

# **ACT Auditor-General's Office**

## **Management of Feedback and Complaints**

**Department of Territory and Municipal Services**

**October 2010**





## ACT AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE



The Speaker  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
Civic Square  
London Circuit  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Speaker

I am pleased to forward to you a Performance Audit Report titled '**Management of Feedback and Complaints**', for tabling in the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to Section 17(5) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'T. Pham'.

Tu Pham  
Auditor-General  
27 October 2010



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## ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

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ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACTION	ACT Internal Omnibus Network
ACTPLA	ACT Planning and Land Authority
ACTRAMS	ACT Roads and Asset Management System
Audit	ACT Auditor-General's Office
CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology
CMD	Chief Minister's Department
Contact Centre	Canberra Connect Contact Centre (a part of Canberra Connect with responsibility for telephone contact with the public)
CSR	Customer Service Representative in Canberra Connect Contact Centre
DECCEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy and Water
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHCS	Department of Housing and Community Services
DUS	Department of Urban Services (became TAMS in 2006)
IAMS	Integrated Asset Management System
ICS	Integrated Customer Support
JACS	Department of Justice and Community Safety
Minister	Minister for Territory and Municipal Services
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NCA	National Capital Authority
Satisfaction Survey	TAMS Annual Community Satisfaction Survey
Shopfront	Canberra Connect Shopfront (a part of Canberra Connect with responsibility for face-to-face contact with the public)
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TAMS	Department of Territory and Municipal Services
TIS	Translating and Interpreting Service
TTY service	Teletypewriter Service



# **1. REPORT SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of a performance audit that reviewed the effectiveness of feedback and complaints management mechanisms within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (TAMS).
- 1.2 Canberra Connect, which is a part of the TAMS Transport and Infrastructure Division, provides a key mechanism for the receipt and dissemination of feedback and complaints received by the ACT Government. While Canberra Connect also receives feedback and complaints for all of the ACT Government, the majority of feedback and complaints (approximately 83 percent of on-line feedback and complaints received) relate to TAMS.
- 1.3 TAMS, including Canberra Connect, operates in a complex environment, which reflects the array of activities for which the Department is responsible, as well as its key role in facilitating communication between ACT residents and the entire ACT Government.
- 1.4 In relation to the management and resolution of feedback and complaints, Audit recognises that TAMS and Canberra Connect are often managing competing community interests, and in some cases, it is difficult to satisfy these competing interests.
- 1.5 Audit appreciates the cooperation and assistance of TAMS staff during this audit.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 1.6 For the purpose of this report and ease of reference, Audit has made a distinction between complaints and feedback, noting that it is common for the definition of feedback to also include complaints.
- 1.7 Complaints are an inevitable and predictable outcome of any government service delivery. A customer's dissatisfaction, leading to the complaint, may be due to a variety of different reasons, some of which may not be within the control of the organisation. However, when a customer expresses his or her dissatisfaction and makes a complaint, this should be recognised and addressed.
- 1.8 Closely allied with complaints is feedback. Feedback is a broad concept that includes a wide range of sentiments, including positive statements of satisfaction (i.e. compliments) through to suggestions for improvement.
- 1.9 An organisation should recognise complaints, compliments and suggestions for improvement as indicators of customers' assessment of the organisation's service delivery.
- 1.10 Apart from demonstrating good customer service, the proper management of feedback and complaints should be recognised as an important component of ongoing business management practices and continuous improvement processes. Such practice has the potential to:

- identify key service delivery failings or shortcomings on a timely basis; and
- identify service delivery successes, which may be emulated across the organisation.

### DEPARTMENT OF TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND CANBERRA CONNECT

- 1.11 TAMS plays a key role in building the ACT's environmental, social, sporting and cultural capital as well as administering most of Canberra's municipal services, transport and land functions. It develops and delivers a range of services for the people of the ACT including road infrastructure management, public transport, libraries, Canberra Connect payments and information services, parks and open space management, sport and recreation services, cemeteries, a variety of ranger services, waste management, linen and plant nursery services, and sports venues.
- 1.12 TAMS estimates that the average ACT resident encounters its services at least 10 times per day. Accordingly, every Canberra resident is a customer of TAMS in one form or another.
- 1.13 Canberra Connect is a business unit within TAMS. It provides the community with access to ACT Government information and payment services through a single, recognisable brand. It does this through diverse channels, including a Contact Centre (i.e. a telephone call centre), Canberra Connect Shopfronts and a web-site that serves as an on-line gateway for ACT Government services. Canberra Connect also manages the infrastructure of the TAMS web-site on behalf of the department and the ACT Government web-site on behalf of the Chief Minister's Department.
- 1.14 Canberra Connect's mission is 'to deliver to the community high quality and integrated information, payments and services on behalf of the ACT Government' and it aims to be 'the primary access point to the ACT Government for information, payments and services' by 2012.

### AUDIT OBJECTIVE

- 1.15 The objective of this audit was to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of feedback and complaints management in TAMS and Canberra Connect. This includes the systems and processes in place to:
- receive and respond to feedback and complaints in TAMS and Canberra Connect in a timely and appropriate manner;
  - ensure feedback and complaints received by Canberra Connect are directed to appropriate business groups within TAMS for action; and
  - ensure that feedback and complaints information contributes to continuous improvements in TAMS' operation and in service delivery.
- 1.16 Audit used the Commonwealth Ombudsman's *Better practice guide to complaint handling* as a general source of criteria for this audit, as outlined in Appendix A.

## AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

1.17 The audit conclusions drawn against the audit objectives are set out below.

Overall, TAMS and Canberra Connect have a sound framework within which they can recognise and respond to feedback and complaints provided by the ACT community, including a good management information system.

Most issues raised by ACT residents through various communication options were considered in a timely manner and in most cases, action was taken by the responsible business areas within TAMS. There was, however, a lack of ongoing communication with the providers of feedback and complaints to keep them informed of action taken.

Policies, procedures and guidelines for staff involved in handling complaints and feedback were not adequate, and there were shortcomings in ongoing monitoring, review and analysis of feedback and complaints. These, combined with the limited use and roll-out of the management information system, can impair the ability of TAMS and other ACT Government agencies to effectively use information provided through feedback and complaints to improve business practices and services delivered.

## KEY FINDINGS

1.18 The audit conclusions are supported by the following findings:

### Encouraging feedback and complaints

- TAMS and Canberra Connect offered a range of options for ACT residents to provide feedback or make a complaint.
- TAMS and Canberra Connect's public information material consistently referred to *feedback*, and it was not easy for the public to find specific guidance to make *complaints*. When searching for *complaints* on ACT Government web-sites ([www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au), [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au) and [www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au](http://www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au)), users were led to formal options such as those of the Human Right Commissioner, which may not be the appropriate avenue users were looking for.
- Canberra Connect research indicated that on-line mechanisms for providing feedback and complaints were significantly increasing in popularity, but there was a relatively low awareness of these options amongst ACT residents.
- TAMS and Canberra Connect provided minimal public information on the administrative processes associated with handling feedback and complaints. This may deter customers from providing complaints and feedback. Providing more information to the public will also increase transparency in the way the complaints are handled and assist TAMS and Canberra Connect in managing the expectations of customers on issues to be resolved.

### Receiving feedback and complaints

- Canberra Connect managed a range of customer service initiatives and forums for receiving feedback and complaints from the public, including Canberra Connect Shopfronts, the Canberra Connect Contact Centre and various on-line initiatives.

- The Integrated Customer Support system (ICS) is a useful system for receiving feedback and complaints through the ACT Government on-line portals. However, the full ICS system was not widely used in Canberra Connect Shopfronts and the Canberra Connect Contact Centre.
- There was a lack of policy and procedural documents for the use and reference by Canberra Connect staff, which increases the risk that feedback and complaints communicated to Canberra Connect are not recognised and recorded, or directed to the right business units.
- The ICS has significant capacity to facilitate the effective management of feedback and complaints across the ACT Government, but its limited use and roll-out diminished this capacity. Currently the system is under-utilised, with 31 ACT Government users having access, compared to its capacity of up to 62 users on current licence arrangements.

### Managing feedback and complaints

- TAMS received a wide range of feedback and complaints, which reflected the diversity of its operations and responsibilities.
- TAMS and its relevant business areas recognised and actioned the significant majority of feedback and complaints received.
- A lack of policy and procedural guidance for the management of feedback and complaints led to inconsistency across the organisation in the way that feedback and complaints are managed as well as differing levels of customer service.
- TAMS gave priority to addressing complaints and feedback provided to Ministers. The relative importance or otherwise of the issues raised through the ministerial process was not always considered against issues raised from other processes. This increases the risks that the priority and resources allocated to have an issue addressed depends on the method of feedback and complaint used, rather than the substance and the importance of the issues.
- Ongoing communication with correspondents was generally poor, with a lack of information communicated to keep them 'in the loop' on progress and actions taken in response to their concerns. This has led to frustration on the part of ACT residents, and potential administrative inefficiencies in TAMS as in some cases, ACT residents escalated their issues and concerns to Ministers and other Members of the Legislative Assembly.
- There was limited monitoring of feedback and complaints received across TAMS. This has impaired TAMS' ability to analyse and identify emerging patterns or trends.

### Evaluating the feedback and complaints process

- TAMS and Canberra Connect sought to review aspects of feedback and complaints processes, but did not directly assess satisfaction of providers of feedback and complaints with the way their feedback or complaint was managed.
- TAMS did not have any performance indicators for its management of feedback and complaints, for reporting and evaluation purposes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

- 1.19 The audit made nine recommendations to address the audit findings detailed in this report.
- 1.20 In accordance with section 18 of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, a Proposed Report was provided to the Chief Executive of TAMS for consideration and comments. The Chief Executive's overall response is shown below:

*TAMS has developed a positive culture of customer service over many years. Through Canberra Connect, the community now has an effective and recognised pathway to submit feedback and complaints not only to TAMS, but the ACT Government more broadly. The recommendations in this report will assist TAMS to improve overall coordination and response to customer feedback and complaints, as well as facilitate the development of consistent guidelines, procedures and policies for all staff to follow in feedback and complaints management. I welcome this report and am confident my acceptance of the recommendations and on-going commitment to customer service will continue to drive the development of feedback and complaints management across TAMS.*

- 1.21 In addition, the Chief Executive provided responses to each recommendation, as shown below.

