



Governance Paper No 5.17—Library—Policy—Parliamentary Library feedback

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Introduction	1
Background	2
Principles	3
Definitions	3
Responding to Feedback	3
Compliments	4
Suggestions and Complaints: individual client enquiries and other Library services	4
Suggestions and Complaints: Library publications	5
Revising Publications following feedback	6
Suggestions and Complaints: Flagpost comments	6
Staff behaviour—complaints	7
Material selected/not selected for the library collection and databases—complaints and suggestions	7
Feedback handling process	7
Responsibility for this policy	8
Related documents	8
Attachment A—Brochure on feedback	9
Attachment B—Website notice	10
Attachment C—Flowchart for handling feedback	11
Attachment D—Templates for letter/emails for receipt of complaints about publications	12

Introduction

1 This policy sets out the purpose and operation of the Parliamentary Library’s feedback and complaints handling system.

2 The Parliamentary Library is committed to continuous improvement in service delivery. Client feedback, including compliments, complaints and suggestions is vital to help us:

- (a) improve our services and products;
- (b) develop new services;
- (c) prevent problems from occurring in the future; and
- (d) ensure consistent service delivery.

3 The Library also welcomes external feedback on its publications and products.

4 The policy covers all feedback about the Library and its services from clients and from external organisations or individuals. Library staff must not solicit compliments; however, it is appropriate for Library staff to seek feedback from clients to help improve the quality of their work.

5 The Parliamentary Librarian will advise the Chairs of the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, the Presiding Offices or the Secretary DPS as necessary of any compliment, complaint or suggestion.

Background

6 This policy has been developed using guidance from the Standards Association of Australia¹, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, and Australian National Audit Office audits of complaints systems in commonwealth agencies.

7 The Parliamentary Librarian is required by the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* to, among other things:

provide high quality information, analysis and advice to Senators and Members of the House of Representatives in support of their parliamentary and representational roles (paragraph 38B(1)(a)).

8 The Act further states (subsection 38B(2)) that the Parliamentary Librarian must perform this function:

- (a) in a timely, impartial and confidential manner;
- (b) maintaining the highest standards of scholarship and integrity;
- (c) on the basis of equality of access for all Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, parliamentary committees and staff acting on behalf of Senators, Members or parliamentary committees; and
- (d) having regard to the independence of Parliament from the Executive Government of the Commonwealth.

9 The Library receives client feedback through:

- (a) the Presiding Offices;
- (b) the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library;
- (c) a review of services each parliament, generally using survey and focus group assessment of client needs and library performance;
- (d) visits to Senators and Members;
- (e) presentations from clients to library staff;
- (f) direct feedback from clients; and
- (g) direct feedback from other individuals and organisations.

¹ *Handbook: the why and how of complaints handling*. Sydney: Standards Australia, 2006 and *Customer satisfaction: guidelines for complaints handling in organizations (ISO 1002:2004, MOD)* Sydney: Standards Australia, 2006.

10 All these mechanisms are used for ongoing planning and service review.

Principles

11 The Library is committed to service delivery in accordance with Governance Paper No. 5.1 — Parliamentary Library Statement of Client Services, and commits to the following principles:

- (a) We welcome feedback and use it to help us improve the way that we provide services to clients.
- (b) We will regularly provide clients with information on how to give feedback. Similar information will be provided to the wider community through the Parliamentary Library's web pages.
- (c) We will recognise and address all complaints as soon as possible, either at first point of contact or by referral to Directors or Assistant Secretaries or the Parliamentary Librarian.
- (d) We will report on complaints through the Parliamentary Librarian's Annual Report.
- (e) We will treat all feedback sensitively and respect confidentiality and privacy in accordance with legislation.

Definitions

12 The types of feedback are:

- (a) **Compliment:** an expression of praise, admiration or congratulation in relation to any Library service. It may be about an individual staff member, a team, a product or a service. (A simple "that was great, thank you" does not constitute a compliment for the purposes of this policy).
- (b) **Complaint:** an expression of dissatisfaction or unmet expectation. It may relate to an individual service or to Library services overall; staff attitude or conduct; or dissatisfaction with the quality of a particular job (for example accuracy of information, timeliness of service, failure to meet service standards, lack of impartiality).
- (c) **Suggestion:** a comment about our services including individual client services, our service standards and the collection. It may be a suggestion to purchase material for the collection, for a publication or seminar, for a new service or for improvement to existing services.

