

## CLIENT COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

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### INTRODUCTION

The Client Complaint Resolution Process has two stages as follows:

#### STAGE 1

Complaints by clients or their representative relating to a matter that has been handled at branch level should be directed in the first instance to the relevant Branch Manager. Those managers are responsible for addressing the complaints directly.

#### STAGE 2

Complaints that have not been able to be resolved at branch level will then enter the second (and final) stage of the Client Complaint Resolution Process.

*Note: Wherever this document refers to Branch Manager and Regional Manager those titles are intended to include those 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> tier manager equivalents in Workforce work units other than visa and permit branches, e.g. in Border Security Group.*

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Client Complaint Resolution Process is to provide clients with an accessible, straightforward avenue to seek resolution of a complaint about any interaction between Workforce and its clients. This process will enable the Department to:

- investigate and resolve problems at Branch level initially
- identify problems that haven't been able to be fixed directly at Branch level and fix them, and
- quickly endorse and support robust decisions.

### OVERVIEW

There are two contact points for a client seeking resolution of a complaint that has not been able to be resolved at branch level:

1. By writing to either the Deputy Chief Executive - Immigration

Deputy Chief Executive – Immigration  
Department of Labour  
PO Box 3705  
Wellington 6140 or by fax to 04 915 6278

**OR**

2. By email to [depseccomplaints@dol.govt.nz](mailto:depseccomplaints@dol.govt.nz)

Information about the Client Complaint Resolution Process will be made available on the Immigration website.

Both the Deputy Chief Executive – Immigration and the Deputy Secretary, Legal, can direct that the reply to a complaint is prepared for their signature, but the Deputy Secretary, Legal will have primary responsibility for engagement in this process on behalf of the Deputy Chief Executive – Immigration until further notice.

A flow chart of the Client Complaint Resolution Process is attached.

## **BACKGROUND**

Clients should have confidence that the Department has a complaints process that is readily accessible, fair, firm and fast.

Clients should have the ability to lodge a complaint easily and have their concerns considered in a timely manner. Complaints should preferably be resolved informally in the first instance to prevent the need for clients to involve external agencies such as the Office of the Ombudsmen and the costs associated with engaging legal assistance.

It is important for the Department to capture complaint information quickly and efficiently. Issues which clients highlight can provide important feedback and enable the Department to identify trends and training issues and to enhance existing systems and processes. This also enhances the chances that the Department will be seen as being proactive and professional in all our interactions with our clients.

## **PROCESS**

### Complaints received by the Deputy Chief Executive - Immigration.

On receipt of a complaint, Resolutions Team will ensure that the complaint has first been considered by the branch where the service issue arose. All other complaints will be forwarded to the appropriate Regional Manager for consideration and reply. In instances where the complaint has previously been considered by the Regional Manager (for example, if it was escalated to them at stage one of the process by the branch manager), the reply is to be prepared for the signature of the Deputy Secretary, Legal.

Where a complaint is justified, Regional Managers will intervene and ensure appropriate action is taken in accordance with the service standards.

Advice and guidance on completing responses can also be obtained from the Resolutions Team, which will allocate an analyst to provide insight and advice where required.

Where the Regional Manager considers it is appropriate, the complaint can be escalated to the Deputy Secretary, Legal for confirmation and completion in accordance with the service standards. Appropriate reasons for escalation to the Deputy Secretary, Legal include, but are not limited to:

- sensitive issues
- media interest
- to 'head off' any further complaint from the client
- complaint results in a marginal decision which requires a second opinion, and
- if the complaint has previously been dealt with at Regional Manager level.

Both the Deputy Secretary, Legal, and the Deputy Chief Executive - Immigration, can direct that the reply to the complaint is prepared for their signature.

## **PRINCIPLES**

Complaints will be assessed in accordance with the following principles:

- We acknowledge our mistakes and put them right if we can.
- We will treat complaints with priority and give a timely response.
- We will be fair.
- We will try to see things from the client's perspective and understand, and therefore, address why they think we were wrong.
- We will not be defensive of existing decisions - we will take a genuine fresh look at the issues raised.
- Someone other than the original decision maker will look at the individual case on its own merits.

## **SERVICE STANDARDS**

All complaints will:

- have an acknowledgment sent to the client within **2 working days** of receipt of the complaint
- be resolved within the timeframes outlined in the process guidelines
- be escalated, where appropriate, to the Deputy Secretary, Legal for signing and a response dispatched within **20 working days** of receipt of the complaint. The Deputy Secretary, Legal may extend this timeframe in complex cases and will direct the Resolutions Team to keep the client informed
- be subject to quality assurance for completeness and accuracy, and
- have the above principles applied.

Note that complaints involving multiple issues and/or the actions of multiple branches are likely to take longer to answer than the timeframes indicated above.

## **OWNERSHIP**

The Deputy Secretary, Legal and the Deputy Chief Executive – Immigration are designated immigration officers and have managerial authority to mandate a particular process or outcome in response to any complaint.

The Resolutions Team is responsible for developing and maintaining guidelines and procedures for this complaints process.