### **Recommendation 1 (Chapter 2)**

TAMS should implement initiatives to improve the visibility of ACT Government feedback and complaints processes, especially utilising Canberra Connect infrastructure. This should include:

- a) clearly facilitating the provision of *complaints*, in addition to *feedback*, in public material and web-site information;
- b) making on-line feedback and complaints options more visible; and
- c) actively promoting on-line feedback and complaints options.

### **Response from TAMS:**

#### ***Agreed***

*Initiatives will be implemented to improve the visibility and promotion of the ACT Government feedback and complaints process in public material and website information.*

*Timeline: 31 March 2011. Responsibility: Director, Canberra Connect.*

**Recommendation 2 (Chapter 2)**

TAMS should provide more public information on processes for handling feedback and complaints. This should include:

- a) information on the administrative steps involved;
- b) expected timeframes; and
- c) limitations on its jurisdiction and capacity to address and resolve certain issues.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed in part*

*Processes within TAMS on the handling of feedback and complaints will be more clearly articulated to customers. TAMS is not in a position however to detail the processes for handling feedback and complaints across other ACT Government agencies.*

*Timeline: 31 March 2011. Responsibility: Directors, Canberra Connect and Governance.*

**Recommendation 3 (Chapter 3)**

Canberra Connect should develop consistent administrative procedures for recording all feedback and complaints received by telephone through the Canberra Connect Contact Centre.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed*

*Consistent procedural documentation for complaints handling will be developed and implemented consistent with TAMS Guidelines.*

*Timeline: 30 June 2011. Responsibility: Director, Canberra Connect.*

**Recommendation 4 (Chapter 3)**

TAMS should develop a strategy for maintaining the accuracy and currency of information within its management information systems, including Canberra Connect's Integrated Customer Support system. This should involve continuously verifying the accuracy and currency of agency contact details to ensure issues are directed to the right areas and staff.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed*

*A strategy for maintaining the accuracy and currency of information within TAMS management information systems will be developed.*

*Timeline: 31 March 2011. Responsibility: Directors, Canberra Connect and Governance.*

**Recommendation 5 (Chapter 3)**

TAMS should:

- a) in the short term, endorse the Integrated Customer Support system (ICS) as the management information system for recording and managing feedback and complaints across TAMS;
- b) ensure key staff members with responsibility for managing feedback and complaints across TAMS have appropriate access to the ICS; and
- c) in the long term, identify and implement an appropriate management information system for recording and managing feedback and complaints.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed*

*Endorsement of ICS as the TAMS information management system for recording and managing feedback and complaints, ensuring appropriate access, will be undertaken in the short term. In the long term, TAMS will identify and implement an appropriate system for recording and managing feedback and complaints, provided appropriate funding is agreed through subsequent budget processes.*

*Timeline: Short term – 30 June 2011. Timeline: Long term – 30 December 2012.*

*Responsibility: Directors, Canberra Connect and Governance.*

**Recommendation 6 (Chapter 4)**

TAMS should develop policy and procedural guidance for the management of feedback and complaints for its staff, which includes minimum standards of service and customer service principles and ongoing communication, when appropriate, with the provider of the feedback or complaint.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed*

*Policy guidelines will be developed for the management of feedback and complaints across TAMS. These guidelines will include service standards, customer service principles, communication with the customer, monitoring and reporting expectations and process for gathering customer feedback on how their feedback was handled and resolved.*

*Timeline: 31 March 2011. Responsibility: Director, Governance.*

**Recommendation 7 (Chapter 4)**

TAMS should improve the monitoring and reporting of feedback and complaints. Regular monitoring and reporting should address:

- a) quantitative and qualitative aspects of feedback and complaints received, including the nature of the feedback or complaint and the business activities to which it relates; and
- b) progress in resolving feedback and complaints, including timeliness of resolution.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed*

*Following implementation of the TAMS Policy on feedback and complaints handling, improved monitoring and reporting will be established across the Department. Provision of qualitative and quantitative information will be provided as part of the monthly Stewardship Report to the TAMS Executive Leadership Team.*

*Timeline: 30 December 2011. Responsibility: Director, Governance.*

**Recommendation 8 (Chapter 5)**

TAMS and Canberra Connect should seek feedback from customers on their satisfaction with the way their feedback or complaint was handled and resolved.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed*

*TAMS and Canberra Connect will implement processes for customers to provide feedback on their satisfaction with the way their feedback or complaint was handled and resolved.*

*Timeline: 31 March 2011. Responsibility: Directors, Canberra Connect and Governance.*

**Recommendation 9 (Chapter 5)**

TAMS and Canberra Connect should review and evaluate its management of feedback and complaints against appropriate performance indicators.

**Response from TAMS:**

*Agreed*

*Performance indicators on customer satisfaction and timeliness will be established for TAMS and identified within the Monthly Stewardship Report.*

*Timeline: 31 March 2011. Responsibility: Directors, Canberra Connect and Governance.*

## 2. ENCOURAGING FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

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### INTRODUCTION

2.1 This chapter describes the activities of TAMS and Canberra Connect for promoting and encouraging feedback and complaints. It considers the visibility and accessibility of the feedback and complaints process and the information available to prospective providers of feedback and complaints.

### KEY FINDINGS

- TAMS and Canberra Connect offered a range of options for ACT residents to provide feedback or make a complaint.
- TAMS and Canberra Connect's public information material consistently referred to *feedback*, and it was not easy for the public to find specific guidance to make *complaints*. When searching for *complaints* on ACT Government web-sites ([www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au), [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au) and [www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au](http://www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au)), users were led to formal options such as those of the Human Right Commissioner, which may not be the appropriate avenue users were looking for.
- Canberra Connect research indicated that on-line mechanisms for providing feedback and complaints were significantly increasing in popularity, but there was a relatively low awareness of these options amongst ACT residents.
- TAMS and Canberra Connect provided minimal public information on the administrative processes associated with handling feedback and complaints. This may deter customers from providing complaints and feedback. Providing more information to the public will also increase transparency in the way the complaints are handled and assist TAMS and Canberra Connect in managing the expectations of customers on issues to be resolved.

### BACKGROUND

2.2 Encouraging customers to provide feedback and facilitating complaints are important mechanisms by which an organisation can improve its business practices and services. Customers should be encouraged to provide feedback and complaints through a process that is both accessible and visible.

2.3 The accessibility of the feedback and complaints process means that a range of feedback and complaints options should be offered to customers to minimise any difficulties they may have in providing feedback. It is a key means by which the agency can demonstrate its willingness to improve its administration and service delivery.

2.4 The visibility of the feedback or complaints process relates to promoting the feedback and complaints process and encouraging its use. Key details associated with the feedback and complaints process should be conveyed and customers

should be advised of how feedback and complaints can be submitted as well as how and when the agency will respond to the feedback or complaint.

### ACCESSIBILITY OF THE FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 2.5 A range of different options were available to ACT residents who wished to provide feedback or make a complaint about TAMS' services or administration. These options included:
- on-line – feedback and complaints options are accessible through a series of web-sites such as [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au), [www.canberraconnect.gov.au](http://www.canberraconnect.gov.au) and [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au);
  - telephone – a customer may call 13 22 81 and speak to an operator (this number is the general Canberra Connect number and the TAMS switchboard number);
  - post;
  - fax; and
  - Canberra Connect shopfronts – a person may complete a *Have Your Say* form or communicate with a customer service representative.
- 2.6 Initiatives such as the introduction of a new on-line feedback forum like *Fix My Street* and the Chief Minister's weekly radio talk-back further encourage feedback and public consultation.
- 2.7 Individual TAMS business units may also receive feedback and complaints directly, through the nature of their business activities and interactions with customers. ACT residents may also contact the Minister or other Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to make a complaint.
- 2.8 TAMS has also recognised that some customers who wish to provide feedback or make a complaint may have accessibility constraints on their ability to do so. TAMS has sought to overcome these constraints by providing information on the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) for clients from non-English speaking backgrounds as well as teletypewriter (TTY) service for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impediment.
- 2.9 Accessibility to TAMS and Canberra Connect feedback and complaints processes is appropriate.

### VISIBILITY OF THE FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 2.10 Although there is a range of options available to ACT residents to provide feedback or make a complaint, Audit considers that there is room for improvement in the way that TAMS promotes and encourages the on-line options.
- 2.11 From an examination of the ACT Government web-site ([www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au)), the Canberra Connect web-site ([www.canberraconnect.gov.au](http://www.canberraconnect.gov.au)), and the TAMS web-site ([www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)), Audit notes that there are no obvious buttons or links labelled 'complaints'.

- 2.12 Although a person accessing the various web-sites can navigate to the *ACT Government Feedback Site* (the on-line facility for recording comments) as well as *Fix My Street*, the navigation processes across the sites are inconsistent and not readily apparent.
- 2.13 The web-sites focussed on *feedback* and it is not readily apparent whether this also included *complaints*. It is possible that a person may be confused by these options and eventually discouraged from making a complaint.
- 2.14 A series of potentially inappropriate options were also provided to users of the search function on the web-sites. When searching for *complaints* on the Canberra Connect web-site, users were initially provided with a series of options for making formal complaints to the Human Rights Commissioner about disability or health services. These complaints avenues are appropriate for specific issues or grievances but not for general complaints about ACT Government service delivery. Furthermore, when searching the TAMS web-site for *complaints*, users were initially presented with options for making complaints in relation to taxis, bus accreditation and care hire. As before, these are very specific complaints and feedback categories.
- 2.15 Through its annual research survey, Canberra Connect has identified that customer satisfaction with its web-sites is low. Shortcomings associated with the general *ease of finding information*, the *usefulness of the information* and the *amount of information* on the Canberra Connect web-site have been highlighted as part of this research. A significant number of adverse comments have also been received in relation to the capability of the web-site search function.
- 2.16 Audit concludes that although the different web-sites provide options and facilities for making a complaint, they were not always readily apparent, and may have deterred customers who may have a genuine dissatisfaction with the organisation or its services from pursuing their complaints.

### Customer awareness and preferences for feedback and complaints

- 2.17 A key aspect of any organisation's feedback and complaints process is evaluating customer awareness and understanding of their options for providing feedback or making a complaint.
- 2.18 Customer preferences for lodging feedback and complaints were assessed through Canberra Connect's annual research survey. As part of this process, customers were asked: *If you wanted to provide feedback to ACT Government, would you prefer to provide it...(on-line, over the phone, in writing, in person, some other way)?* In 2010, a significant majority of respondents indicated a preference for on-line (50 percent) over alternative options (over the phone 23 percent, in writing 11 percent, in person 10 percent).
- 2.19 However, customer awareness of on-line feedback and complaints options remained low at 18 percent, although it was a slight improvement on the 2009 result of 16 percent.

