

handling complaints **guidance for signatories**

July 2018



Australian
Carbon Industry
Code of Conduct
SIGNATORY



Handling complaints – guidance for signatories

Handling complaints received from clients and other stakeholders

As a signatory to the Code, if you receive a complaint, you are required to be responsive and deal appropriately with clients and other stakeholders in a timely manner. You are also required to have a fair, efficient and transparent internal complaints handling procedure.

This document provides guidance to signatories on how to handle complaints received from clients and other industry stakeholders.

Internal processes

Your internal complaints handling procedures must be compliant with relevant legislation and standards on handling complaints in organisations, e.g. *AS ISO 10002-2006: Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations*. Information on how your organisation deals with complaints must be made available to your staff and clients.

Upon receiving a complaint from a client, stakeholder or other party, you are required to respond in a timely manner and provide feedback as soon as possible on the expected timeframe for resolution. Within 21 days of receipt of the complaint, you must provide the complainant with feedback on the outcome. If additional time is required, you must inform the complainant and the Code Administrator of this requirement. Signatories must complete their investigation and respond to the complainant no later than 45 days after receiving the original complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation undertaken, they may escalate this to the Code Administrator. Contact details for the Code Administrator must be provided to the complainant if required. The complainant may also choose to contact a relevant consumer protection authority.

Appropriate records of the internal complaints investigation and outcomes must be maintained by signatories. Records must be kept in a manner that are easily accessible for audit or other purposes.

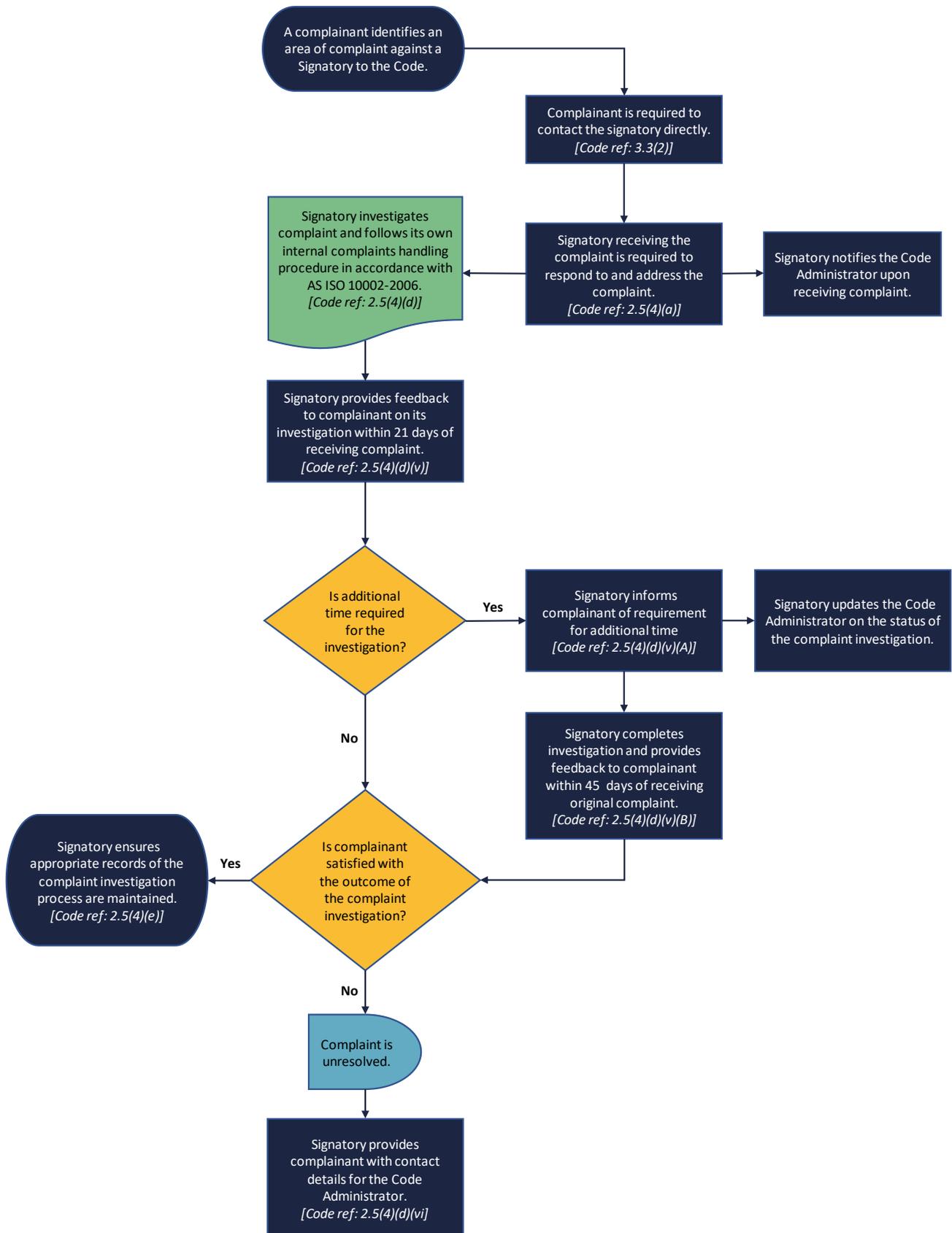
This process is illustrated further in **Figure 1**.