Responding to Feedback

13 A three tier approach is used:

- (a) **First contact response:** feedback may be provided to a Library staff member who can respond immediately (for example by ensuring that a resource is acquired for the collection).
- (b) **Second level review and response** by a senior officer: If the issue cannot easily be resolved through the first contact or a review is requested, the feedback is passed to a senior officer, either a Director or Assistant Secretary for review and response.

- (c) **Additional review and response:** If the issue cannot be easily resolved or there are policy implications, the Parliamentary Librarian will be responsible for communication with the individual providing feedback.

14 All substantive client feedback will receive a written response. Responses will be made as promptly as possible, generally within one week of receipt. All correspondence will be placed on the appropriate DPS file.

15 The Office of the Parliamentary Librarian records statistical information on complaints for the Library's quarterly reports. An annual report on complaints is included in the *Annual report of the Parliamentary Librarian* provided to the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library. It also is included in the DPS annual report and provided to the Presiding Officers, the Parliament and to the wider community through publication in print and on the parliamentary website.

16 The methods used to deal with different types of feedback are outlined below.

Compliments

17 Many compliments are received by staff about the Library and its publications and collections. Some of these come from clients and some from the public (as Library publications are available to the public through the Parliamentary website).

18 A copy of each compliment will be provided to the relevant Director and Assistant Secretary. The Director will forward each compliment to the Office of the Parliamentary Librarian for filing on the appropriate Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) file. Email compliments are forwarded via email; other compliments are circulated with a distribution list.

Suggestions and Complaints: individual client enquiries and other Library services

19 Clients may provide feedback on individual client responses or other client services, suggesting areas for improvement or expressing dissatisfaction with the service.

Dealing with Client Suggestions

20 All suggestions from clients for improvements or changes to client services are to be promptly forwarded to the relevant Assistant Secretary who will review the suggestions and determine the most appropriate course of action. The suggestions will also be notified to the Parliamentary Librarian and, where appropriate, to the Joint Chairs of the Library Committee.

21 Suggestions will be considered in light of Governance Paper No. 5.2—Responses to client requests. If changes are required to the policy, training for staff is required or staff awareness of handling client enquiries needs to be improved, the Parliamentary Library Executive (PLEM) will decide an appropriate course of action.

22 Policy changes will be made only after consultation with Library staff, and approval by the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library.

23 The Assistant Secretary will respond in writing to client suggestions.

Dealing with Client Complaints: individual client enquiries (including client memos) and other Library services

24 The relevant Assistant Secretary and Parliamentary Librarian should be promptly advised of any client complaint, particularly complaints from senators and members.

25 The relevant Assistant Secretary will review the complaint with relevant staff and determine the most appropriate course of action. Each client complaint will receive a response in writing from the Parliamentary Librarian.

Suggestions and Complaints: Library publications

26 Publications are prepared on issues before the Parliament that very often have differing points of view in the community. Because of this, individual publications can attract criticism.

27 In general, suggestions may include topics for future publications, additional areas of research which go beyond the scope of the particular publication or additional information sources which were not included in the citation list. Complaints may be about the quality or content of the publication. Feedback can, therefore, be very valuable in pointing to errors or deficiencies in the work or identifying additional issues, information that may be important for further library work.

28 Feedback, whether from library clients, experts in the field, advocacy groups or those with a particular point of view, needs to be reviewed seriously. This review needs to identify whether:

- (a) revision is required to publication(s);
- (b) any changes to the policy and procedures are required; or
- (c) the publication is accurate and balanced and does not need amendment.

29 Regardless of the origin of the feedback, suggestions that a paper contains any errors or is biased or in any other way does not meet the requirements of the *Parliamentary Services Act 1999* are taken seriously.

30 All substantive suggestions for improvements or changes to publications or products, from clients and from external individuals/organisations, are to be forwarded to the relevant Assistant Secretary who will review the suggestions and determine the most appropriate course of action. The suggestions will also be notified to the Parliamentary Librarian. (Suggestions for new collection material are dealt with at paragraphs 41 following.)

31 The relevant Assistant Secretary and Parliamentary Librarian should be advised of any client complaint as soon as possible.

32 The relevant Assistant Secretary will promptly review the client complaint with relevant staff and determine the most appropriate course of action. If the review recommends substantive changes to the paper, these need to be approved by the Assistant Secretary and the Parliamentary Librarian.

33 Each client complaint will receive an initial acknowledgement in writing or email promptly and a substantive response from the Parliamentary Librarian in writing within two weeks.

