

**CITIZEN COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS MANAGEMENT
FRAMEWORK**



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**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND
ADMINISTRATION**

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1. INTRODUCTION

As the Public Service we are committed to service excellence in **how** we deliver services in our day-to-operations to citizens. It is not an additional task to our daily tasks, but the manner in how we approach delivering services professionally, and in a courteous, efficient and cogent manner, which ensures predictable affordable services to all our citizens, all the time, within the baseline service standards we have promised our citizens. However, when numerous challenges arise, and citizens expectations are not met in a timely manner, citizens need to be given avenues to communicate with government so as to resolve their complaints and dissatisfaction with any of our services so that we as government can redress and also improve on service delivery processes and systems. Citizens also need to be given an opportunity to compliment public servants when they have experienced outstanding service delivery from government so as to assist us in the acknowledgement of outstanding performance and contribute to continuous improvement of services.

1.1 The Purpose and Objectives of the Framework

- Ensure that departments have a feedback mechanism whereby citizens can communicate to government when services are not being delivered in line with the expectation as espoused within the Eight Batho Pele Principles;
- Provide a uniform approach to complaints management within the Public Service;
- Assist departments that are reviewing their complaints and compliments management systems, as well as those setting up such system for the first time;
- Provide guidance on how to develop an effective complaints and compliments management system;
- Set standards that should be used to judge whether existing complaint systems are adequate;
- Lay down procedures and principles to be followed by departments when developing a complaints and compliments management system and the manner in which the actual complaints lodged should be handled;
- Provide the parameters within which government departments and agencies should develop their complaints and compliments management systems;
- Set out principles which should underpin the development, implementation, monitoring and reviewing of complaints management systems. This is done by suggesting some good practices in complaints and compliments management and by giving a brief outline of the advantages and benefits of having a complaints and compliments management system;

- Highlight the most common causes of complaints about services with a view to creating awareness to the departments so as to improve their services;
- Acknowledge public servants who have been complimented for exceptional delivery of services; and,
- Differentiate between an employee grievance system which is codified within the Labour Relations legislation and hence does not form part of this Citizen Complaints and Compliments Management framework.

1.2 Applicability of the Framework

- All line and sector departments who are responsible for the delivery of any public services to citizens or groups of citizens of all age cohorts throughout the country.

2. BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has previously embarked on a number of initiatives geared towards giving practical meaning to the eight (8) Batho Pele principles. One of such initiatives was the development of a *Batho Pele Handbook – A Service Delivery Improvement Guide* which aimed at empowering managers (especially those in service delivery institutions – the coalface of service delivery) in Public Service institutions to address the challenge of service delivery in their work environments. The guidelines on Complaints Management which give practical effect to one of the eight (8) Batho Pele principles, which is *redress*, are part of the *Batho Pele Handbook*.

However, since the publication of the *Batho Pele Handbook*, there have been significant changes in government. Some of the key change interventions in government were:

- The launch of the *Batho Pele Gateway* in 2004 which served as an information platform for citizens to access information about government services; which has now been revamped to also focus on the monitoring and evaluation role regarding compliance with the Citizen Complaints and Compliments Management Framework by departments across the three spheres of government.;
- Introduction of the *Presidential Hotline* in September 2009 which puts more emphasis on the speedy resolution of complaints by government departments across the three spheres of government and not only the public service; and,

- The re-configuration of the DPISA's organizational structure with effect from 1 June 2010; which led to the creation of the Branch: Service Delivery and Organisational Transformation with a specific focus on the transformational aspects of service delivery and the necessary changes, in terms of systems and processes to ensure a speedy delivery of quality services to communities.

The Minister for Public Service and Administration (MPSA) has also, inter alia, indicated at the media briefing on 7 March 2013 that: "To enhance service delivery the Public Service Charter will regulate the partnership between citizens, the State and public servants to enhance productivity and fast track service delivery consistent with service standards that respond to the needs and aspirations of the citizens." The Charter will, inter alia, provide feedback mechanisms that will allow the public to compliment or raise complaints about the conduct and attitudes of public servants and the quality, timeliness and efficacy of the services they provide. A Citizen Complaints and Compliments Management Framework will provide the platform for the achievement of these objectives.