- 2.20 There is an apparent mismatch between preference and actual use, whereby half of all respondents have a preference for on-line feedback, while only 18 percent of respondents were aware of this option being available. There is room for improvement in educating the public about on-line options for providing feedback and complaints.
- 2.21 Although it is apparent that an increasing number of ACT residents prefer on-line feedback, it is also important to recognise that half of respondents prefer alternative methods. The Canberra Connect research does not evaluate respondents' awareness of alternative feedback and complaints processes.

### Recommendation 1

TAMS should implement initiatives to improve the visibility of ACT Government feedback and complaints processes, especially utilising Canberra Connect infrastructure. This should include:

- a) clearly facilitating the provision of *complaints*, in addition to *feedback*, in public material and web-site information;
- b) making on-line feedback and complaints options more visible; and
- c) actively promoting on-line feedback and complaints options.

### INFORMATION ON THE FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 2.22 Providing information to the public on the feedback and complaints process will increase accountability and transparency of Department services, and provide a means to manage the expectations of providers of feedback and complaint.
- 2.23 Currently there is minimal information available to the providers of feedback and complaints on the administrative processes involved, as well as what to expect from TAMS and Canberra Connect throughout the process. There is an opportunity to provide this information up-front in publications such as brochures or fact sheets, as well as on-line and throughout the feedback and complaints process.
- 2.24 Through the various web-sites noted earlier, some information was provided to prospective feedback and complaints providers such as:
- the general purpose of the service;
  - options for the customer for registering to use the service (e.g. the option to remain anonymous); and
  - assurances with respect to privacy and use of the information.
- 2.25 Minimal information was given on what happens to any feedback or complaints provided and how they will be managed or responded to. No public information was provided with respect to:
- steps or activities involved in the feedback and complaints process;
  - expected timeliness standards for handling the feedback or complaint;

- any limitations on TAMS' and Canberra Connect's jurisdiction to handle certain feedback or complaints; and
  - options available to the person if they are dissatisfied with the process.
- 2.26 Providing this information is important to the customers, particularly with respect to feedback or complaints relating to complex issues. It would:
- provide the public with assurance as to TAMS' processes and capabilities; and
  - encourage the provision of more complaints and feedback.
- 2.27 This is also important for TAMS, if it wishes to be recognised as a service-oriented organisation that is open and receptive to feedback and complaints and committed to continuous improvement.
- 2.28 Additionally, providing this information to customers will assist TAMS to more effectively manage expectations of providers of feedback and complaints of its capacity to respond to and resolve their concerns. This is likely to reduce the administrative burden associated with receiving and responding to feedback and complaints that are not within TAMS or ACT Government's responsibility.
- 2.29 Audit notes that TAMS received feedback and complaints outside its responsibilities, such as those relating to:
- the National Capital Authority (NCA) (a Commonwealth agency), which has responsibility for some services relating to a significant amount of land around the Parliamentary triangle and Lake Burley Griffin;
  - services for private properties such as unit and townhouse developments; and
  - neighbourhood disputes – issues arising from neighbourhood disputes are often reported to TAMS by one of the parties as a means by which to escalate the dispute to 'a higher authority' for resolution.
- 2.30 Clarification of TAMS' role is likely to reduce inefficiencies generated by the time and effort required to recognise and respond to customers who raise issues outside the control of TAMS and other ACT Government agencies.

### Recommendation 2

TAMS should provide more public information on processes for handling feedback and complaints. This should include:

- a) information on the administrative steps involved;
- b) expected timeframes; and
- c) limitations on its jurisdiction and capacity to address and resolve certain issues.

### CONCLUSION

- 2.31 Encouraging customers to provide feedback and make complaints is an important mechanism by which an organisation can improve its business practices and services. Customers should be encouraged to provide feedback and complaints through a process that is both accessible and visible.
- 2.32 TAMS and Canberra Connect have a number of accessible feedback and complaints processes, but can improve on some aspects of the visibility of these processes. On ACT Government web-sites, TAMS should make explicit references to *complaints* in addition to general *feedback*.
- 2.33 TAMS and Canberra Connect should continue to increase the public awareness of on-line feedback and complaints options, which are increasingly popular preferences for its customers.
- 2.34 There is scope for improvement in the provision of more information to providers of feedback and complaints on the administrative processes involved, and keeping them informed of progress, especially when their cases take time to resolve. This will provide assurance to correspondents that their communication will be considered appropriately, and would increase transparency in TAMS' decision making process. This would also assist in managing expectations by customers of TAMS and Canberra Connect's capacity to resolve their issues.

## **3. RECEIVING FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

3.1 This chapter describes Canberra Connect's role in managing whole-of-government feedback and complaints, and assesses the use of the Integrated Customer Support system to manage feedback and complaints.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Canberra Connect managed a range of customer service initiatives and forums for receiving feedback and complaints from the public, including Canberra Connect Shopfronts, the Canberra Connect Contact Centre and various on-line initiatives.
- The Integrated Customer Support system (ICS) is a useful system for receiving feedback and complaints through the ACT Government on-line portals. However, the full ICS system was not widely used in Canberra Connect Shopfronts and the Canberra Connect Contact Centre.
- There was a lack of policy and procedural documents for the use and reference by Canberra Connect staff, which increases the risk that feedback and complaints communicated to Canberra Connect are not recognised and recorded, or directed to the right business units.
- The ICS has significant capacity to facilitate the effective management of feedback and complaints across the ACT Government, but its limited use and roll-out diminished this capacity. Currently the system is under-utilised, with 31 ACT Government users having access, compared to its capacity of up to 62 users on current licence arrangements.

### **BACKGROUND**

3.2 Canberra Connect has a unique role as a conduit between ACT residents and the ACT Government. Its stated mission is 'to deliver to the community high quality, integrated, information, payments and services on behalf of the ACT Government' and it aims to be 'the primary access point to the ACT Government for information, payments and services' by 2012.

3.3 Canberra Connect has four key functions:

- facilitating payments and transactions - Canberra Connect manages a range of primary and secondary payment channels to enable ACT residents and businesses to make payments to the ACT Government;
- providing information to the community - through various channels, Canberra Connect provides general information, advice and referral services on behalf of all ACT Government agencies;
- maintaining the Functions and Services Directory - Canberra Connect maintains an on-line contact list of officers in the ACT Government. This function directly supports Canberra Connect's whole-of-government role; and

## Receiving feedback and complaints

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- receiving information, feedback and complaints - Canberra Connect manages the whole-of-government customer feedback and service request capability, facilitated through the Integrated Customer Service system (ICS). ICS is the key information system in use by Canberra Connect for the receipt, recording and tracking of feedback and complaints information received.
- 3.4 Through its role, there is a unique opportunity for Canberra Connect to receive feedback and complaints on behalf of the ACT Government. Accordingly, it is important for Canberra Connect to have robust processes to recognise, record and disseminate feedback and complaints to relevant parts of TAMS and the broader ACT Government.
- 3.5 Canberra Connect interacts with ACT residents through three key mechanisms:
- Canberra Connect Shopfronts;
  - the telephone Contact Centre; and
  - on-line services and facilities, through [www.canberraconnect.gov.au](http://www.canberraconnect.gov.au).
- 3.6 Canberra Connect also manages the web infrastructure for [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au) and [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au) on behalf of TAMS and CMD respectively. The content on these sites is managed by officers responsible for the respective subject matter in each department.

### CANBERRA CONNECT SHOPFRONTS

- 3.7 ACT residents pay ACT Government bills and seek information at Canberra Connect Shopfronts, situated in four locations across Canberra. The Shopfronts provide information and advice, as well as a wide range of brochures on ACT Government services. Canberra Connect also operates the Civic Drivers Licence Service which offers services such as the issue and renewal of driver licences, proof of age cards and ACTION gold cards.
- 3.8 Shopfronts have a particular role with respect to processing transactions that may not be performed on-line or via the telephone such as licence renewal. Shopfronts represent an opportunity for the community to provide verbal feedback or complaints directly to Canberra Connect representatives.

### Recognising and recording customer feedback and complaints

- 3.9 If a customer wished to provide feedback or make a complaint at a Canberra Connect Shopfront, the customer was encouraged to complete the *Have Your Say* brochure, which was available at all Canberra Connect Shopfront locations. The customer then had the option of providing the completed brochure to Shopfront staff or separately mailing the document to the Canberra Connect mailing address. Alternatively, the customer had access to a telephone in the Shopfront, which allowed them to call the Contact Centre.
- 3.10 Shopfront staff and managers were expected to meet general customer service principles when interacting with customers. However, there was no specific policy or procedural documentation available for the use and reference of

Canberra Connect Shopfront staff on receiving feedback and complaints provided by Shopfront customers.

- 3.11 Canberra Connect Shopfront staff did not receive and record feedback or complaints that were provided verbally. Audit considers that the practice of not receiving and recording feedback and complaints made verbally by customers is not ideal from a customer service perspective as this may deter feedback and complaints from some customers. Nevertheless, Audit accepts that alternative options are available for customers.

### CANBERRA CONNECT CONTACT CENTRE

- 3.12 The Canberra Connect Contact Centre handles a wide range of payment transactions, enquiries, referrals to, and information about all areas of the ACT Government.

- 3.13 Most communication to the Contact Centre is received through the general 13 22 81 telephone number. The following table provides an overview of the 13 22 81 number, its hours of operation and additional accessibility services.

**Table 3.1: Canberra Connect Contact Centre – Hours of operation**

Contact number	Hours of operation / accessibility
13 22 81 (AUS)	7am to 8pm Monday to Friday; 8am to 5pm Saturday; and 9am to 5pm Sunday. (02) 6207 0494 (TTY) service or use the National Relay Service. 13 14 50 (TIS) for the Translating and Interpreter Service.
After hours service	A reduced service is delivered by Telstra when the Contact Centre is not operating.

Source: Canberra Connect

- 3.14 Audit notes that the seven-day operation of the Contact Centre, as well as the after-hours service provided through Telstra facilitated the accessibility of feedback and complaints services to ACT residents.