Notifying the Code Administrator

As a signatory to the Code, if you receive a complaint against you by a complainant, or you are notified of a complaint that has been lodged against you with the Regulator, the Department, an ombudsman or a consumer affairs body, you are required to inform the Code Administrator, within 10 business days by completing the **Signatory Complaints Form** available on the Code website at [\[Forms & Resources\]](#).



Figure 1 – Internal Complaints Handling Process





Complaints and Compliance FAQ

- **I suspect another signatory has breached the Code. How can I report this?**

You must first take reasonable steps to contact the signatory suspected of breaching the Code before informing the Code Administrator of a suspected breach by another signatory. If the suspected breach is considered major or severe as outlined in the Code breach matrix, you must notify the Code Administrator by completing the **Signatory Breach Form** available on the Code website at [\[Forms & Resources\]](#). If the suspected breach is considered minor or medium as outlined in the Code breach matrix, you are encouraged to notify the Code Administrator by completing the **Signatory Breach Form** available on the Code website at [\[Forms & Resources\]](#).
- **I have had a complaint made against me by a client, stakeholder or other party. What should I do?**

You are required to be responsive and deal appropriately with complaints receiving from clients and other stakeholders in a timely manner. You are also required to have an appropriate internal complaint handling procedure. Signatories receiving complaints are encouraged to notify the Code Administrator using the **Signatory Complaints Form** available on the Code website at [\[Forms & Resources\]](#).
- **I need more time to investigate the complaint I have received against me. How should I proceed?**

You are required to provide feedback to the complainant within 21 days of receiving a complaint. If additional time is required, you must notify the complainant of your requirement for more time, after which you will have a total of 45 days from receipt of the original complaint to provide a response to the complainant on the outcome of your investigation. You are also encouraged to keep the Code Administrator informed on the progress and status of your investigation.
- **The complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints investigation I have taken. What are the next steps I need to take?**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome following your complaint investigation, then they may escalate that complaint to the Code Administrator. You are required to provide contact details of the Code Administrator to the complainant. The complainant may also decide to contact the relevant consumer protection organisation regarding the complaint. Irrespective of the outcome of a complaint investigation, signatories are required to maintain appropriate documentation of the process undertaken when investigating complaints received.
- **Do I need to maintain records of the complaint investigation process I have undertaken?**

Yes, all signatories are required to maintain appropriate documentation of the process undertaken when investigating complaints received. For example, this may include evidence of communication between you and the complainant (i.e. emails, letters, phone records), minutes of internal meetings undertaken discussing the complaint, and any other documentation relevant that can demonstrate the processes undertaken in reaching a final outcome in relation to the complaint.
- **I have been notified by the Regulator, Department, ombudsman or consumer affairs authority that a complaint has been lodged against me with a relevant consumer protection organisation. What should I do?**

You are required to notify the Code Administrator that this has occurred by completing the **Signatory Complaints Form** available on the Code website at [\[Forms & Resources\]](#).



- **Will signatories to the Code be audited for compliance purposes?**

Compliance against the Code will be reviewed by the Code Administrator through the use of an annual report or “self-audit” checklists submitted by signatories to the Code. During the first two years of the Foundation Phase, the Code Administrator’s responsibility will not extend to include undertaking compliance audits and initiating enquiries into compliance as necessary.

- **What type of information might be requested by the Code Administrator?**

Signatories may be required to provide specific information to the Code Administrator in relation to their compliance under the Code. The type of information that could be requested includes:

- in-house procedures related to complaints handling,
- records in relation to a suspected breach (e.g. information provided to a complainant, internal training provided to employees, correspondence with relevant stakeholders),
- any other information deemed relevant for reviewing a signatory’s compliance under the Code.

- **Do I need to develop a project management plan for every project I undertake?**

A carbon offsets project management plan is in place to ensure that the obligation and responsibilities of all parties are clearly defined and understood, and that the objectives of the project are met. It is expected that Signatories to the Code must have a written project management plan in place that is developed in consultation with the client and other relevant stakeholders.

- **How long do I need to keep records of my business activities?**

Signatories are required to maintain appropriate records in relation to carbon offset projects undertaken and consider the accessibility and type of information that will support audit procedures. Signatories should ensure that they have maintained appropriate records of all relevant business activities and transactions for a minimum period of five (5) years. The Code Administrator may at times certain information to verify compliance under the Code.

- **Do I need to hold an AFSL?**

When providing any financial or project feasibility advice to clients, signatories must comply with the requirements of the *Corporations Act* as it relates to the Australian Financial Services Licensee. Signatories must inform clients of the level of financial advice they can provide based on whether or not they hold an AFSL (Australian Financial Services Licence) and must take into consideration the client’s individual circumstances when providing advice.

- **Can I use the Code brand mark on my company documents and website?**

Yes. Approved signatories to the Code will be provided with the relevant brand mark image files and associated brand mark guidance, outlining the appropriate use of the Code band. For further information on how to use the brand mark within your organisation, please refer to the [[Code Brand Mark Guidelines](#)].

- **How can I get in touch with the Code Administrator?**

Contact details for the Code Administrator can be found on the Code website’s [contact page](#).

for more information please contact

Code Administrator

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