Although the Public Service Regulations, 2001 require an executive authority to establish and sustain a *service delivery improvement programme* for his/her department and such a programme is required to include a feedback process through a complaints and compliments management system; there has not been an:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Enabling framework to guide departments on how such complaints and compliments management systems should be developed.</i> |
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Hence this enabling framework will set the foundational guide for line departments on how to develop the citizen complaints and compliments management systems. The following are some of the reasons that lead people to complain:

- **Poor communication and insufficient information**

Complaints often arise because of poor communication or inaccessible media used to communicate between the department and the public. It may also be because information about a department's services is not clearly and widely publicized.

- **Inappropriate policies and unclear procedures**

Complaints can be minimized if a department has appropriate policies and clear procedures for implementing those policies.

- **Language barriers, Signage and Branding**

It is important to ensure that all communications are in simple and clear non technical language and not only in English, including accessible formats for people with disabilities and the usage of proper signage. Forms should be properly designed so that they are user-friendly. Help should be readily available for those who have difficulty in understanding procedures or filling in forms.

- **Lack of service delivery according to the expected minimum service standards or no standards have yet being published**

It may be that departments are not delivering services to the level that the public expects or that departments are inaccessible to people with disabilities.

- **Lack of training of staff dealing with complaints**

Lack of the appropriate training for staff responsible for handling complaints may cause dissatisfaction among the public.

3. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The development of the Complaints and Compliment Management Systems by line departments, should be done within the parameters of the Constitutional and legislative framework.

3.1 Constitutional Framework

This enabling framework on *complaints and compliments management* is primarily informed by Chapter 10 of the Constitution, 1996 which deals with public administration. Section 195(1) specifically directs that public administration must be governed by the following democratic values and principles:

- a) A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained;
- b) Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted;
- c) Public administration must be development oriented;
- d) Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;

- e) People's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making;
- f) Public Administration must be accountable;
- g) Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information;
- h) Good human resource management and career-development practices, to maximise human potential must be cultivated; and
- i) Public Administration must be broadly representative of South African people with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness and need to redress the imbalances of the past.

One of the DPSA's priority performance areas being implemented in compliance with the values and principles governing public administration pertains to managing access to information for citizens to transact their lives which are governed by the following legislation:

- **Promotion of Access to Information Act, No. 2 of 2000;**
- **Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, No. 3 of 2000; and**
- **Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, No. 4 of 2000.**

In developing and implementing their Complaints and Compliments Management Systems, the executive authorities (EAs) should comply with the letter and spirit of the aforementioned legislation which has its foundations in the Bill of Rights within the Constitution.

3.2 Batho Pele Principles

To establish a policy framework to guide the introduction and implementation of new policies aimed at transforming the SA Public Service, the *White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995*, as well as, the *White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997*, sets out 8 transformation priorities, which declared that the Public Service should be people-centric and that people must come first in the delivery of services in order to ensure a better life for all citizens. These eight Batho Pele principles are as follows:

- **Consultation**

Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and,

where possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.

- **Service Standards**

Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.

- **Access**

All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.

- **Courtesy**

Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.

- **Information**

Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.

- **Openness and Transparency**

Citizens should be told how national and provincial department are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge.

- **Redress**

If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.

- **Value for Money**

Public Services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.

3.3 Public Service Legislative Framework

In terms of the Public Service Regulations, 2001 (based on the Public Service Act, 1994 as amended), an executive authority shall establish and sustain a service delivery improvement programme (SDIP) for her or his department. One of the key elements of the service delivery improvement programme (as per the regulations), is that it should:

- Stipulate a system or mechanisms for (managing) complaints.

In order to assist the line departments in developing their complaints management systems, this enabling framework proposes that:

- ***An executive authority should develop a Citizen Complaints and Compliments Management System linked to contact centres in each demarcated boundary based on policy guidelines for all service oriented departments.***
- ***Such a system should form part of the Service Delivery Improvement Programme as already envisaged in the Public Service Regulations, 2001.***

It is envisaged that once the Citizen Complaints and Compliments Management Framework has become operational, the DPSA will evaluate the appropriate institutionalization thereof, through a legal Directive to all line departments in order to ensure uniformity in the establishment and functioning of such complaints system.

It is against this background that this enabling citizen complaints and compliments management framework has been developed as a strategy.

4. CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICE DELIVERY

As part of the vision to create a developmental citizen oriented public service, that delivers services effectively and speedily, the government has to continuously review its systems, processes and procedures. In order to effectively fulfill its developmental mandate and as an integral feature of good governance and effective service delivery, the government has to ensure that service delivery complaints are managed effectively and that the right of redress is upheld.

In this regard the government, as an agent of the state, has to ensure that it continuously improves its capacity to deliver to its citizens. In so doing, it has to form partnerships with other organs of state and independent bodies such as the Public Protector in the fulfillment of its mandate. The Public Protector is an independent institution created by the Constitution, has jurisdiction over all organs of state and in all three spheres of government on the resolution of complaints among others.

Through the process of the implementation of the effective citizen complaints and compliments management systems, the government can make a valuable input by ensuring that citizen complaints are properly addressed at the departmental level before the citizens' approach the Public Protector (or other statutory institutions) for independent review and redress.

This would in turn assist the Public Protector not to take on complaints that should otherwise have been successfully handled at the departmental level. Hence a partnership with the Public Protector (or any other statutory institutions/agencies) is critical in monitoring the implementation of this enabling framework.

5. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A **complaint** can be defined as an expression of a grievance to any up-line authority about how an individual is being treated or perceives they are being treated. A commonly expressed general definition of a complaint is as follows:

- **An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the service, actions or lack of action by an agency or its staff affecting an individual client or group of clients.**

In the context of the Public Service, a complaint would typically entail:

- **An expression of dissatisfaction by a citizen or a group of citizens about the level of service (including issues of accessibility) or lack thereof, by a department or departments which in the opinion of a complainant requires resolution and redress.**

6. MECHANISMS FOR LODGING COMPLAINTS

Complaints against line departments may be lodged in a variety of ways through mechanisms/platforms such as:

- A verbal expression after the deficient act / action with respect to the service;
- A complaints/ suggestion box;
- A touch-keypad system after the service is rendered;
- A walk- in by the complainant;
- A telephone to a call centre or office;
- A fax to a call centre or office;
- A letter or e-mail to the call centre or office;
- A web based complaints lodging system;
- A Short Message System (SMS);
- A social media system; and,
- Any other mechanism that is user friendly and that is accessible to people with special needs.

Such a collection of the complaints handling mechanisms at one location is generally known as:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contact centre or a citizen interaction centre of which a call centre is part. |
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Line departments will be required to set-up these contact centres as part of their complaints management system. But when the contact centres fail to perform as expected, this may lead to a system failure in complaints resolution by line departments which in turn may create a crisis and an emergency situation for citizens. If that situation arises then:

- Citizens should be able to call the highest office in government to alert it about the system failures in line departments.

Hence the Presidential Hotline was initiated to be used by citizens as a last resort if there are system failures in line departments.

Conversely, the citizens should be encouraged to give credit where credit is due, in the form of a compliment (which is basically a statement of praise or approval) to a department and / or public servant, through the use of the same platforms / mechanisms outlined above.

6.1 High level components of an effective call centre

The following high level components are critical for the effective functioning of a call centre and will therefore be used as a primary mechanism in assessing the effectiveness of call centres in line departments. These high level components talk to the call centre management in terms of four dimensions namely:

- People;
- Systems and processes;
- Technology; and
- Monitoring and evaluation.

These five high level SYSTEMS components are listed below as follows:

<p>1. Technology components</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Call Centre Telephony System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Unified Communication (Multichannel inbound & outbound capability example: Telephony, email, Fax, SMS, social networking, etc) ○ Call logging system (Enabling Service Management) ○ Knowledge Base (Enabling Telephonic Support) ○ Voice Recording ○ Quality Management (Supporting Measurements and Compliance Training) ○ Interactive Voice Response (IVR) ○ Tele-collaborative devices
<p>2. Internal system automation and integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integration and automation of listed technology components
<p>3. External system integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Capability to integrate to strategic government Call Centres, (Example: Batho Pele Gateway & Presidential Hotline)
<p>4. Service Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting supporting continual improvement ○ Policies, processes and procedures

<p>5. Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Call Centre Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Management Skills ✓ Public Relations Skills ✓ Communications and Translation Skills ✓ Supervisory / Team Leader Skills ✓ Agent Skills ○ Process and Technology Support Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ System / Process technical and functional skills ✓ Workforce Management Skills
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6.2 Reporting on Complaints Management by Line Departments

Line departments will be required to report on complaints management in line with the Batho Pele principles; by indicating the Batho Pele principle(s) that was violated and for which the complainant seeks resolution and redress.