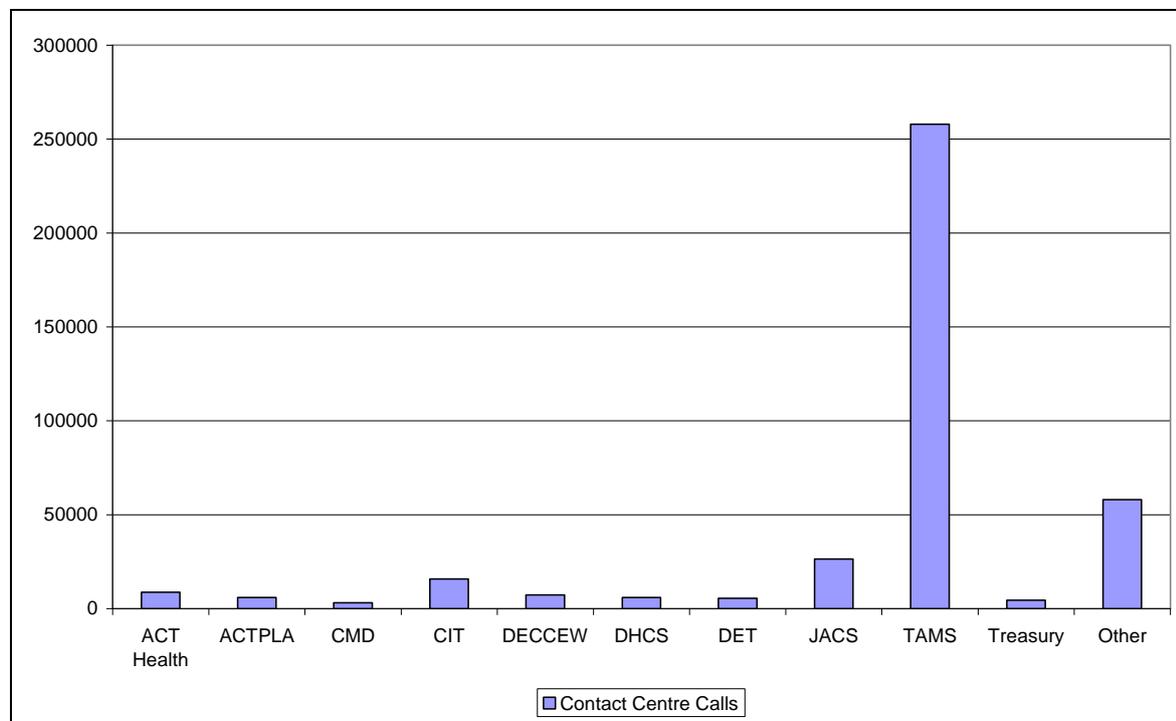
- 3.15 Although most telephone calls are received through the general 13 22 81 telephone number, calls received from the public from a range of other ACT Government telephone numbers are also channelled to Canberra Connect. Some examples of these are:

- ACTION bus hotline – 13 17 10;
- Domestic Animal Services – 6207 2424;
- Department of Housing and Community Service public housing hotline – 13 34 27; and
- Faulty Parking Meters – 1800 047 222.

## Receiving feedback and complaints

3.16 Canberra Connect maintains data on the *telephone calls* received in the Contact Centre and the services and agencies to which they relate. This data is expressed in the Figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1: Calls taken through 13 22 81 on behalf of other agencies in 2009-10**



Source: Canberra Connect

3.17 The graph demonstrates that the significant majority of telephone calls received by Canberra Connect from the public related to TAMS and its services. It should also be noted that a significant proportion of these calls related to ACTION and its activities.

## Recognising and recording customer feedback and complaints

3.18 Audit notes that telephone calls relating to feedback and complaints may be actioned in a number of different ways, including:

- transferring the caller to an identified subject matter expert within TAMS or another ACT Government agency;
- recording the details of the feedback or complaint in an on-line *SmartForm*, which is sent to an identified team for actioning; or
- recording details directly into additional TAMS management information systems, e.g. Integrated Asset Management System (IAMS) and ACT Roads and Asset Management System (ACTRAMS). This option is only available to key staff within the Contact Centre.

3.19 The different processes for actioning feedback and complaints may also mean that the nature of the communication may not be recognised. For example, a communication that represents a strong expression of dissatisfaction with TAMS

service delivery may be recognised and actioned as a ‘request for service’ without appropriate recognition of the customer’s dissatisfaction.

- 3.20 Contact Centre managers have full access to the ICS. However, most staff within the Contact Centre do not have full ICS access, including key Contact Centre staff members with responsibility for receiving feedback and complaints relating to municipal services provided by TAMS, which represents the bulk of non-ACTION feedback and complaints received. Contact Centre staff have limited access to the system, which could be used to record details of feedback or a complaint, but once submitted this information could only be accessed by staff with full system access.
- 3.21 When interacting with customers on the telephone, Contact Centre staff referred to on-line scripts and prompts, which were made available through computer screens. The scripts and prompts vary according to the nature of the telephone call and subject matter. However, there was no consistent procedural or administrative guidance for staff for the *recording* of feedback and complaints.
- 3.22 Consequently, there was no systematic process by which feedback and complaints were consistently recorded within the Contact Centre. This reflects:
- the multiplicity of systems in use within the Contact Centre, as well as the differing levels of access and use;
  - the lack of ICS access for key staff within the Contact Centre; and
  - the lack of consistent, clearly articulated policy and procedural guidance for the recording of feedback and complaints by Contact Centre staff.
- 3.23 The case studies in Chapter 4 highlight the risks associated with these shortcomings, in particular the dissatisfaction of customers and lack of opportunity to resolve issues and improve services.

### **Recommendation 3**

Canberra Connect should develop consistent administrative procedures for recording all feedback and complaints received by telephone through the Canberra Connect Contact Centre.

### **CANBERRA CONNECT ON-LINE FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS**

- 3.24 Canberra Connect maintained a number of publicly available ACT Government web-sites for the provision and receipt of information to and from customers. The following table lists the range of web-sites through which information may be received by Canberra Connect and channelled to relevant parts of the ACT Government.

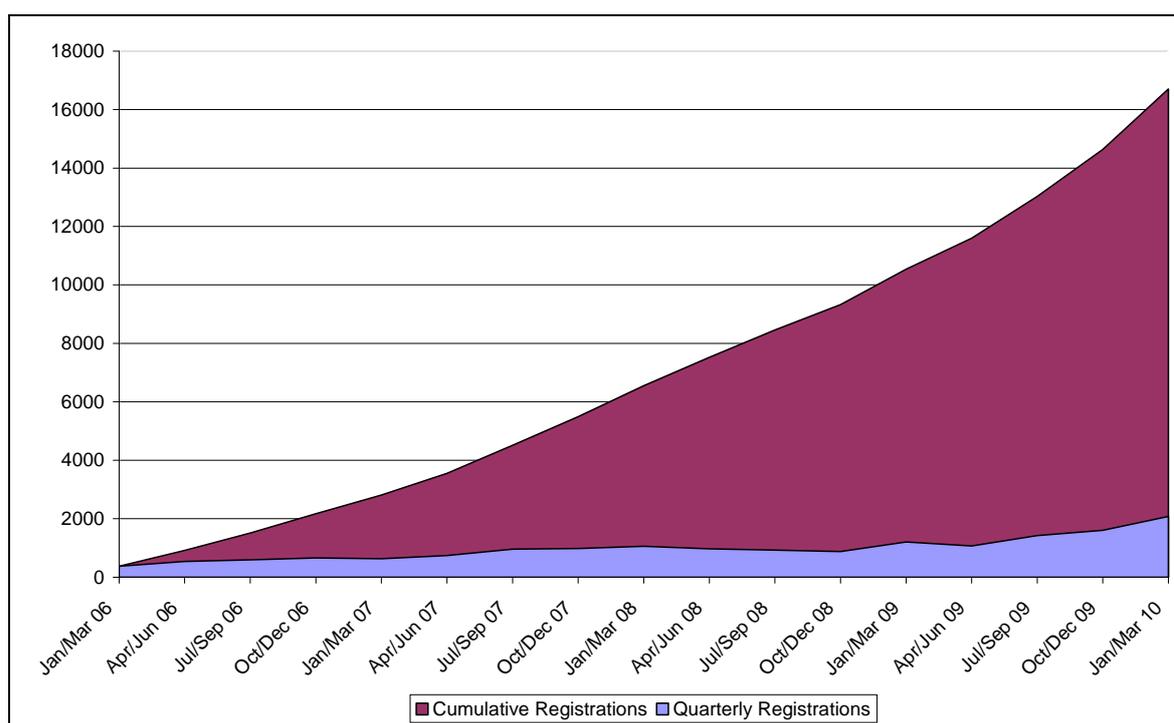
**Table 3.2: ACT Government web-sites linked to Canberra Connect**

Web-site	Description
ACT Government Portal <i>http://www.act.gov.au</i>	ACT Government Information and links
Canberra Connect Services Portal <i>http://www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au</i>	ACT Government service details/descriptions
ACT Government Directory <i>http://www.directory.act.gov.au</i>	ACT Government contact list
On-line Change of Address <i>http://www.emove.com.au</i>	Electronic change of address notifications
Self service system <i>http://www.contact.act.gov.au</i>	FAQ's, feedback, service requests
ACT Government bookings system <i>http://www.bookings.act.gov.au</i>	On-line booking systems
TAMS web-site <i>http://www.tams.act.gov.au</i>	TAMS Departmental web-site

Source: Canberra Connect

### Recognising and recording customer feedback and complaints

- 3.25 Of the web-sites identified above, the two key on-line portals through which ACT residents can provide feedback or complaints on ACT Government services are the *ACT Government Feedback Site* and the *Fix My Street* initiative.
- 3.26 Both of these services represent portals to the ICS and information received through these services, including feedback and complaints, is recorded directly in the ICS.
- 3.27 Figure 3.2 (on the following page) demonstrates the growth in the number of users of on-line feedback and complaints mechanisms since January 2006.
- 3.28 The figure indicates that more than 16,000 people have registered to provide on-line feedback to date. Registration involves accessing the system and creating a user account, which enables a person to provide feedback or make a complaint through the system. These registrations were initially through the *ACT Government Feedback Site*, although since June 2010 they are also made through the *Fix My Street* initiative.

