
NSW Treasury

Online Correspondence Management Policy and Procedures

Treasury Internal Policy & Procedure

June 2022

treasury.nsw.gov.au



Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Treasury acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of Australia, and the oldest continuing culture in human history.

We pay respect to Elders past and present and commit to respecting the lands we walk on, and the communities we walk with.

We celebrate the deep and enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country and acknowledge their continuing custodianship of the land, seas, and sky.

We acknowledge the ongoing stewardship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the important contribution they make to our communities and economies.

We reflect on the continuing impact of government policies and practices and recognise our responsibility to work together with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families, and communities, towards improved economic, social and cultural outcomes.

Artwork: 'Regeneration' by Josie Rose



Preface

The NSW Treasury Online Correspondence Management Policy and Procedures document (the Policy) outlines NSW Treasury's approach to managing correspondence received via Treasury's online communication channels.

All government sector employees abide by a set of core values - integrity, trust, service and accountability. These core values inform the way we approach all the work we do as NSW Treasury. Guided by these values, the Policy sets out our commitment to effective engagement with the public.

The following six principles underpin our approach to managing correspondence received via Treasury's online communication channels:

- We acknowledge correspondence in a timely manner and strive to make it easy for individual/s to write or provide feedback
- We respond to correspondence quickly and keep the individual informed,
- We are flexible in our approach when responding to correspondence,
- We are objective and fair,
- We ensure confidentiality within the law,
- We aim to build trust in our services and processes.

The Policy applies to all staff within Treasury, ensuring that any correspondence received online is addressed appropriately, accurately and with the final aim of providing excellent service to our communities.

Dr Paul Grimes PSM

Secretary

NSW Treasury

21 June 2022

Note

General inquiries concerning this document should be initially directed to:
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This publication can be accessed from the Treasury's website www.treasury.nsw.gov.au

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Policy Scope

The Policy provides guidance to Treasury staff managing Treasury's online communication channels. This Policy acts as a guide in how to deal with correspondence received online, including complaints, and is intended to be read in line with the following policies:

- Code of Conduct and Ethics policy
- Public Interest Disclosures policy
- Privacy Management Plan – Internal Reviews
- NSW Procurement Board Complaints Management Guidelines Policy
- Compliance Incident Policy

Any online correspondence received by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) in relation to the Office of Energy and Climate Change will be managed in accordance with the DPE Complaint Handling Policy.

Purpose

The Policy is intended to ensure that Treasury staff understand and follow the appropriate process when managing Treasury's online correspondence. This will ensure that NSW Treasury handles correspondence fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy is intended to:

- Enable staff to respond to issues raised by people in a timely and cost-effective way
- Build, boost, and maintain public confidence and trust in the NSW public service
- Provide information that can be used to deliver quality improvements in how Treasury manages correspondence and/or undertakes engagement.

Treasury's Commitment

The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a culture that values effective engagement with members of the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support and direction to staff responsible for managing online correspondence. Encourage all staff to be alert and assist those responsible for handling online correspondence, respond to them promptly when required. Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements. Recognise and reward good correspondence practices by staff.
Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and manage our online correspondence management system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure staff respond to online correspondence promptly and in accordance with Treasury's policies and procedures. Encourage staff managing online correspondence to provide suggestions on ways to improve the organisation's correspondence management system. Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.
Manager, Engagement and Correspondence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate exemplary customer service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide reports to Treasury leadership as required on issues arising from online correspondence and engagement with members of the public. Treat all correspondents with respect, including people who make complaints. Respond to requests for assistance from members of the public. Provide statistics concerning the

traffic of online correspondence.

- Be able to identify complaints from feedback and forward the complaints to the area responsible for managing it.
- Implement a management system to ensure all online correspondence is dealt with in timely manner.

All staff

- Understand and comply with Treasury's correspondence handling practices.
- Be aware of Treasury's correspondence management policies and procedures.
- Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.
- Assist people who wish to write to the Department.
- Provide feedback to management on issues arising from correspondence.
- If allocated correspondence to respond to by the Manager, Engagement and Correspondence, the line area must respond back to the Manager, Engagement and Correspondence in a timely manner (but at least within 20 business days) with an approved response to be shared with the individual/s.

Definitions

Correspondence includes all opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services, or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Policy

A statement of instruction that sets out how Treasury should fulfill its vision, mission and goals.

Procedure

A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

Public interest disclosure

A report about wrongdoing made by a public official in New South Wales that meets the requirements of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*.

Online Correspondence Procedure

Writing to the Department online

Online correspondence can be submitted via the NSW Treasury managed websites through:

- the Contact us page or
- Your Feedback Assist widget.

For correspondence to be effectively assessed and responded to, correspondence should include:

- What the key issues are
- The desired outcome
- Contact details.

Responding to online correspondence

Timeframes

Treasury aims to respond to all correspondence within 20 business days from receipt.

Treasury will assess and prioritise correspondence in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security, the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

Treasury will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their correspondence and provide advice about where such issues may be directed (if known and appropriate).

Objectivity and fairness

Treasury will address correspondence with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. If the matter concerns a complaint, Treasury will ensure that the person handling the complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is the subject of the complaint.

Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly.

Confidentiality

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by Treasury as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

Treasury may also disclose personal information to other NSW government agencies where such a disclosure will allow the issues raised in correspondence to be better responded to by that agency.

Online Correspondence Process

Initial Assessment

Treasury will acknowledge all correspondence submitted through the Contact Us pages and assign it internally.

Addressing the correspondence

Once the relevant business area has been allocated the correspondence, it will assess the issues to determine the best course of action. After assessment, the business area will consider how to manage it. They may:

- give the customer information or an explanation, or
- review and/or investigate the claims made in the correspondence.

The business area will provide the Manager, Engagement and Correspondence with an approved response and/or outcome for the Manager to issue to the writer. What actions Treasury decides to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

When responding, we might do one or more of the following:

- take action to fix the matter or improve the situation,
- give the customer further information or an explanation,
- gather information from the staff member or area that the issues are about,
- undertake to review a practice, policy or procedure as a result, and/or
- investigate the issues raised.

Record keeping, redress and review

The Manager, Engagement and Correspondence will keep a record of:

- Date, contact details and nature of the online correspondence received
- How the correspondence was dealt with by the Manager and, if applicable, to whom and when the correspondence was forwarded
- When relevant information is received from the business area, record how the correspondence has been addressed.
- For correspondence received through Contact us page (excluding the Feedback Assist widget), provide:
 - monthly reports to business areas on correspondence responses which are outstanding and late.
 - reports as required to the leadership, on the correspondence received and status, including any trends or issues to be noted.

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