7. ADVANTAGES OF A COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A properly designed complaint/ compliments management system can have the following advantages:

- **Financial**

It enables the departments to address problems before they become costly disputes. Telephone or other forms of communication with the complainant over the same thing for an extended period can also be very costly.

- **Continuous improvement**

Using the set performance standards, departments can measure their citizens' complaints against their performance and service standards. This will enable the departments to listen and respond to their citizens' complaints (including all sectors of society) thus providing the opportunity for continuous service improvement.

- **Citizen satisfaction**

A proper complaints management system may result in improved service delivery and citizen satisfaction, thereby enhancing the citizen and government relationship.

- **Rights protection**

A proper complaints management system recognizes, promotes and protects citizens' rights, including the right to complain.

- **Provide resolution**

It provides an efficient, fair and accessible system for resolving citizen complaints.

- **Provide Information**

It provides information to citizens on the complaints management processes of the departments. It also empowers the citizens to know what is expected from the departments and their rights to query deviations. Complaints management systems also serve as useful management tool because management may utilize complaints management information to improve service delivery which is inclusive of all sectors of the society.

- **Serve as a monitoring system**

It serves as a monitoring tool for the departments so as to improve the quality and accessibility of services to the citizens.

8. BASIC PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE TO COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The Batho Pele principle of *redress* requires national and provincial departments to review and improve their complaints management systems in line with the following principles:

- **Accessibility**

Complaints management systems should be well publicized and should be easy to use, including accessible formats for people with disabilities and those who are illiterate. The system should avoid excessive formalities and should encourage face to face communication.

- **Speed**

Citizens tend to become more dissatisfied when a response to a complaint takes a long time to be resolved. A complaints management system should provide opportunities for a quick response. When a response cannot be given within the expected time, the complainant should be kept informed of the progress and told when an outcome can be expected.

- **Fairness**

Complaints should be fairly and impartially handled. If a complainant is still dissatisfied with the first response, the system should provide for an independent review.

- **Confidentiality**

In order to encourage complainants to complain, the complainant's confidentiality should be protected. This will make the citizens feel that they will be protected to even lodge future complaints.

- **Responsiveness**

The response to a complaint should take full account of the complainant's concerns and feelings. Where a mistake has been made regarding the provision of a service, an apology with the full explanation and assurance that the occurrence will not be repeated, should be given to a complainant.

- **Review**

A complaints management system should incorporate a system for review of complaints and for feedback suggestions for change to departments, so that mistakes and failures do not recur.

- **Training**

Complaints management procedures should be publicized by the departments and staff should be trained so that they know what action to take when a complaint is lodged.

This must include the training of staff to provide to disabled citizens as well as on the necessity for staff to provide for interpretation services where necessary.

9. TURNAROUND TIME FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

In line with the above principles, departments must develop a complaints management system that will ensure that citizen complaints are resolved within:

- **25 working days from the time that complex complaints are lodged with the departments or referred to the departments by other institutions such as:**
 - **The Presidential Hotline or by the Public Protector through mechanisms such as telephone, fax, email or letter.**
- **Note: Complaints that relate to anti-corruption should be referred to the National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH) that is managed by the Public Service Commission and are to be dealt with in terms of a separate process and are not part of what this framework seeks to address.** The National Anti-Corruption Hotline is a tool designed to enable concerned members of the public and government employees to report any form of suspected corruption. Callers or whistleblowers are guaranteed anonymity. More importantly, the NACH is also regarded as a tip-off tool in terms of reporting allegations of corruption. A tip-off in this regard is regarded as an incident where the caller calls the NACH whilst an act of corruption is occurring so that the necessary investigations can take place.

Departments must therefore ensure that they deal with the citizen complaints in terms of the three stage process outlined below within 25 working days. Once the 25 working days within which a department has to resolve a complaint has lapsed, then the complainant becomes entitled to:

- Approach an independent statutory institution such as the Public Protector; or
- The Public Service Commission; or
- Any statutory prescribed mediatory institution based on the nature of the complaint.