**Figure 3.2: ICS registered users**


Source: Canberra Connect

3.29 The following table shows the volume and nature of on-line feedback received via Canberra Connect in 2008-09.

**Table 3.3: On-line feedback and complaints received 2008-09**

Agency	Complaints	Compliment	Notification	Request for Information	Request for Service	Suggestion	Total Feedback
TAMS	2 513	201	592	1 442	1 058	429	6 236
JACS	52	5	22	79	272	22	452
Chief Minister's Department	24	4	6	53	7	43	137
ACTPLA	26	2	3	89	7	8	135
Treasury	8	2	10	37	6	7	70
ActewAGL	3	0	15	36	11	4	69
DHCS	18	5	2	19	2	6	52
ACT Health	4	2	3	22	4	4	39
DET	2	1	1	23	0	3	30
ACT Legislative Assembly	11	1	2	5	1	3	23
Rhodium	2	0	0	2	0	0	4
Auditor-General's Office	0	1	0	1	0	1	3

## Receiving feedback and complaints

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Agency	Complaints	Compliment	Notification	Request for Information	Request for Service	Suggestion	Total Feedback
CIT	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Family Court (Non ACT Govt)	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Unidentified Feedback	130	22	7	17	3	7	186
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 793</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>1 829</b>	<b>1 371</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>7 440</b>

Source: Canberra Connect

### *Directing feedback and complaints through on-line portals*

- 3.30 Once feedback was recorded within the ICS, there were predetermined system business rules for channelling feedback and complaints to appropriate ACT Government agencies or TAMS business units. These business rules primarily depend on 'drop-down' categories selected by on-line users when entering their feedback and complaints.
- 3.31 For example, if a user identified that his or her issue related to graffiti, this feedback or complaint was automatically directed to an identified e-mail inbox within TAMS. Alternatively, feedback or complaints relating to a range of health-related issues were sent to identified e-mail inboxes within the control of ACT Health.
- 3.32 Audit tested the 56 e-mail addresses associated with the business rules and found that communications sent to eleven (19.6 percent) of the e-mail addresses were not received. In six instances the e-mail address did not exist and in five instances the e-mail inbox was full. All of these e-mail addresses were for agencies and functions external to TAMS.
- 3.33 This indicates that there are shortcomings in the automatic allocation of on-line feedback and complaints. Audit recognises that Canberra Connect would notice that these e-mails would not be received, and would endeavour to identify an appropriate recipient for the e-mail communication. However, this would require additional time and effort, and is an inefficient process.

### *Accuracy and currency of ACT Government agency information*

- 3.34 Canberra Connect relies on information provided by other ACT Government agencies and TAMS business units, to establish the business rules for redirecting feedback and complaints. It was an on-going issue for TAMS to maintain the accuracy and currency of this information, but clearly the effectiveness of the system is highly dependent on this process.
- 3.35 In recognition of this problem, between September and December 2009, Canberra Connect conducted a series of verification audits on the accuracy of information maintained within the Functions and Services Directory. The Functions and Services Directory is accessible to Contact Centre staff and callers may be transferred to ACT Government representatives identified in the Directory.

Canberra Connect identified that between 12 percent and 15 percent of entries in the Directory were inaccurate. Some agencies' entries were consistently inaccurate, by as much as 38 percent.

- 3.36 The inaccuracy of this information increases the risk that callers will not be directed to appropriate ACT Government representatives and that their feedback or complaints may not be recognised and recorded.

#### **Recommendation 4**

TAMS should develop a strategy for maintaining the accuracy and currency of information within its management information systems, including Canberra Connect's Integrated Customer Support system. This should involve continuously verifying the accuracy and currency of agency contact details to ensure issues are directed to the right areas and staff.

#### **INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SUPPORT SYSTEM (ICS)**

- 3.37 The ICS Project was initiated by the then Department of Urban Services (DUS) in 2003. At the time of the project's inception, DUS recognised a need to improve customer service delivery and ensure that services were provided to customers in a timely and efficient manner, which met customer expectations.

- 3.38 Key outputs of the project were identified in the ICS Functional System Specifications. This is included in detail in Appendix B. In summary, key outputs for the ICS were to:

- manage a service repository of relevant service information and links to other information items, including service descriptions, frequently asked questions, and other reference material (i.e. definitions and information items) that is used to correctly diagnose or fulfil a service need;
- manage the lifecycle of a Customer Service Request from diagnosing the customer's needs to closing the Service Request on completion and any follow up actions and progress actions; and
- track and manage day-to-day performance on Service Requests.

- 3.39 The system has the capacity:

- to directly receive information communicated through on-line feedback and complaints portals;
- for users to record information against entries, including details of communication with feedback and complaint providers; and
- for users to view and generate a range of administrative detail and records associated with the feedback or complaint.

#### ***Limited use and roll-out of the ICS***

- 3.40 Although the ICS has considerable capacity, its limited use and roll-out across the ACT Government and the lack of endorsement and mandate for its use was a key

## Receiving feedback and complaints

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constraint on its ability to manage feedback and complaint lifecycles and monitor actions taken to address feedback and complaints.

- 3.41 Under current contractual arrangements, up to 62 users may be granted access to the ICS. At present, 31 ACT Government users have been granted access, meaning there is considerable unused capacity within the system.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.42 With respect to direct front-line services, two users from ACTION as well as three Canberra Connect Shopfront users in TAMS' head office (but not the Shopfronts) had access to the system to access and review feedback and complaints. The balance of users were primarily Canberra Connect administrative staff or InTACT Shared Services staff.<sup>2</sup> Three *Live in Canberra* campaign staff members also had access in order to review and action communication received through on-line portals relating to this campaign.
- 3.43 User access was not allocated to any other service delivery business units within TAMS or any other ACT Government agencies that may be receiving feedback or complaints. A range of other ACT Government agencies, including JACS and ACTPLA, received a substantial number of feedback and complaints through Canberra Connect.
- 3.44 Accordingly, there was no capacity for staff from these government agencies and many business units in TAMS to directly view ICS information or, more importantly, input information into the ICS on action taken in response to the feedback or complaint. Similarly, any feedback and complaints received directly by these business units could not be input into the ICS due to this lack of direct access.
- 3.45 Canberra Connect staff, who track correspondence between members of the public, internal directives to the relevant business unit and documents relating to resolution of an issue, do not have full access to the ICS. Although the ICS is ideal for tracking multiple correspondences to multiple locations, its capacity was under-utilised.

### *Record-keeping and documentation*

- 3.46 There was poor documentation and record-keeping associated with the management of feedback and complaints within TAMS. During audit fieldwork, it was difficult and time-consuming to identify what actions had been taken, if any, in response to feedback or complaints received through the ICS.
- 3.47 Documentation associated with the management of the feedback and complaints was maintained across a range of different sources including the ICS, individual officers' e-mail accounts and business unit-specific information systems such as spreadsheets or other documents across TAMS.

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<sup>1</sup> An additional two users from the software vendor have been granted access.

<sup>2</sup> ICS supports communication received by InTACT Shared Services, which supplies human resource and information technology services across the ACT Government. Six licences are currently allocated to Shared Services administrators.

- 3.48 The lack of a single, widely-accessible information system for the management of feedback and complaints was a key constraint on TAMS' ability to:
- accurately identify how it responded to and managed feedback and complaints; and
  - monitor and report on feedback and complaints across the department.

### Costs of an enhanced ICS

- 3.49 Except for the currently unallocated licences, a more extensive roll-out of the ICS across the ACT Government may involve additional cost. This cost needs to be assessed against the potential benefits of the system in addressing the following risks and problems:
- inconsistencies in record-keeping for feedback and complaints received;
  - inability to efficiently track and monitor departmental progress in managing and resolving feedback and complaints;
  - inability to efficiently monitor and report on feedback and complaints received across the department; and
  - the administrative inefficiencies in the current manual, double-handling of information relating to feedback and complaints.
- 3.50 Audit also notes that there may be alternative management information systems that have similar capability to the ICS.

### Recommendation 5

TAMS should:

- a) in the short term, endorse the Integrated Customer Support system (ICS) as the management information system for recording and managing feedback and complaints across TAMS;
- b) ensure key staff members with responsibility for managing feedback and complaints across TAMS have appropriate access to the ICS; and
- c) in the long term, identify and implement an appropriate management information system for recording and managing feedback and complaints.

### CONCLUSION

- 3.51 Through its role as a conduit between ACT residents and the ACT Government and its administration of the ICS, Canberra Connect is in a unique position to receive feedback and complaints on behalf of the ACT Government.
- 3.52 There was a lack of policies and procedures and a lack of use by relevant areas of the current management information system. This could lead to the risk of feedback and complaints provided to Canberra Connect Shopfronts and the

Canberra Connect Contact Centre not being appropriately recorded for management and reporting purposes.

3.53 Once a complaint or feedback is received, there were processes for the allocation of feedback and complaints to appropriate business units within TAMS and Canberra Connect for action. However, it was an ongoing challenge for Canberra Connect to ensure the currency and accuracy of its information on where to allocate feedback and complaints.

3.54 Current limitations in ICS' roll-out and implementation across TAMS and the ACT Government has resulted in shortcomings in TAMS' capacity to efficiently and effectively manage feedback and complaints. Record-keeping and documentation of feedback and complaints management was generally poor. More effective allocation of current user access to the ICS should be undertaken, or alternatively, TAMS and Canberra Connect may wish to examine the feasibility of an alternative management information system that has a similar capability.

## 4. MANAGING FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

### INTRODUCTION

4.1 This chapter describes processes in TAMS for managing feedback and complaints. It considers business processes to recognise and respond to the feedback or complaint, address the issue raised, and communicate results to the providers of feedback or complaints.

### KEY FINDINGS

- TAMS received a wide range of feedback and complaints, which reflected the diversity of its operations and responsibilities.
- TAMS and its relevant business areas recognised and actioned the significant majority of feedback and complaints received.
- A lack of policy and procedural guidance for the management of feedback and complaints led to inconsistency across the organisation in the way that feedback and complaints are managed as well as differing levels of customer service.
- TAMS gave priority to addressing complaints and feedback provided to Ministers. The relative importance or otherwise of the issues raised through the ministerial process was not always considered against issues raised from other processes. This increases the risks that the priority and resources allocated to have an issue addressed depends on the method of feedback and complaint used, rather than the substance and the importance of the issues.
- Ongoing communication with correspondents was generally poor, with a lack of information communicated to keep them ‘in the loop’ on progress and actions taken in response to their concerns. This has led to frustration on the part of ACT residents, and potential administrative inefficiencies in TAMS as in some cases, ACT residents escalated their issues and concerns to Ministers and other Members of the Legislative Assembly.
- There was limited monitoring of feedback and complaints received across TAMS. This has impaired TAMS’ ability to analyse and identify emerging patterns or trends.

