



Opera House Guideline	Feedback & Complaints Handling Guideline for Commercial Hirers
Authorisation:	Director, Theatre & Events
Authorisation Date:	28 February 2014
Contact Officer:	Manager, Venue & Event Sales

1. PURPOSE

This Guideline sets out how commercial hirers can provide feedback, and how they can make complaints, in relation to the venue booking process set out in the *Venue Hire Guideline for Commercial Hirers*.

2. WHO IT APPLIES TO

This Guideline only applies to commercial hirers wishing to hire an Opera House venue. This Guideline does not apply to the Opera House's resident companies, Opera House supported arts organisations, educational institutions, government departments and agencies, and the Opera House Presents.

3. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS HANDLING

- 3.1 This section sets out a framework to address complaints from commercial hirers in relation to the venue booking process set out in section 4 of the *Venue Hire Guideline for Commercial Hirers*. The framework's objectives are to ensure:
- (a) complaints are handled in a structured, timely and professional manner that is fair, courteous and respectful of privacy;
 - (b) Opera House staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding handling complaints; and
 - (c) complaints are used to identify problems and to continuously improve Opera House services.
- 3.2 The Opera House's complaints handling procedures provide a structured mechanism to allow complaints and concerns about Opera House service delivery to be notified and managed in a professional manner.
- 3.3 The Opera House values feedback, including complaints, as a means of identifying problems and enabling improvements to systems and processes to improve services. Effective complaint handling is an essential part of the Opera House's approach to providing services that are responsive to needs and meet the expectations of commercial hirers.
- 3.4 Commercial hirer's who wish to give feedback on Opera House procedures or other issues relating to their dealings with the Opera House can provide feedback either verbally or in writing to the Opera House staff member they have been dealing, or with the Director, Theatre & Events.
- 3.5 Staff receiving a complaint will aim to resolve it at the earliest possible opportunity. It is expected that the majority of complaints will be addressed and resolved by frontline staff providing further information or explanation at the time the matter is raised. Where the commercial hirer is not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint, they will be given the option to progress the issue through the formal complaint handling process.
- 3.6 Opera House staff will treat all complaints fairly and impartially.
- 3.7 All complaints will be acknowledged and complainants kept informed about the progress of their matter, particularly if delays occur.

- 3.8 Complainants will not be subjected to any form of prejudice, lose services or be disadvantaged in any way as a result of having complained.
- 3.9 Complaints will be treated with an appropriate level of confidentiality. Information about complaints will only be shared on a need to know basis, both within the Opera House and externally.
- 3.10 Reasons will be provided for decisions made in relation to complaints received.
- 3.11 Complainants are expected to:
 - (a) clearly identify the issues of complaint or ask for help from Opera House staff to do this;
 - (b) give the Opera House all available information in support of the complaint in an organised format at the time of making the complaint and not provide any information that is intentionally misleading or knowingly wrong;
 - (c) co-operate with Opera House inquiries or investigations;
 - (d) treat Opera House staff with courtesy and respect.
- 3.12 If complainants do not meet these expectations, the Opera House may set limits or conditions on the handling of their complaint. Any abuse, harassment or threats to the safety or welfare of Opera House staff will result in discontinuation of the complaint investigation and contact with the complainant will cease. Similarly, if it is found that the complainant has made a frivolous, trivial, knowingly false or vexatious complaint, future contact with the complainant may cease.

Complaints handling procedures

- 3.13 The Opera House will manage service-related complaints as follows:
 - (a) a complaint will be initially addressed by frontline Opera House staff – during a conversation or in writing in response to a written complaint;
 - (b) if a complaint is not satisfied and resolution is unlikely, a complainant may ask to progress the matter through the Opera House’s formal complaints handling process. In that case, the matter will be referred to the Head of Government Relations who will manage the complaint within the Opera House;
 - (c) complaints that the Opera House has failed to follow the procedures in section 4 of the *Venue Hire Guideline for Commercial Hirers* cannot be considered on the basis that the complainant disagrees with the decision made by the Opera House. Also, complaints cannot be considered in relation to a venue booking made by, or pencil booking given to, a third party (whether successful or otherwise);
 - (d) to make a formal complaint in relation to the venue booking process set out in section 4 of the *Venue Hire Guideline for Commercial Hirers*, complainants must:
 - (i) submit their complaint in writing to the Opera House within 20 working days of the date of the Opera House’s formal written communication notifying the complainant of the decision;
 - (ii) set out the specific element of the process that has not been followed and that the complainant therefore believes warrants making a formal complaint. If the complainant refers to any documents in their complaint, or wish other material to be considered, the complainant must ensure copies are attached (and the relevant parts highlighted) to ensure they are considered in the complaint process;
 - (iii) send the complaint to:
 - Head of Government Relations
 - Sydney Opera House
 - GPO Box 4274
 - Sydney NSW 2001

This process does not apply to complaints involving allegations of possible corrupt or criminal behaviour, matters where there is a legal remedy or complaints solely about the activities of third parties.

- 3.14 Complainants may also refer their grievance to the NSW Ombudsman for assistance with resolution if required. The NSW Ombudsman can be contacted at the [NSW Ombudsman website](#).

Anonymous complaints

- 3.15 Anonymous complaints will be investigated where sufficient detail is provided to substantiate a valid complaint. In these circumstances, however, any investigation may be affected by the inability to seek further information and details and no information can be issued on outcomes to the complainant.

Vexatious or threatening complainants

- 3.16 In exceptional circumstances, the Opera House may assess that a commercial hirer is a vexatious or threatening complainant and may restrict access to Opera House services on the basis that continuing communication with that complainant would unreasonably impact on the Opera House's ability to fulfil its functions by diverting resources, impeding other hirers from receiving services or affecting the safety of Opera House staff or third parties. In those circumstances, the Opera House may (without limitation):
- (a) refuse to respond to attempted personal contact, telephone enquiries, email or written correspondence from the complainant;
 - (b) require all contact, queries and communications from the complainant to be in writing; or
 - (c) withdraw any Opera House advice or services from the complainant.
- 3.17 When deciding whether or not to limit access to Opera House services, the Opera House will take the following into account:
- (a) in the absence of strong reasons to the contrary, commercial hirers are entitled to seek information or help in relation to, or seek access to, Opera House services;
 - (b) commercial hirers are entitled to provide feedback about things like poor service, inaction, overreaction and maladministration;
 - (c) criticism is a legitimate and valuable part of the relationship between the Opera House and its commercial hirers and stakeholders;
 - (d) commercial hirers should not be unreasonably deprived of an opportunity to have their concerns addressed.

4. GUIDELINE PUBLICATION AND AMENDMENTS

- 4.1 This Guideline will be published on the Opera House's website at www.sydneyoperahouse.com.
- 4.2 The Opera House may at any time replace, amend, revise or update this Guideline by publishing the replacement, amended, revised or updated guideline on that website.

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 In this Guideline:
- complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction about the services provided or the performance of staff in providing a service.
- 5.2 Unless the context indicates otherwise, terms used in this Guideline that are defined in the *Venue Hire Guideline for Commercial Hirers* have the same meaning in this Guideline.