10. THREE STAGE PROCESS FOR MANAGING COMPLAINTS

The following three stage process, *which should be completed within 25 working days from the time a complaint is lodged with the departments*, is therefore suggested and forms the crux of the actual management of a complaint:

- **First Stage (Immediate Attention and Resolution)**

The front-line service staff deals with the initial submission of complaints and attempt to resolve them. Resolving complaints on first contact saves money and time by eliminating unnecessary additional contacts and builds confidence in the departments. Typically, verbal complaints at this stage should be acknowledged immediately or within 24 hours and should be resolved accordingly. Community based workers such as the Community Development Workers (CDWs) can play a critical role at this stage to ensure that complaints are resolved at the first level of contact.

If not resolved, a verbal complaint becomes a written complaint which should be referred to the second stage.

- **Second stage (maximum 15 working days)**

This stage takes place if there is still dissatisfaction after stage 1. A manager or complaints officer within the department investigates complaints from citizens who are still dissatisfied. The citizen must have the opportunity to have his or her complaint investigated by someone who has previously not been involved in the matter. The information gathered should be consolidated into a report and a decision taken.

Complaints at this stage should ideally be acknowledged within 5 working days and resolved within 15 working days, from the time that they are received from phase 1. If a complaint cannot be resolved within 15 working days, it should be escalated to the stage 3 for internal review and the complainant should accordingly be advised in writing of the escalation.

Alternatively, if a department needs more than 15 working days to resolve a complaint in phase 2, it must write to the complainant to explain why and when a response can be expected. A copy of such a letter should be sent to the Head of the Department (HoD) for noting.

- **Third stage (Internal Review – maximum 10 working days)**

It takes place only if there is still dissatisfaction after stage 2. Someone with higher authority carries out a further investigation and reviews the complaint. This person must take a fresh look at the evidence and not merely rely on the findings of the second stage. Then a solution to the problem is

developed and implemented. This stage requires that the accounting officer or someone delegated by the accounting officer in a department signs off on the solution on stage 3.

The accounting officer must also advise the complainant of his/her right to refer the complaint for independent review, should the complainant not be satisfied with the outcome of stage 3. The Accounting Officer should ideally take not more than 10 working days to review a decision, from the time that it is received from stage 2.

The accounting officer must be appraised on a weekly basis of all complaints that have been lodged with the department, even if they do not reach the third stage of the complaints resolution.

- **Independent Review (Time to be determined by Review Body)**

If the complainant is not satisfied after stage 3, the complainant may approach the Ombudsman (the Public Protector or any other mandated statutory institution).

The complaints management flow chart below (Annexure A) seeks to inter alia:

- Summarise the complaints management process;
- Facilitate the easy of understanding of the process; and to
- Simplify the process in terms of:
 - The three phases,
 - The proposed 25 working days timeline.

10.1 Administrative elements in the three stage process

The system should, as a minimum, include the following elements as part of the three stage process for managing complaints:

- **Screening and logging**

This is the initial step where important information such as the name of the complainant; the nature of complaint; the action taken; the citizen's response; place and date are captured. This will allow departmental officials to exercise control and ensure proper follow-up. A reference number and contact details must be supplied to the citizen.

- **Investigating**

This is a step whereby staff members are engaged in a research activity to ascertain the legitimacy of the problem. The complainant interacts with the complaints handling officers and is requested to give full details of the problem. This will provide more facts that will help in making the decision to resolve the problem.

- **Acknowledging Progress or Additional Information Request**

When the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, it is important to let the citizen know that the matter is receiving attention. Prompt acknowledgment will set the citizen at ease, demonstrate that care is given and begin the process of preserving goodwill. Whenever possible, citizens should be told how long it will take to complete the response on the complaint. If there is further delay, feedback should be given to the citizen on why and when it is expected to have an answer. Procedures should always have time limits.

- **Formulating a solution**

A solution must be consistent with the constitutional mandate and existing policies of the department and the Batho Pele principles.

When formulating a solution, departments should consider the following:

- The citizen's expectations;
- Department's expectations of the citizen;
- The cost and benefit of alternative solutions;
- The comprehensiveness and fairness of the solution;
- The attainability of the solution; and
- The suggested solution by the citizen.

- **Responding**

A response should be clear and appropriate. The citizen must understand the response, and it must address the issues raised in the citizen's original complaint.

11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Departments should set in place a system to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of their complaints management system. They should be able to track down their steps and procedures in resolving complaints so as to identify flaws and institute remedial measures. To do this, they have to develop their key performance indicators or checklist against which to measure their performance.