34 Suggestions and complaints from external individuals and organisations do not always require a formal response. If an individual or organisation is simply putting their arguments on an issue they will only require an acknowledgement from the author or relevant Director. Where a publication's content is criticised for issues such as accuracy or partiality, a review will be undertaken by the author and relevant Director and provide a response to the individual or organisation.

35 Responses will be made as promptly as possible. Complaints will be acknowledged by email or in writing after they have been received if the response is likely to take more than two weeks. A formal response will generally be given within two weeks of receipt of the suggestion or complaint. A draft template for correspondence is attached ([Attachment C](#)—Templates for letter/emails for receipt of complaints about publications).

Revising Publications following feedback

36 Where a publication needs to be amended:

- (a) revisions should be made consistent with Governance Paper No. 5.12—Parliamentary Library Research papers and background notes.;
- (b) a copy of the earlier and amended publications will be placed on DPS files;
- (c) Publishing Section will be advised in writing of the approved amended text with authorisation by the relevant Director or Assistant Secretary as appropriate and consistent with Governance Paper No. 5.12; and
- (d) clients are notified of the revised publication, when significant changes have been made, in the same manner that they are notified of new publications, through *What's New from the Parliamentary Library*, RSS feeds and alerts.

37 When significant changes are required, a publication may need to be temporarily withdrawn from the public circulation and an appropriately worded notice substituted in its place.

Suggestions and Complaints: Flagpost comments

38 FlagPost provides factual, descriptive and/or summary information on topics of current interest to members of the Australian Parliament. Comments on individual posts provided via email/letter are dealt with as comments for other publication types.

39 Comments provided via the feedback button on the bottom of individual posts are moderated. When comments are received, they will be forwarded to the relevant author by the FlagPost Administrator. The author will consider the comment in consultation with the relevant Director. Comments deemed to be inconsistent with the objectives of FlagPost will not be published (this includes spam, profanity, personal abuse and comments that are politically partisan or where no additional information is provided). Where a comment raises a

substantive issue regarding the quality or content of a post, a review will be undertaken by the author and relevant Director to determine whether changes or clarification is required. The comment and the response will be published at the bottom of the blog post.

40 In all cases such decisions will be documented and included in the FlagPost comments log book in the relevant TRIM file

Staff behaviour—complaints

41 Library staff are employed under the *Parliamentary Service Act* 1999 and must act in accordance with the Parliamentary Service Values and the Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct.

42 Any complaint about the behaviour of Library staff should be made known to the relevant Assistant Secretary and Parliamentary Librarian as soon as possible. All such complaints will be reviewed by the relevant Assistant Secretary or Parliamentary Librarian. If there are potential breaches of the Parliamentary Service Code of Conduct, the Personnel policy relating to such breaches will be followed (People Management Paper No. 1.1—Procedures for investigating and determining breaches of the Code of Conduct).

Material selected/not selected for the library collection and databases—complaints and suggestions

43 Library clients make suggestions about material that they think should be included in the Library's collection. Any suggestions for collection materials should be forwarded to the Director Collection Management. All requests or suggestions will be considered in light of Governance Paper No. 5.3 — Parliamentary Library Collection development, the budget and other resources available through the collection. They may also be referred to the Parliamentary Library Executive for discussion.

44 The relevant Assistant Secretary and Parliamentary Librarian should be advised of any client suggestion or complaint regarding the selection of collection materials as soon as possible.

45 The Assistant Secretary will respond in writing to client suggestions, and the Parliamentary Librarian will respond to client complaints.

46 Responses will be made as promptly as possible, generally within one week of receipt of the suggestion or complaint.

Feedback handling process

47 While the methodology for dealing with feedback has been described above, a flowchart is shown in [Attachment C](#).

48 Draft templates for letters regarding feedback about publications are shown in [Attachment D](#).

49 All feedback will be handled in accordance with legislative confidentiality and privacy requirements.

Responsibility for this policy

50 Responsibility for implementing these policies and procedures rests with all Library staff. Specific responsibilities are as outlined in the policy and attachments.

Related documents

51 The following documents outline the services and procedures to ensure quality services from the Library:

- (a) Governance Paper No. 5.1 —Parliamentary Library Statement of Client Services;
- (b) Governance Paper No. 5.3 —Parliamentary Library Collection development;
- (c) Governance Paper No. 5.3.2 — General guidelines for the selection and de-selection of material for the Library collections;
- (d) Governance Paper No. 5.2 — Responses to client requests;
- (e) Governance Paper No. 5.13 — Preparing and publishing bills digests; and
- (f) Governance Paper No. 5.12 —Parliamentary Library Research papers and background notes.

