QUEENSLAND OMBUDSMAN

50 YEARS 1974–2024

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Prevent or minimise unreasonable complainant conduct

How officers interact with complainants can have a significant effect on their conduct and the quality of future interactions.

The following strategies may help prevent or minimise unreasonable complainant conduct (UCC) occurring:

- Set clear expectations for officers who deal with complainants. Officers should treat complainants fairly and respectfully, remain calm, act professionally and impartially and clearly communicate outcomes. Complainants who feel they have been heard, properly

informed and treated with respect are more likely to respond positively, even when faced with a negative outcome.

- Establish ground rules about the conduct expected of complainants and make the organisation's expectations clear and publicly available.
- Clearly communicate relevant information to complainants. Let them know what the organisation can/cannot do, what communication they can expect, who will be involved, the organisation’s processes, timelines and possible outcomes.
- Identify, test and manage complainant expectations at the outset, and throughout the complaints process. This involves defining the complaint issues, identifying the complainant’s requested outcomes, correcting misunderstandings, and redefining unrealistic/unreasonable expectations.
- Exercise ownership of complaints. Make sure complainants are aware that the organisation will decide if and how their complaint will be dealt with.
- Avoid labelling complainants - this can negatively influence how they are dealt with. Instead, respond to observable conduct.
- Recognise the early signs of anger and use techniques to avoid escalation.
- Make and keep good records of complainant interactions.

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