

MAKING RIPPLES

How a small complaints unit can make a big difference through frontloading the system

Trinh Mai

SA Department for Education and Child Development - Education Complaint Unit

The Context

Public inquiry
Lack of policies and procedures
Lack of co-ordination / communication
Lack of training

Outcomes
Restructure
Policy reform
Compliance and sanctions

The opposite of wrong is not always right

Complaints management is about protecting the relationship between the family and the school
Long term nature of public education
Building motivation, skills and capacity
Aligning authority and responsibility

Rethinking the 3 tiers

Level 1 – Frontline Complaint Resolution

Level 2 – Central Complaint Resolution

Level 3 – External Complaint Resolution

Frontloading Strategies

Positive language and frame
 Creating compelling stories
 Setting the legal / policy context
 Priming to receive information

Outcomes

Time period	2012	2013	2014	2015
Same Day (0 days)	53%	64%	50%	52%
One Week (0-7 days)	83%	90%	84%	85%
Two Weeks (0-14 days)	88%	94%	92%	92%

Nature of Contacts	2012	2013	2014	2015
Complaint	77%	77%	65%	64%
Enquiry	20%	20%	34%	35%
Other	3%	3%	1%	1%

Outcomes

"The ECU has transformed into a highly professional unit that works through complaints methodically"

"The ECU an asset to the Department. The work of this team is responsive, respectful, thorough and timely"

"Principals in particular feel that they are dealt with fairly and consistently. I expect most parents would feel the same"

SurveyMonkey- June 2016

Case Examples

1. Why are education complaints like the Cuban Missile crisis?
2. Why is complaint management like refereeing Star Wars and Star Trek fans?
3. Why are complaints handlers like traffic controllers?
4. None of the above. Hurry up and finish, there are half-price margaritas at the bar

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