### BACKGROUND

4.2 TAMS receives a significant range of different feedback and complaints. This is due to a range of factors, including:

- differences in sources of feedback and complaints. Feedback and complaints may be received through Canberra Connect processes, including telephone calls and on-line portals, through to direct feedback and complaints to business units and Ministerial correspondence;
- differences in the detail and expressions of feedback and complaints. Audit identified feedback and complaints ranging from short and instinctive reactions to particular service experiences, through to feedback and

complaints about complex and inter-related issues involving a range of different TAMS services and activities; and

- differences in customer expectations. Some customers have strong expectations for ongoing communication and negotiation with TAMS in the resolution of the issue, while other customers simply wish to notify TAMS of their experience, with minimal expectations for ongoing involvement.

4.3 TAMS business units used this feedback in different ways. For example:

- traffic light engineers relied on the public to notify them of any problems relating to traffic lights; and
- tree managers used information from the public to recognise potentially dangerous situations following storms.

4.4 Audit notes that there are two key processes involved in managing feedback and complaints:

- taking action to resolve the issue(s) raised; and
- liaising with providers of the feedback and complaint to inform them of actions taken.

4.5 However, the diversity of feedback and complaints received and the differences in customer expectations means that a ‘one size fits all’ approach to feedback and complaints management is not possible or desirable for TAMS. Each feedback or complaint should be recognised and actioned accordingly and appropriately.

4.6 A single process could over-complicate simple feedback and complaints, which may not need significant investments of time and effort in their resolution, and a single process may not be sufficient for significant and complex issues. TAMS feedback and complaints procedures should have the capacity to be scaled up or down, as appropriate.

4.7 For the purposes of this audit, Audit sought to identify that there was:

- a recognition of the feedback or complaint;
- action in response to the issue(s) raised (Audit recognises that no action can be a valid response, if it is supported by appropriate consideration); and
- appropriate communication with the feedback or complaint provider.

## **ACTION AND RESPONSE TO THE FEEDBACK OR COMPLAINT**

### **Ministerial correspondence**

4.8 Representations made by TAMS customers to the Ministers or to other members of the ACT Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are one means by which TAMS may receive feedback or complaints from ACT residents.

4.9 TAMS had a robust and well-established system in place for managing feedback and complaints received through the Ministers and other MLAs. The management of Ministerial correspondence is supported by the Parliamentary

Document Management System (PDMS). This approach ensured a timely response to feedback and complaints received through these processes.

- 4.10 Guidance on Ministerial correspondence requires a complete response to all issues raised and a short timeframe (14 days) in which they are to be addressed. Discussions with TAMS' staff indicated there was an expectation that requested work from the ministerial process should be completed as soon as possible. Under current practices, Ministerial correspondence through which feedback and complaints were received often dictated the priority of action taken by business areas within TAMS, rather than action being based on established criteria such as public safety issues, costs and efficiency.
- 4.11 Within limited resources, and given the large number of complaints and feedback received by TAMS, it would be more efficient to prioritise workloads based on appropriate criteria, including safety issues and efficient work practices.
- 4.12 Audit was informed that TAMS, in compliance with the requirements for dealing with ministerial correspondence, could take actions to address issues raised with Ministers by providing services outside TAMS' scheduled programs, such as lawn mowing in a particular location or footpath maintenance. In the absence of other justifications, this approach could be inefficient and could lead to inequity and additional costs.
- 4.13 To ensure consistency and equity in its approach to addressing complaints and issues raised, it is desirable that TAMS has a sound overarching system to assess and prioritise complaint issues where action needs to be taken, based on the relative merit of the issues rather than on the mechanism through which the issues are raised. In addition, an analysis of the impact and costs of giving high priorities to meeting work requests made through Ministerial correspondence would inform TAMS' advice to the ACT Government on the efficiency or otherwise of current practices.

### Action on other feedback and complaints

- 4.14 Audit made a selection of 32 feedback and complaints received by TAMS for further examination on how TAMS' policies and processes were applied and impacted on real cases. The selection covered feedback and complaints received through a variety of processes and was made on the basis that the feedback or complaint:
- represented an issue of potential public safety or concern; or
  - represented an expression of dissatisfaction with service delivery.
- 4.15 The selection of feedback and complaints related to the following business units, which represent the majority of feedback and complaints received through the ICS system:
- Roads ACT;
  - Transport Regulation; and
  - Parks and Conservation.

- 4.16 Feedback or complaints often related to problems or issues associated with TAMS' assets such as roads, footpaths, streetlights and parks. TAMS' current approach to feedback and complaints is to focus on addressing the underlying issue.
- 4.17 Audit found that business units' investigation and action were generally prioritised based on risk levels identified and articulated in business unit practices. Public safety issues were a high priority when prioritising any action requested.
- 4.18 Following the actioning of high priority issues, other issues would be considered and addressed. Timeframes for actioning and resolving these issues could be anywhere between 24 hours for some services or up to two years for other complex services, reflecting the diversity of TAMS activities and services. Contractual arrangements, specifications, seasons and resources could also affect timeframes for specific services.
- 4.19 In most instances examined by Audit, there was evidence that TAMS business units had recognised the underlying issue raised by the feedback or complaint and had taken some action to address it.
- 4.20 However, TAMS did not always communicate with the provider of feedback and complaint about action taken. The lack of communication was often perceived by the complaint provider to be no action taken.
- 4.21 The following case studies demonstrated general processes for managing feedback and complaints within TAMS.

### **Case Study – Illegal traffic on a median strip**

On 6 January 2010, an on-line complaint was received from a member of the public regarding vehicles illegally using and traversing a median strip to gain access to a building site. The person noted that the illegal use of the median strip was dangerous to traffic, as well as damaging to the median strip. An automatic acknowledgement was sent to the person on the receipt of the e-mail, followed shortly after by an e-mail advising that a work order had been raised. The person was advised that a representative from the business unit would contact them within 10 business days to discuss his concerns.

A notation in ACTRAMS indicated that the person was contacted by telephone on 19 January 2010. However, the details of the telephone call made to the person on 19 January 2010, and the information conveyed, were not recorded in ICS or ACTRAMS.

A new works order was initiated on 19 January 2010 to erect traffic barriers to prevent drivers illegally traversing the median strip. The expenditure for the works was approved on 30 March 2010 with a target date for completion of 15 May 2010, in accordance with identified business unit practices. The works were completed on 1 May 2010.

The initial information and responses to the person were recorded in ICS, although information relating to the work order and the details of completion were recorded in different systems used by the business unit.

Audit considers that this is an example of a complaint that was handled in accordance with identified business practices, and appropriate action was taken to address the issue raised. There was also evidence of communication with the complainant.

### Case Study – Tree obstructing drivers’ vision

On 26 November 2008, on-line feedback was provided through the *ACT Government Feedback Site* advising of what the correspondent thought was a dangerous situation regarding a tree that was obstructing drivers’ vision. The person provided a detailed description of the situation and reasons for why he thought the tree was dangerous.

An automatic acknowledgement was sent to the person on the receipt of his e-mail. Two days later, on 28 November 2008, an e-mail was sent to the person advising that a work order had been initiated to have the tree ‘trimmed or removed’. A target date of 9 January 2009 was assigned to the task, in accordance with identified business unit practices. The tree was pruned on 4 January 2009.

The initial information and responses to the person were recorded in ICS, although information relating to the work order and the details of completion were recorded in IAMS. No communication was provided to the person to advise of expected timeframes for completion or when the job was completed. However, the nature of the person’s initial communication suggested that there was minimal expectation on TAMS to do so.

Audit considers that this is an example of a comparatively straightforward communication from the public, which was handled appropriately, and an appropriate outcome achieved. There was also evidence of communication with the complainant.

### COMMUNICATION WITH THE CORRESPONDENT

4.22 There were shortcomings with respect to ongoing communication with providers of feedback and complaint.

4.23 Following initial confirmation that the feedback or complaint would be addressed, there was generally poor ongoing communication with providers of feedback and complaints to ‘keep them in the loop’ on progress to address their issue. This was a key issue that emerged through the examination of the selection of feedback and complaints, and reflected the lack of guidelines to staff on this particular aspect of communication.

4.24 Audit conducted its own survey of ACT residents who had provided feedback or made a complaint. Thirteen responses were provided to Audit and the lack of ongoing and meaningful communication was consistently raised as an issue of concern. One survey respondent commented:

*I have no feedback other than the original e-mail from Canberra Connect that a work order had been raised...some feedback from the next step in the chain would be appropriate.*

4.25 Another survey respondent commented:

*When I made my complaint, it was received with a degree of competence that made me believe it would be taken seriously. After I received no further feedback whatsoever on the matter, I soon realised nothing was going to happen.*

- 4.26 The following comment is representative of a number of stakeholders and highlights the risks of not communicating effectively with people providing feedback or making a complaint:

*Regardless of the complaint, a client has the right to further feedback whether it is possible and achievable or not. As stated, my initial phone call with a staff member after submitting the complaint on-line was handled in a professional manner and gave me the impression the issue would be looked into and that I would be followed up with feedback. Unfortunately, that was the end of my experience as no further progress was brought to my attention. This of course has led me to believe that the system you have for submitting complaints is a total waste of time. I believe proper follow up would help in your management of customer satisfaction.*

### **Lack of information on TAMS business unit processes**

- 4.27 Following the receipt of feedback or a complaint, there was generally a timely communication to confirm that the communication was received and that a work order had been initiated to investigate the issue.
- 4.28 Following this communication, different processes in different business units would typically influence response times and standards. The actual investigation of the issue may not take place for some time, while the actual ‘fixing’ of the issue may not take place until a further work order or contract is initiated following the initial investigation.
- 4.29 Ongoing communication of these processes and timeframes was generally poor. This led to inefficiency in the management of feedback and complaints. Audit identified a number of instances where a lack of communication:
- caused the feedback and complaint providers to re-contact Canberra Connect or TAMS to enquire about progress in addressing their issue; and
  - prompted the feedback and complaint providers to complain to the Minister or their local MLA.
- 4.30 Once a feedback or complaint provider had re-contacted Canberra Connect to question progress, some time and effort was expended to identify what progress had been undertaken in relation to the person’s feedback or complaint. The lack of a widely-used management information system and consistent record-keeping and documentation caused further inefficiencies when trying to identify what action had occurred.
- 4.31 Audit considers that it is important to communicate more effectively with feedback and complaint providers in the interests of better customer service and as a means by which to manage customer expectations of service delivery.

