaint:

- Making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 28 days of the complaint being received:
 - informing the complainant of the outcome:
 - upheld (and if so what will be done to resolve it)
 - resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
 - if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this.
- Informing the complainant of any options for further action if required.

4. Reviewing the complaint:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint they can seek a further review of the matter by the ADO Board. If a Board member is the subject of the complaint, that Board member will not take part in the review.

Complainants will also be advised that they may contact the ACT Law Society if they feel an ADO officer has engaged in:

- professional misconduct, or
- unsatisfactory professional conduct.

Details about making a complaint to the ACT Law Society are available on the Society's website: <https://www.actlawsociety.asn.au/for-the-public/making-a-complaint>

Record keeping

A register of complaints and reviews will be kept and maintained by an ADO officer. An ADO officer will be responsible for preparing a report on the complaints and requests for reviews received as required to the ADO Board.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the Board and Legal Practice Committee and will be used to:

- inform service planning by including a review of complaints in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- inform decision making by including a report on complaints as a standard item on volunteer and management meeting agendas.

[End of policy]