Dr Dianne Heriot
Parliamentary Librarian



Attachment A—Brochure on feedback

Making a better Parliamentary Library—provide your feedback

The Library is committed to service delivery in accordance with *Parliamentary Library Statement of Client Service*. Feedback from clients and other individuals and organisations, including complaints, is based on the following set of principles:

- (a) We welcome feedback and use it to help us improve the way that we provide services to clients.
- (b) Information on how to give feedback will be provided to all clients regularly and to the wider community through the Parliamentary Library's web pages.
- (c) We will recognise and address all complaints as quickly as possible, either at first point of contact or by referral to Assistant Secretaries or the Parliamentary Librarian.
- (d) Complaints will be reported through the Annual report of the Parliamentary Librarian.
- (e) We will treat all feedback sensitively and respect confidentiality and privacy in accordance with legislation.

Feedback provides a very important means of recognising the success of our current services, areas which need improvement and issues that require long term planning. Sharing the outcomes of feedback through regular library meetings and planning is essential for continuous improvement.

Have your say

If you have a compliment, suggestion or complaint about our services or collections please do not hesitate to contact us. You may have a comment about:

- (a) our response to your request;
- (b) our publications;
- (c) our collection; or
- (d) our behaviour.

All comments will be treated in confidence.

Do:

- (a) speak to a staff member who is dealing with you;
- (b) send feedback to the Director of Client Relations (Joanne James) or the Parliamentary Librarian.

Contact details:

Parliamentary Librarian:
(02) 6277 7102
dianne.heriot@aph.gov.au
Parliament House
PO Box 6000
Canberra ACT 2600

Director, Client Relations:
(02) 6277 2512
Joanne.James@aph.gov.au
Parliament House
PO Box 6000
Canberra ACT 2600

Chairs, Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library
The Hon. Dick Adams MP Senator Gary Humphries



Attachment B—Website notice

In the information section at the end of each publication on the internet the following will be displayed:

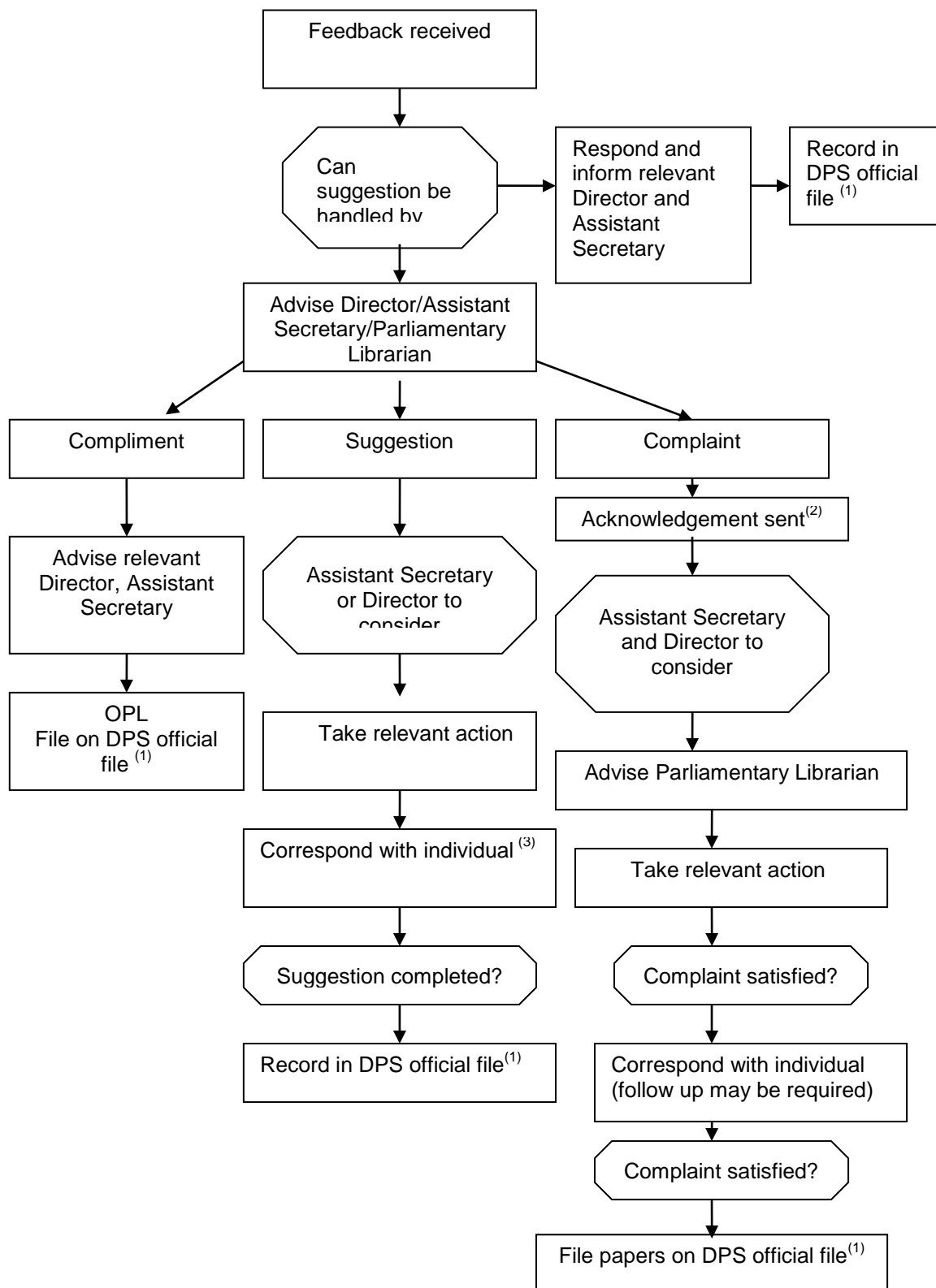
Feedback is welcome and may be provided to: web.library@aph.gov.au. Any concerns or complaints should be directed to the Parliamentary Librarian (Parliamentary.Librarian@aph.gov.au).