## POLICY AND PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

- 4.32 There was no TAMS-wide policy or procedural guidance on the management of feedback or complaints. There is, however, policy and procedural guidance for recognising and managing Ministerial correspondence.
- 4.33 Inadequate policy and procedural guidance, including minimum standards for actioning and response, have led to:
- shortcomings in TAMS management of feedback and complaints identified throughout this chapter, including the poor communication and feedback on progress; and
  - inconsistency across business units in the way feedback and complaints have been recognised and managed.
- 4.34 This has also resulted in staff not fully implementing customer service principles for the recognition and management of feedback and complaints. More effective articulation of customer service principles, including principles for timeliness of service, and ongoing communication with the providers of feedback and complaints, would facilitate more effective customer service in the management of feedback and complaints.

### Recommendation 6

TAMS should develop policy and procedural guidance for the management of feedback and complaints for its staff, which includes minimum standards of service and customer service principles and ongoing communication, when appropriate, with the provider of the feedback or complaint.

- 4.35 The following case studies identified shortcomings that have been identified in this report which can lead to poor customer service outcomes.

### Case Study – Streetlights

On 15 March 2010, a Canberra resident used the *ACT Government Feedback Site* to report that approximately 20 street lights in two suburban streets were not working. In his on-line communication, the resident said he had rung Canberra Connect for six consecutive nights to advise of the outage before using the on-line feedback facility on the seventh day. The resident stated: *I have rung the Canberra Connect number to complain about this on six consecutive nights and nothing has been rectified...I ring Canberra Connect and nothing happens except a different person takes my details!*

Audit investigated the situation further and noted that other communication had also been received in relation to the streetlights. A work order was issued within the Integrated Asset Management System (IAMS) (the ACT Government's information system for managing infrastructure and assets, including street lights) for the contractor to investigate the issue on 17 March 2010. The nature of the problem was complex and the streetlights were fixed approximately six weeks after these on-line communications (potentially seven weeks after the problem was first reported to Canberra Connect).

On 19 March 2010 an e-mail was sent to the resident, advising that the work order had been issued. The e-mail said: *Thank you for using Canberra Connect's on-line customer feedback system. I*

*have raised a job request...to have the streetlights in your area examined and repaired. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please refer to the job number provided.* A typographical error in the e-mail address resulted in the e-mail not being received by the resident.

Following the 19 March 2010 e-mail, there was no effort made to further inform the resident as to the likely timeframes for the resolution of the issue, including that it was a complex issue and was going to take up to six weeks to fix.

On 24 March 2010, the resident telephoned Canberra Connect to complain about progress in addressing the issue. There were no records of this telephone call in ICS or other systems within Canberra Connect, although there was a record of this telephone call in IAMS as a 'request for service'. However, as a work order had already been issued (17 March 2010) this telephone call was recognised as a 'duplicate' and no further action was taken or communication made with the resident.

The resident responded to Audit's survey and advised that he never received any information or communication from TAMS or Canberra Connect in relation to his complaint. In his survey response, the resident stated: *I was not satisfied as to how TAMS handled this matter....On this experience it would appear that complaints are just ignored.*

The resident subsequently complained about the handling of his complaint to his local MLA, and Audit notes that this added to the administrative time and effort associated with this issue as an investigation and response was prepared for the resident.

Audit observed that there are a number of shortcomings associated with this issue, as well as lessons to be learnt. These have been highlighted in the report and include:

- inadequate recording of feedback and complaints communicated by telephone to Canberra Connect;
- the use of multiple systems within Canberra Connect and TAMS for managing and responding to feedback and complaints; and
- lack of identified policies and procedures for providing ongoing feedback and communication to the correspondents.

An additional issue for consideration is the failure to recognise that the resident's on-line communication on 16 March 2010 and telephone call on 24 March 2010 represented *complaints* and not only *requests for service*. (It is also likely that some of the other telephone calls also represented complaints). There was no recognition of the customer's dissatisfaction with the service that he had received and no attempt to investigate the issue further to identify ways to improve the handling of similar cases in the future.

### **Case Study – Missing drain cover**

On 3 July 2008, a complaint was received through the *ACT Government Feedback Site* about what was regarded as a dangerous pedestrian hazard on a city footpath. The complainant noted that the issue had been raised previously. An automatic acknowledgement was sent to the person on the receipt of the e-mail. The person's communication was directed to an internal TAMS e-mail address.

Audit sought to identify what action had been taken in response to the complaint. However, there was no further information, documentation or records associated with this complaint. There was no

information within ICS or other TAMS systems (e.g. IAMS or ACTRAMS). Within the business unit, departmental officers could not substantiate that they had received the referral or if a reply had been sent to the person.

Audit notes that this is an example of a complaint received from the public where there is no evidence of any action taken to address. This demonstrates shortcomings that have been highlighted in the report, including:

- inadequate policies and procedures associated with the management of feedback and complaints, including accountability for receiving and addressing information received from the public; and
- shortcomings in not having a widely-used management information system for the management of feedback and complaints across TAMS.

### MONITORING OF FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

4.36 Regular analysis and reporting of feedback and complaints are important for management and accountability purposes. As an organisation, TAMS should be able to understand the number and nature of feedback and complaints received, as well as progress in addressing or resolving the issues raised.

4.37 Regular monitoring also provides business managers and TAMS' Executive with an opportunity to:

- understand potential service delivery issues or problems, or new and emerging issues of concern or relevance to the community; and
- manage or re-allocate resources to address apparent service delivery failures on a timely basis.

4.38 In turn, this provides a more rigorous basis by which to hold business managers accountable for service delivery issues or problems and monitor actions to address these service delivery problems or issues over time.

#### Monitoring by Canberra Connect

4.39 Canberra Connect prepared fortnightly and quarterly reports on its business activities.

4.40 Business intelligence reports are produced fortnightly, and contain a range of information that may be of interest to the Minister, TAMS' Executive and other ACT Government stakeholders. The reports included:

- quantitative information on customers' access to the Contact Centre and the ACT Government web-site and the top issues of interest for these customers; and
- qualitative analysis of other key issues that may have emerged, such as an increase in customer enquiries relating to a particular issue.

4.41 The reports were sent to TAMS' Executive, the Chief Minister's Office, Chief Minister's Department and relevant executive officers in other ACT Government agencies.

- 4.42 Quarterly reports were primarily quantitative in nature and provided an indication of the volume of activities and transactions undertaken by Canberra Connect.
- 4.43 The reports included the following items and issues:
- transactions facilitated, including by volume and revenue value;
  - call volumes into the Contact Centre, as well as associated performance by the Contact Centre in answering and resolving the calls;
  - usage of the Canberra Connect web-site and access to key Frequently Asked Questions; and
  - volume of feedback and complaints, including by agency.
- 4.44 There was no qualitative analysis on the nature of feedback and complaints received in the quarterly reports.
- 4.45 The quarterly reports served a useful purpose and offered some value through a quantitative indication of the volume of feedback and complaints received. However, there is a missed opportunity to add further value through these reports by not identifying qualitative factors for consideration relating to the nature of the feedback or complaints or the issues that they raise.

### **TAMS-wide monitoring of feedback and complaints**

- 4.46 There were no regular or systematic processes by which TAMS, as an organisation, monitors and reports on the number and nature of feedback and complaints received. This includes monitoring of the volume and nature of feedback and complaints, as well as progress in responding to and resolving the feedback and complaints.
- 4.47 All business units examined by Audit had their own processes for monitoring issues that had been raised through feedback and complaints. For example, the Parks and Conservation Trees unit has developed a database that would assist in keeping all tree management issues in a single location for ease of monitoring all aspects of tree maintenance.
- 4.48 Similar to earlier comments on Canberra Connect, however, Audit notes that reports produced for the benefit of business unit management were generally quantitative in nature.
- 4.49 The shortcomings in the quality and comprehensiveness of feedback and complaints information maintained by TAMS can impair its ability to accurately analyse and report on feedback and complaints. These shortcomings were a result of the lack of:
- consistent and systematic processes for the recording of feedback and complaints received; and
  - an effective management information system with widespread use and accessibility across the organisation to facilitate the recording and tracking of feedback and complaints.

- 4.50 Accordingly, TAMS can not accurately identify the exact number and nature of feedback and complaints received across the organisation.
- 4.51 There is merit in implementing a regular and systematic process for monitoring the organisation's feedback and complaints and progress in managing and responding to them. This is likely to enhance accountability for the management of feedback and complaints, and inform management decisions on service delivery.

### **Recommendation 7**

TAMS should improve the monitoring and reporting of feedback and complaints. Regular monitoring and reporting should address:

- a) quantitative and qualitative aspects of feedback and complaints received, including the nature of the feedback or complaint and the business activities to which it relates; and
- b) progress in resolving feedback and complaints, including timeliness of resolution.

### **CONCLUSION**

- 4.52 Once feedback or a complaint was recognised and allocated to a TAMS business unit, there were general business processes to respond to and act on the issue. Existing business processes or practices within the business units varied and generally influenced the nature and timing of the response.
- 4.53 There was generally poor communication with providers of feedback and complaints, to inform them of what actions were to be taken in response to their feedback or complaint, including the likely timing of action or a resolution.
- 4.54 The lack of policy and procedural guidance for the management of feedback and complaints across TAMS has contributed to inconsistencies and shortcomings in customer service.
- 4.55 Regular monitoring of feedback and complaints is important for management and accountability purposes. As an organisation, TAMS should be able to understand the number and nature of feedback and complaints received, as well as progress in addressing or resolving the issue.
- 4.56 TAMS did not regularly monitor and report on its feedback and complaints handling, including the number and nature of feedback and complaints received, or progress in resolving the issue. Limitations on administrative processes for recognising and recording feedback and complaints, as well as shortcomings in current management information systems will need to be addressed.



## **5. EVALUATING FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 5.1 This chapter considers the activities in TAMS for evaluating its management of feedback and complaints. This includes consideration of activities to review and evaluate feedback and complaints processes to identify potential shortcomings and how they might be improved.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- TAMS and Canberra Connect sought to review aspects of feedback and complaints processes, but did not directly assess satisfaction of providers of feedback and complaints with the way their feedback or complaint was managed.
- TAMS did not have any performance indicators for its management of feedback and complaints, for reporting and evaluation purposes.

