

Feedback and Complaints Policy

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Introduction

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) is an independent and impartial statutory authority established under the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic). Our vision is that all Victorians actively participate in their democracy.

We conduct Victorian state parliamentary elections, local council elections and certain statutory elections and polls. We also conduct boundary reviews, maintain the register of Victorian electors, undertake electoral research, deliver education and oversee the disclosure of political donations for state elections.

If there is something you are dissatisfied with, we want you to tell us. Complaints give us an opportunity to evaluate our products and services so that we can make changes and do better.

This policy covers:

- what you can expect from us
- what we ask of you
- what to know before making a complaint
- how to make a complaint
- what happens when you make a complaint
- how to request a review
- how we handle your information.

What you can expect from us

We will do our best to:

- provide a fair, open and accessible service
- listen and understand
- treat everyone with respect, empathy and dignity
- act with integrity and impartiality.

What we ask of you

We ask that you:

- be courteous
- provide accurate and complete information, including relevant evidence
- not engage in unacceptable behaviour.

Definition of unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour means acting in a way that is unreasonable, regardless of the level of your stress, frustration or anger. It may involve acts, words or physical gestures that could cause another person distress or discomfort, including:

- aggressive or abusive behaviour (written or spoken) that could cause our staff to feel threatened or afraid
- making threats of harm to yourself, our staff or third parties
- making unreasonable demands or persistently contacting us about an issue that we have already addressed or which is not within our remit.

Managing unacceptable behaviour

We do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour when communicating with you. If you engage in unacceptable behaviour, our staff have the right to stop communicating with you.

Before we do this, we will attempt to inform you that you are engaging in unacceptable behaviour. However, in extreme circumstances, no contact will be made (for example, when there is a threat of violence).

What to know before making a complaint

When is it a complaint?

When you would like to:

- express dissatisfaction with a policy, product or service related to an interaction with the VEC
- allege a breach of the *Electoral Act 2002* (Vic), the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) or another relevant act, by-law or protocol.

If your submission is outside our remit, we will try to suggest which agency is best placed to assist you or, in some cases, may refer it to the relevant agency ourselves. This may include:

- the Local Government Inspectorate, for submissions which allege a breach of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) or related legislation
- the Chief Executive Officer of the relevant council, for submissions which allege a breach of local laws
- a Victorian government department or agency, for submissions about the placement of signage on property under its management
- the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC), for submissions which involve allegations of corrupt or improper conduct
- Victoria Police or the Department of Public Prosecutions, for submissions which allege that an offence has been committed.

When is it feedback?

When you have ideas on how we can do things better, or want to tell us about something we are doing well, we consider it feedback. We use feedback as part of our ongoing review and planning process.

Why is it important to notify us promptly?

You can submit your complaint or feedback at any time, but it might help to submit it as soon as possible after the event or occurrence you are telling us about.

There may be a time limit on when charges can be laid or what actions can be taken in relation to some types of complaints, such as those related to fraud, a legal matter or a public interest disclosure (previously known as 'whistleblower' complaints).

How to make a complaint

Your complaint or feedback needs to be submitted in writing using one of the following channels:

Online

Submit your complaint or feedback using the webforms accessible via the VEC website: vec.vic.gov.au/about-us/complaints

By email

Send an email to complaints@vec.vic.gov.au with your complaint or feedback.

By post

Address your complaint or feedback to:

**Customer Feedback and Complaints team
Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000**

We will adjust our submission process if you are unable to submit your complaint or feedback in writing, for example, because you are living with disability or have low English proficiency. In these circumstances, we can help by recording your complaint or feedback on your behalf over the phone. If you need to access this support, [get in touch with us](#).

You can also contact us with the assistance of:

- the **National Relay Service** (contact the service and ask for 03 8620 1100)
- an **interpreter**.

Information we need from you

We ask that you include the following information when submitting your complaint or feedback to help us understand and respond to your concerns:

- Your full name or the name of the group or organisation making the submission, unless you would like to remain anonymous.
- Your contact details, such as an email address, postal address or telephone number, unless you would like to remain anonymous.
- Details of your complaint or feedback, including relevant dates, places and a description of any events or occurrences relevant to your submission.
- Your desired outcome or the resolution you are seeking.
- Any evidence or supporting documents, which could include photographs, notices, letters or anything you think is relevant to your complaint or feedback.

You can make a complaint or submit feedback anonymously, but we will not be able to respond to you if you do not provide your contact details.

What happens when you make a complaint

We strive to be transparent at all stages of the complaint process. Broadly, this process can be divided into three steps:

Step 1: Acknowledgement

We will send you an automatic acknowledgement to let you know that we have received your complaint and give you a case number when you make a submission using our webform or by email.

Step 2: Assessment

A member of our staff will assess your complaint. We may contact you if we need further information.

Step 3: Response

We aim to respond to complaints within **5 working days**. We will let you know if we think it is going to take longer.

Our response time could vary depending on:

- whether your complaint relates to a specific electoral event
- whether your complaint needs to be referred to a different agency
- how many issues are discussed in your complaint
- whether we need to investigate the circumstances of your complaint.

In addition to providing a response to your complaint, we may:

- refer your complaint to another VEC team for assessment and, if appropriate, action
- refer your complaint to another agency (see 'what to know before making a complaint' for more information)
- share your complaint with another VEC team for consideration, including as part of continuous improvement and planning.

Requesting a review

If you are unhappy with how we have handled your complaint, you can request a review.

How to request a review

You can request a review within **60 days** after you receive a response from us.

All requests must be made in writing. Make sure you tell us:

- your case reference number
- why you are unhappy with how your complaint was handled
- what outcome you would like.

Your request will be considered by a member of the VEC's senior leadership team who was not involved in handling your complaint. They will decide whether it is appropriate for the handling of your complaint to be reviewed, having regard to the reason why you are unhappy.

We will write to you to tell you whether your request has been granted or denied.

How the review will be conducted

If your request for a review is granted, a member of the VEC's senior leadership team will review your complaint. This will be somebody who was not involved in handling it. We may engage an external reviewer where required.

The person conducting the review will have access to your request for a review, details of your original complaint and correspondence we have exchanged with you.

Once the review has been completed, we will send you an outcome letter. This letter will outline whether your complaint was handled in accordance with our procedures.

How we handle your information

We keep a record of all complaints and feedback we receive and how we have handled them. We handle all information collected from you, for the purpose of managing a complaint or feedback or conducting a review, in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#) as well as the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic).

Information we collect from you may be disclosed to:

- the VEC business area to which your complaint or feedback relates
- another agency or body, where required by law as part of a report to that agency or body
- another agency or body as part of a referral of your complaint or feedback (see 'what to know before making a complaint').

We report on complaints and feedback in the following publications, using aggregated and deidentified data:

- VEC annual reports, prepared after the close of each financial year and tabled in the Victorian Parliament
- Reports to the Victorian Parliament about the conduct of state and local government elections.