Parliamentary Library staff are available to discuss the contents of publications with Senators and Members and their staff. To access this service, clients may contact the author or the Library's Central Entry Point for referral.

Last reviewed XXX by the Parliamentary Web Manager

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Attachment C—Flowchart for handling feedback



- (1) Held by Office of the Parliamentary Librarian
- (2) If response likely to exceed two weeks
- (3) From Parliamentary Librarian if required

Attachment D—Templates for letter/emails for receipt of complaints about publications

Communication with Clients

(a) Acknowledgment

Dear X

Thank you for your [letter/email] of [date] concerning the Library publication [title]. Library publications are prepared in accordance with governance papers endorsed by the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library. Our practice is for all publications to pass through a rigorous quality control process at the time of preparation; however we welcome feedback as a means of improving individual publications and our publication process.

We will review this publication and aim to respond to you in more detail as soon as possible.

(signed) Parliamentary Librarian

(b) Letter [Use as a checklist]

Dear X

Thank you for your [letter/email] of [date] concerning the Library publication [title]. Library publications are prepared in accordance with governance papers endorsed by the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library. Our practice is for all publications to pass through a rigorous quality control process at the time of preparation; however we welcome feedback as a means of improving individual publications and our publication process.

In your [letter/email] you raised the following issues XXX.

We have reviewed the publication and find that [results of investigation].

As a result the Library has decided that in this instance [outline action to be taken].

Thank you for taking the time to contact the Library on this matter.

(signed) Parliamentary Librarian

Communication with external organisations and individuals

(c) Acknowledgment with no review

Dear X

Thank you for your [letter/email] of [date] concerning the Library publication [title]. Our practice is for all publications to pass through a rigorous quality control process at the time of preparation; however we welcome feedback as a means of improving individual publications and our publication process.

We will consider your feedback in light of the Library's publication requirements.

(signed) Parliamentary Librarian

(d) Acknowledgment with review to occur:

Dear X

Thank you for your [letter/email] of [date] concerning the Library publication [title]. Our practice is for all publications to pass through a rigorous quality control process at the time of preparation; however we welcome feedback as a means of improving individual publications and our publication process.

We will review this publication and advise you in more detail as soon as possible.

(e) Letter [Use as a checklist]

Dear X

Thank you for your [letter/email] of [date] concerning the Library publication [title]. Our practice is for all publications to pass through a rigorous quality control process at the time of preparation; however we welcome feedback as a means of improving individual publications and our publication process.

In your [letter/email] you raised the following issues XXX.

We have reviewed the publication and find that [results of investigation].

As a result the Library has decided that in this instance [outline action to be taken].

Thank you for taking the time to contact the Library on this matter.

(signed) Parliamentary Librarian