### **BACKGROUND**

- 5.2 Regular and ongoing evaluation of the management and administration of the feedback and complaints process will assist TAMS to understand whether the process is:
- operating as efficiently and effectively as possible;
  - providing satisfaction to feedback and complaints providers; and
  - meeting the needs of internal stakeholders, such as business unit managers.
- 5.3 Overall, regular evaluation will allow TAMS to understand the value of the feedback and complaints process and its capacity to contribute to improved business management and service delivery outcomes.
- 5.4 A related aspect to the regular evaluation of the feedback and complaints process is identifying appropriate performance indicators against which to measure the performance of the organisation in implementing a good complaint and feedback system. These indicators will facilitate public reporting and enhance internal and external accountability of the department.

### **EVALUATING THE FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

#### **Canberra Connect research**

- 5.5 Canberra Connect research was conducted on an annual basis and was intended to provide an indication of ACT residents' knowledge of, and satisfaction with, the full range of Canberra Connect services. The research provided a measure of quality and effectiveness of Canberra Connect and the results contributed to the Canberra Connect's output report for inclusion in the Annual Report. The research involved a telephone survey of a random sample of 600 ACT residents.

- 5.6 A specific section of the research involved Canberra Connect's *feedback* processes. A total of seven questions were asked in relation to feedback processes, primarily relating to:
- preferred methods of providing feedback;
  - awareness and usage of the on-line feedback system maintained by Canberra Connect;
  - awareness of Canberra Connect's role; and
  - customer expectations of the service and likely actions if the customer was unhappy with the outcome of the feedback.
- 5.7 The research did not provide any information or assessment on whether customers who have provided feedback or made a complaint have been satisfied with the process. There were no specific survey questions relating to:
- satisfaction with the feedback and complaints process (i.e. the administrative process); or
  - satisfaction with the resolution of the feedback or complaints (i.e. the outcome).
- 5.8 Audit noted that the research survey questions relating to the feedback and complaints process were primarily hypothetical in nature and respondents were invited to answer the questions on this basis. In this respect, respondents were primarily questioned on their *expectations* of the service.
- 5.9 As a result, although the Canberra Connect research served a useful purpose in providing an indication of ACT resident awareness of the feedback and complaints processes and their expectations of the service, it had limited value in providing an assessment of the quality or effectiveness of current feedback and complaints processes.

### Audit survey of feedback and complaint providers

- 5.10 As noted previously in this report, Audit conducted a small survey of ACT residents who had provided feedback or made a complaint. Thirteen responses were provided to Audit, which were overwhelmingly negative.
- 5.11 Nine out of 13 survey respondents answered **No** to the following question: *Overall, were you satisfied with how your complaint or other feedback was handled by TAMS and Canberra Connect?* Two respondents indicated satisfaction with the process, and two respondents did not express either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
- 5.12 A variety of additional comments were made by survey respondents, with most of the comments relating to no action being taken to address the complaint or no communication or follow-up information being provided in relation to progress in addressing or resolving their feedback or complaint. These findings have been discussed throughout this report.

- 5.13 Audit noted that Canberra Connect or TAMS have not sought views of the providers of feedback and complaints on their satisfaction with the process.
- 5.14 Although anecdotal evidence of frustration and dissatisfaction with the process has been communicated to Canberra Connect and TAMS in the past, TAMS should undertake a structured and regular evaluation of customer satisfaction to obtain more reliable information.
- 5.15 By not undertaking such an exercise, Canberra Connect and TAMS have missed an opportunity to understand the extent of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the feedback and complaints process and identify possible actions for improvement.

### **Recommendation 8**

TAMS and Canberra Connect should seek feedback from customers on their satisfaction with the way that their feedback or complaint was handled and resolved.

### **IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

- 5.16 A key aspect of any review and evaluation process is identifying and articulating appropriate performance indicators for the management of feedback and complaints. Appropriate performance indicators will provide a basis on which the TAMS' Executive can understand organisational and business unit performance in relation to the feedback and complaints handling. Appropriate performance indicators provide a clearer basis on which business units and managers can be held accountable for their performance in relation to recognising and responding to ACT residents' feedback and complaints.
- 5.17 TAMS did not have any identified performance indicators, quantitative or qualitative, associated with the management of feedback and complaints.
- 5.18 One effective approach would be to identify appropriate qualitative indicators that relate to the *management* and *administrative processes* for managing feedback and complaints. This also recognises that the providers of feedback or complaints may not always get the outcome they are seeking, and this can reflect that TAMS tries to juggle the sometimes competing interests associated with its services.
- 5.19 A qualitative measure on customers' satisfaction with the way that their feedback and complaints were recognised and responded to would provide a strong basis on which to:
- identify potential shortcomings in processes;
  - measure performance over time; and
  - demonstrate transparency in administrative processes to the public and external stakeholders.

5.20 Appropriate performance indicators could include:

- customer satisfaction indicators; and
- timeliness indicators.

### **Recommendation 9**

TAMS and Canberra Connect should review and evaluate its management of feedback and complaints against appropriate performance indicators.

## **CONCLUSION**

5.21 To improve its understanding of the effectiveness or otherwise of the Department's feedback and complaints processes, TAMS should seek to ascertain and identify customer satisfaction with the way that their feedback or complaint was handled and resolved. There was evidence to indicate that feedback and complaint providers are dissatisfied with TAMS' and Canberra Connect's handling of feedback and complaints, but a lack of information means that that TAMS and Canberra Connect cannot accurately identify issues and improve its processes.

5.22 TAMS and Canberra Connect should also identify appropriate performance indicators for its feedback and complaints handling activities, including customer satisfaction and timeliness indicators.

# APPENDIX A: AUDIT CRITERIA, APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

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## AUDIT CRITERIA

Audit assessed the effectiveness of the management of feedback and complaints within TAMS and Canberra Connect, based on the principles identified in the Commonwealth Ombudsman's *Better practice guide to complaint handling*.

When conducting audit fieldwork, Audit used these principles to inform and assess processes used by TAMS and Canberra Connect to receive, manage and act on feedback and complaints, and to review, evaluate and reporting on its performance.

### *Culture*

- The approach to feedback and complaints – each agency should value feedback and complaints and recognise that effective feedback and complaints handling will benefit its administration and reputation; and
- Management responsibility – management should embrace and act upon feedback and complaints raised.

### *Principles*

A complaint handling system (and feedback where appropriate) should be modelled on:

- Fairness – it should treat all people equally;
- Accessibility- it should be easy to locate and use;
- Responsiveness- it should be responsive to the needs of complainants;
- Efficiency- complaints should be actioned in a timely manner; and
- Integration – the complaint handling system should be integrated with the core business of the organisation.

### *People*

- Continuous training – there should be appropriate skills development and training opportunities for staff with responsibility for receiving and responding to complaints.

### *Process*

A complaint handling system (and feedback where appropriate) should include the following features:

- Acknowledgement – feedback should be acknowledged promptly;
- Assessment and assignation of priority – actioning complaints should be prioritised;
- Planning and investigation – investigations into complaints should resolve factual issues and consider options for complaint resolution;
- Response – responses to complainants should be clear and informative; and
- Follow-up – avenues for redress or follow-up, including escalation processes, should be provided to complainants if they are not satisfied with internal review decisions or resolutions.

### *Analysis*

- Systemic issues – systemic issues should be recognised and acted on; and
- Accountability – accountability for actioning complaints, including identifying and managing systemic issues should be clearly defined.

## **AUDIT APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

The performance audit was conducted under the authority of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, and in accordance with the principles, procedures, and guidance contained in Australian auditing standards relevant to performance auditing. These standards prescribe the minimum standards of professional audit work expected of performance auditors. Of particular relevance is the professional standard on assurance engagements - *ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements*.

The audit approach and methodology consisted of:

- reviewing relevant literature and work undertaken on this subject by other jurisdictions with the intention of finding better practices;
- reviewing the governance and administrative arrangements in place within TAMS and Canberra Connect for the management of feedback and complaints;
- discussions with management and key personnel with responsibility for feedback and complaints management within TAMS and Canberra Connect;
- an examination of key documentation within TAMS and Canberra Connect associated with feedback and complaints management, including policies, procedural guidance and other relevant governance and administrative documentation;
- an examination of a sample of feedback and complaints to assess compliance with established policy and procedural guidance and the achievement of customer and client outcomes; and

- a survey of a selection of TAMS' customers to ascertain their satisfaction with TAMS and Canberra Connect business processes to receive and act on their feedback and complaints.

Feedback and complaints data maintained by TAMS and Canberra Connect was analysed and three TAMS business units were identified for closer review:

- Roads ACT;
- Transport Regulation; and
- Parks and Conservation.

## APPENDIX B: ORIGINAL ICS SYSTEM SPECIFICATIONS

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The ICS solution initially provides a mechanism to:

- Manage a ‘service repository’ of relevant service information and links to other information items, including service descriptions, frequently asked questions, and other reference material (i.e. definitions and information items sourced from the ACT Government Information and Services Portal) that is used to correctly diagnose or fulfil a service need, including:
  - Managing the authoring, authorisation and editing processes associated with the creation of the information;
  - Standardising the content, presentation and formatting of service descriptions;
  - Managing the publishing process of the information to a publicly and internally accessible web site;
  - Managing the appropriate methods for locating and viewing the required information in a timely manner; and
  - Managing the completeness, currency and accuracy of the current information.
- Manage the lifecycle of a customer Service Request from diagnosing the customer’s needs to closing the Service Request on completion and any follow up actions and progress actions, including:
  - Providing information on how the Service Request should be managed based on the service business rules;
  - The ability to create and send Service Requests to the appropriate end user for action based on workflows and scripted procedures, including the automatic sending of Service Requests via SMS and e-mail to field devices (i.e. PDA’s and mobile phones);
  - Managing the status of a Service Request from initiation to completion; and
  - Managing the workflow of Service Requests between Canberra Connect and the business units.
- Track and manage day to day performance on Service Requests including:
  - Access to real time information about the Service Request, such as knowing the status of each and every Service Request by ACT Government users and the status of requests they have raised by Public Users;
  - The ability to allocate resources to manage the Service Request; and
  - The ability to queue, prioritise and re-route Service Requests.

Source: ICS Functional System Specifications (April 2005)

## AUDIT REPORTS

### Reports Published in 2010-11

Report No. 7 / 2010	Management of Feedback and Complaints
Report No. 6 / 2010	Annual Report 2009-10
Report No. 5 / 2010	Delivery of ACTION Bus Services

### Reports Published in 2009-10

Report No. 4 / 2010	Water Demand Management: Administration of Selected Initiatives
Report No. 3 / 2010	Delivery of Budget Initiatives
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