Some of the key performance indicators to be considered include the following:

- Approved complaints management system by the executive authority of a department;
- Efficiency of the complaints management system in resolving complaints within the prescribed turnaround time;
- Ability of the complaints management system to ensure accountability of the public officials;
- Citizen satisfaction;
- Employee satisfaction measures.

Once the strategy framework has been adopted and the departments have developed their citizen complaints management system, DPSA will issue Directives on the monitoring and evaluations tools and indicators.

12. ROLE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL HOTLINE IN THE THREE STAGE PROCESS OF MANAGING COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

When the Presidential Hotline was set up in September 2009, it was in response to the public concerns at the pace at which the government responds to the complaints of citizens. There was also no clear policy framework on how government departments had to respond to complaints from the citizens. Departments also had no clear systems on how citizen complaints have to be managed.

The introduction by the DPSA of the Citizen Complaints and Compliments Management Framework is in line with the existing Public Service Regulations on Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIPs) which require departments to develop complaints management systems, and therefore seeks to close the gap that the Presidency had identified.

Once the framework is in place, it is envisaged that the Presidential Hotline will complement the DPSA in ensuring that departments set up the citizen complaints and compliments management systems; and that the Presidential Hotline will continue inter alia to:

- **Act as a monitoring and evaluation tool for the implementation of the framework by departments;**
- **Act as an information gathering tool to ensure that departments set up complaints management systems as envisaged in the Public Service Regulations and the framework;**
- **Act as a tool to ensure proactive intervention by the DPSA if departments do not resolve complaints as intended in the Public Service Regulations;**
- **Serve as a feedback and reporting tool on the state of the complaints management in the Public Service;**
- **Act as a tool to support the Public Protector (and other mandated statutory institutions) in the resolution of the complaints reported to them.**

The “Presidential Hotline” will therefore not be utilised as another level for managing citizen complaints, but rather as an intervention tool to ensure that departments resolve complaints as per the three stage process as outlined in their complaints management systems.

In this regard a “hotline” is understood to be a mechanism that ensures that citizens have direct access to the Presidency when there is a system failure in line departments; which then ensures that the Presidency can intervene to correct the situation and ensure that line departments have the necessary systems (including call centres) for resolving complaints.

This means that the “Presidential Hotline” ensures that line departments perform their duties, but does not perform the duties of line departments.

The same logic applies to the Office of the Premier in a province in relation to the provincial departments.

13. ROLE OF THE DPSA BATHO PELE GATEWAY CALL CENTRE

As part of its mandate in terms of the Public Service Act, 1994 as amended and as part of its strategy to roll-out the Complaints and Compliments Management Framework; the DPSA has revamped its existing Batho Pele Gateway Call Centre and has expanded its focus to include a primary monitoring and evaluation role of departments’ compliance with the Complaints and Compliments Management Framework.

Broadly, the role of the revamped DPSC Batho Pele Gateway Call Centre will be primarily similar to that of the Presidential Hotline as it will:

- **Act as a monitoring and evaluation tool for the implementation of the framework by departments;**
- **Act as an information gathering tool to ensure that departments set up complaints management systems as envisaged in the Public Service Regulations and the framework;**
- **Act as a tool to ensure proactive intervention by the DPSC if departments do not resolve complaints as intended in the Public Service Regulations;**
- **Serve as a feedback and reporting tool on the state of the complaints management in the Public Service;**
- **Act as a tool to support the Public Protector (and other mandated statutory institutions) in the resolution of the complaints reported to them.**
- **Complement the Presidential Hotline.**

As part of its mandate, DPSC will institute an audit to establish the effectiveness of existing call centres in the public service; be they anti-corruption hotline call centres or service delivery related call centres; as the citizens do not see these differences and have to be served in a seamless manner. This will be done to ensure that all call centres meet the criteria as set out in this framework.

14. CONCLUSION

It is important that the Public Service be guided by a uniform approach in citizen complaints management. The proper management of complaints will potentially lead to improved service delivery and citizen satisfaction. Departments must ensure that they have adequate complaints management systems that make it easy for citizens to complain. The commitment and continuous involvement of departmental management is critical to the successful citizen complaint resolution and to the optimum use of a complaint management system as a management tool.