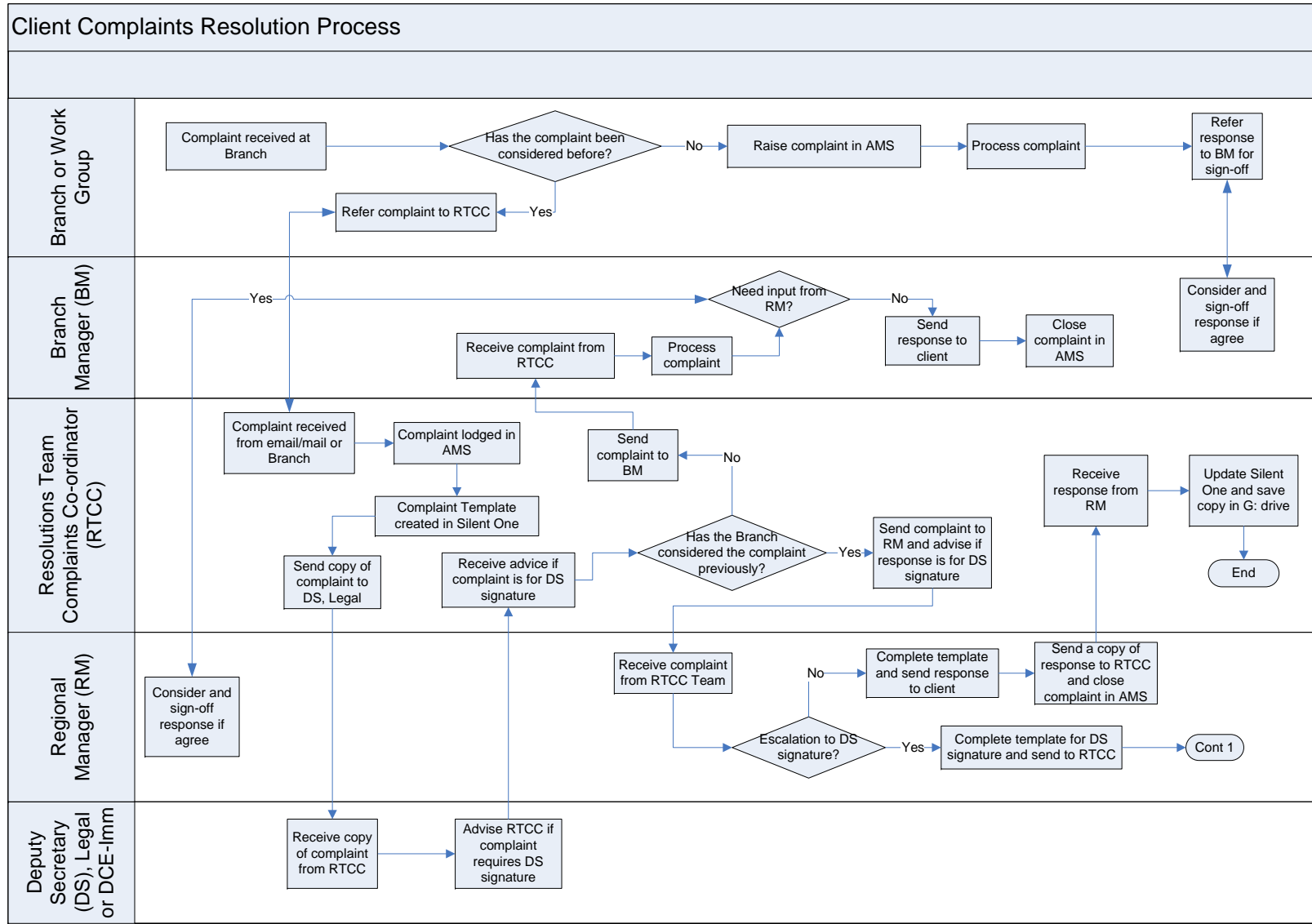
## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following roles, responsibilities and timeframes will support the complaint process:

Responsibility	Role
Resolutions Team Complaints co-ordinator	<p><b>Complaints received in National Office addressed to Deputy Chief Executive – Immigration or complaints received via the complaints email address or referred from branches:</b></p> <p>Determine whether the complaint has previously been dealt with at branch level. If not, raise Complaint/Feedback application in AMS, acknowledge within <b>2 working days</b> and forward to appropriate branch or work unit manager. That manager is responsible for monitoring the timeliness of branch level (stage 1) complaint processing.</p> <p><b>If previously dealt with at branch level:</b></p> <p>Raise a “Deputy Secretary” (stage 2) complaint in AMS</p> <p>Acknowledge complaint within <b>2 working days</b> of receipt in Resolutions Team</p> <p>Create ‘complaint template’ to outline the complaint and distribute for action as appropriate</p> <p>Monitor timeliness of stage 2 complaint processing including giving reminders</p> <p>Manage complaints on Silent One</p> <p>Receive and file copies of all responses for internal audit purposes</p> <p>Promulgate responses signed by the Deputy Secretary, Legal or the Deputy Chief Executive - Immigration.</p>
Analyst, Resolutions Team	<p>Provide advice and guidance on completing responses as required</p> <p>Provide Quality Assurance of responses as requested</p> <p>Direct “lessons learned” information into the appropriate channel for investigation and communication to internal stakeholders</p>
Branch or equivalent 5 <sup>th</sup> tier Managers	<p>Investigate branch level complaints as a priority and sign out the response within <b>15 working days</b> of receipt of the complaint (unless timeframe extended by the Manager)</p> <p>Provide assistance to Regional Managers by investigating complaints referred to them within <b>5 working days</b>.</p> <p>Monitor the timeliness of branch level (stage 1) complaint processing.</p>
Regional Managers or equivalent 4 <sup>th</sup> tier Managers	<p>Complete templates and responses to stage 2 complaints within <b>20 working days</b> of receipt of the complaint</p> <p>Escalate complaints relating to sensitive issues, or as required, to Deputy Secretary, Legal for sign off (via Resolutions Team and no later than the <b>15<sup>th</sup> working day</b> to allow time for the Deputy Secretary’s consideration)</p>

Deputy Secretary, Legal or Deputy Chief Executive - Immigration	Direct responses to be returned to themselves for sign off  Sign out responses where required – return signed responses to Resolutions Team (Complaints Co-ordinator) for promulgation within <b>20 working days</b> of receipt of the complaint (unless timeframe extended).
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# Escalation of complaint to Deputy Secretary

