

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Mills to Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Police Grievance Time Limits

1. What general time limits apply to correspondence in the Police Force, under the provisions of Police General Orders.

General Order titled Correspondence applies a general rule for internal correspondence to be addressed within 14 days. It should be noted that this order relates to all documentation that does not otherwise have prescribed or required timeframes.

2. What exceptions exist for compliance with the general correspondence time limits within the Police Force.

Timeframes defined by the General Order are applied to the individual required to efficiently action the correspondence however, the period specified may not be representative of the actual time taken to acquit. In cases where a period in excess of 14 days is required, an interim response is provided.

3. Why is it that it took 568 days for a formal written response to be provided to Constable Steven Isles by the NT Police in respect to his employee grievance lodged on the 23rd July 2007.

Without an authority to release specific information from Mr Isles, it is not appropriate to release such information.

In general terms, there are circumstances where employees will lodge a grievance and although a response is (or a number of responses are) subsequently provided, the employee may be of the opinion that a response, to their satisfaction, was not received. In such instances, the employer and employee will meet and agree, through mediation, what necessary information or actions are required to resolve the grievance.

Matters of grievance are, in the main, not readily or easily resolved. In recognition of this, the Northern Territory Police Force has in place a hierarchy of reporting and response that facilitates resolution at the most appropriate level. Where this is not successful and in accordance with governing industrial and policy requirements, the grievance or complaint is progressed to higher levels in order to find that resolution.

To ensure that grievances are dealt with in the most effective and efficient manner, grievances relating to Equal Employment Opportunities are dealt with differently than those relating to disputed assessments or administrative decisions. It is the position of the NT Police Force that the complaint of Steven Isles was dealt with pursuant to and in accordance with industrial and policy requirements.

4. Is 568 days the standard time it takes to deal with a grievance.

Formal Grievances lodged by an individual member, or by the NT Police Association on behalf of a member, will often cover a broad range of issues. Many of these are complex in nature and often address multiple issues.

The vast majority of grievances are dealt with in relatively short periods of time however, the more complex the issue, the longer the timeframe taken to address. In some instances where a member cannot accept a determination relating to a grievance, the member will absent themselves from the workplace on extended periods of sick leave. In these circumstances it is both in the interest of the employer and the employee to reach resolution in as expeditious a manner possible. Unfortunately, a number of these cases become ongoing disputed Worker's Compensation claims that can take years to fully resolve.

5. What is the average time taken to respond to and finalise an employee grievance.

This information is not readily available. As discussed, some grievance matters may stretch for years if legal action is required, while others are satisfactorily resolved within a matter of hours at supervisory or manager level.

6. How many employee grievances are currently active.

There is only one active employee grievance currently being dealt with by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

7. Would you please detail, in relation to each current grievance:

- The date the grievance was lodged; and
- The date a formal written response to the grievance (not acknowledgement of receipt of the grievance) was forwarded to the aggrieved Member.

The employee lodged the grievance with OCPE, dated 24 April 2009 following an internal investigation completed on 8 January 2009. The employee was advised of the outcome of the internal investigation and given a copy of the internal report on 13 January 2009.

8. Has Constable Steven Isles been provided with advice that his employment will be terminated under Section 87 of the *Police Administration Act* and if so, what are the grounds for his termination.

Without an authority to release specific information from Mr Isles, it is not appropriate to release such information.