

## Complaining is ok

### What do I do if my employment service doesn't do the right thing?

Occasionally things don't work out as well as you'd hoped. If you are having problems of any kind with your employment service, it is ok to complain.

It may be that your employment service does not seem to understand you and what's going on in your life.

It is important that you try to talk about your issue with your service and give them the chance to address it. A good service will welcome your feedback as an opportunity to improve.

This fact sheet outlines your feedback/complaints options and processes.

### How is my service accountable?

Employment Service Providers have "Service Guarantees" a set of minimum service standards they must follow. These include treating you fairly and with respect and taking account of your parenting or caring responsibilities or other recognised limits on your ability to find work.

Within Disability Employment Services these standards must be outlined in the initial interview with you. Disability Employment Services must comply with the Disability Service Standards and can be held accountable to them (please see Consumer Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS) information below).

Job Services Australia Services must ensure that the standards are prominently displayed and available to people who access their services. You can ask for a copy of the service standards for your program at any time. They are also available at:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/Resources/Pages/Home.aspx>

### Natural Justice and Continuous Improvement

It is important and fair that where possible, before

you take your complaint to an external body, you attempt to discuss your issue with your service and give them the opportunity to address it. The service may be unaware that you are unsatisfied or unhappy. Often issues can arise through communication problems or misunderstandings. By complaining, you are giving the service an opportunity to change and improve its practices which will benefit not only you, but other job seekers who access the provider. A good service will welcome your complaint as an opportunity to improve.

### Complaints processes

Employment Service Providers are required to tell you about their feedback/complaints processes in your first interview with them. Many will give you information on how you can complain and what happens when you do.

Services must have a senior staff member investigate your complaint. The responsible officer must inform you of the outcome of any investigation and any action the service proposes to take about the complaint.

### What if I need to take the complaint further?

There are a number of ways to complain and organisations to go to.

#### DEEWR Customer Service Line

Employment Service Providers are funded and managed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). DEEWR has a Customer Service Line: 1800 805 260 (free call from landlines). You may need to leave your contact details if all lines are attended. The Customer Service line will ask you to explain your issue and then they will investigate it.

If, after contacting the DEEWR line, you feel that the standard of service you have received from the department has not been satisfactory, you can contact the Department's Service Charter Bureau on 1300 363 079 or the Commonwealth



Ombudsman (please see below).

### **Complaints Resolution and Referral Service**

The CRRS is an independent service that receives complaints about any service funded under the Commonwealth Disability Services Act. This means if you are accessing a Disability Employment Service you can complain to the CRRS. CRRS holds services accountable to the 12 Disability Service Standards which include individual need, privacy dignity and confidentiality and service access. For information on these standards please go to:

**<http://www.crrs.org.au/disability-services-standards.html>**

To complain to CRRS, you can ring their free call number: 1800 880 052. They will ask you about your issue and investigate it. CRRS have the power to compel services to fix breaches in the service standards. Wherever possible they support people to repair their relationship with their service provider and use conciliation processes (assisting both parties to reach a solution together) for more complicated complaints.

### **Commonwealth Ombudsman**

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about actions and decisions made by Australian Government agencies to see if they are wrong, unjust, unlawful, discriminatory or just plain unfair.

Making a complaint is simple. You can make a complaint by:

- telephone: 1300 362 072 (local call charges, calls from mobiles at mobile phone rates)
- in person: Brisbane Office:  
Level 17, 53 Albert Street Brisbane, QLD 4000 (there is an office in every capital city);
- in writing: GPO Box 442, Canberra, ACT 2601;
- by fax: 02 6276 0123;
- or using their online complaint form:  
<http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/pages/making-a-complaint/>

If you do not speak or write English well, the Ombudsman's office can arrange for translation and interpreter services. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint another more senior investigation officer will review it.

### **Welfare Rights Centre Inc.**

The Welfare Rights Centre (WRC) provides advocacy and advice about Employment Service Providers. You can call us on 07 3847 5532 or 1800 358 511 (outside Brisbane), 9am – 5pm on Monday – Friday and leave details of your issue and someone will call you back to discuss your options. You can also call just to find out what your rights are.

Where possible, the WRC will encourage people to raise their issue with their provider initially. The WRC can help you work out how to do that and what you might say. In some cases, WRC can act on your behalf.

We also collect stories of issues raised with us and provide general information on these to governments to argue for changes to the system so that everyone is treated fairly.

### **Please note:**

This Fact Sheet contains general information only. It does not constitute legal advice. If you need legal advice please contact the Welfare Rights Centre on 3421 2510 or if outside of Brisbane on 1800 358 511.

The Welfare Rights Centre is a community legal centre, which provides specialist advocacy and legal services in Social Security law, administration and policy. We are independent of Centrelink. All assistance is free.

This Fact Sheet was updated in June 2011.

**[www.wrcqld.org.au](http://www.wrcqld.org.au)**

