



Complaints Management Policy

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1. TITLE

Bellarine Bayside Complaints Management Policy

2. PURPOSE

The community expects public sector entities to be customer-focused and responsive to complaints. The Victorian Government expects public sector entities to have complaints management systems in place and to be accountable for their decisions and actions. An effective complaints management system contributes to responsive service delivery and leads to better outcomes for communities, visitors and guests.

This complaints management policy has been developed to promote a consistent approach across Bellarine Bayside for responding to, managing, processing and recording complaints. It will assist staff to manage customer complaints in an accountable, transparent, timely and fair manner.

The policy sets out how we will listen and respond to complaints and how we will use that feedback to develop and deliver policies, programs and services.

3. SCOPE

This policy covers complaints made to Bellarine Bayside about decisions, actions, amenities or services. Complaints relating to serious improper conduct or corruption by an employee of Bellarine Bayside are managed in accordance with the Bellarine Bayside Public Interest Disclosure Policy.

4. LEGISLATION/POLICY

To the greatest extent possible, Bellarine Bayside will employ a common approach to the handling of all complaints, noting that some legislation requires particular arrangements for the handling of complaints relating to matters covered by that legislation. Bellarine Bayside must meet its legislative obligations with respect to the management of complaints for any matters covered by the following:

- *Ombudsman Act 1973*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Public Administration Act 2004*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Disability Act 2006*
- *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*
- *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012*

5. POLICY DETAILS

5.1 Our Commitment

Bellarine Bayside acknowledges everyone's right to express their opinion about its services. We will provide our visitors, guests and the community with the opportunity to influence the way we work through meaningful engagement, listening and responding to feedback, and protecting their confidentiality and privacy.

Complaints provide valuable feedback about the level of satisfaction with our services. Along with other forms of feedback (such as compliments), they provide an opportunity to improve the delivery of services. Complaints must be handled effectively and promptly, and recorded for coordination, analysis and reporting.

Resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity, in a way that respects and values the person's feedback, can be one of the most important factors in ensuring an opportunity to recover a person's positive feelings and confidence about our services. It can also help prevent further escalation of the complaint. To facilitate this, we will provide a responsive, efficient, effective and fair complaint management system.

5.2 What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with any service provided, decision made or action taken by Bellarine Bayside that impacts on the person making the complaint. A complaint may also be made about Bellarine Bayside's complaints handling processes.

The definition of complaint used by Bellarine Bayside is the Australian Standard Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations AS ISO 10002-2014, which defines a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected'.

5.3 Types of complaints

Complaints may be lodged about:

- A decision made, an action taken, or lack of action taken by Bellarine Bayside that affects the person making the complaint
- The standard of service provided by Bellarine Bayside, including failure to provide a service
- Breaches of Information Privacy
- Correcting information held by Bellarine Bayside about the person making the complaint
- General complaints about the actions or inaction of Bellarine Bayside or its staff.

The following will not be treated as a complaint under this policy:

- A request for a service
- A request for information
- Complaints about decisions made under a contract
- Complaints of improper conduct
- Injury claims
- A request for a review or appeal under legislation (where a formal review process already exists it must be followed).

5.4 Elements of complaints management

Bellarine Bayside's management of complaints is based on the principles of clarity, honesty and transparency and has the following elements:

Visibility and accessibility

The complaints management system will:

- be visible and accessible to individuals
- explain how and where to make a complaint
- consider specific needs of the individual or barriers they may experience
- explain how Bellarine Bayside will manage a complaint and the expected timeframe for resolution
- support individuals so they can identify and seek their preferred outcome.

Responsiveness

The complaints management system will be responsive and provide mechanisms and strategies to:

- inform and train staff to use the complaint management system
- support the complainant to seek the most appropriate resolution
- ensure there is clarity about the requested outcome
- provide a respectful, valuing and informative acknowledgement
- actively listen, empathising and acknowledging when the service was not the best it could have been
- monitor timeframes for resolution
- communicate with all relevant parties about the progress to resolve the complaint.

Assessment and investigation

The complaints management system will have mechanisms and strategies to:

- assess complaints for severity, safety, complexity, impact and whether there is a need for immediate action
- collect adequate and appropriate information to inform systemic improvement
- protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information people have provided
- determine by whom and at what level the complaint should be dealt with
- enable complaints to be considered fairly and objectively.

Feedback

The complaints management system will provide mechanisms and strategies to:

- explain what happened and why, what will be done to fix the issue, who will do it, how we will communicate our progress and how we will check things are on track
- explain the reasons for the decision
- provide an apology if appropriate
- where an apology is provided, ensure it is sincere, and accepts responsibility for what occurred and the impact
- explain the circumstances and summarise the key actions that will be taken
- provide regular updates to the complainant if resolution is delayed
- notify the complainant of alternative complaint resolution pathways and review mechanisms
- follow up with complainants to determine the effectiveness of the outcome, where appropriate.

Improvement focussed

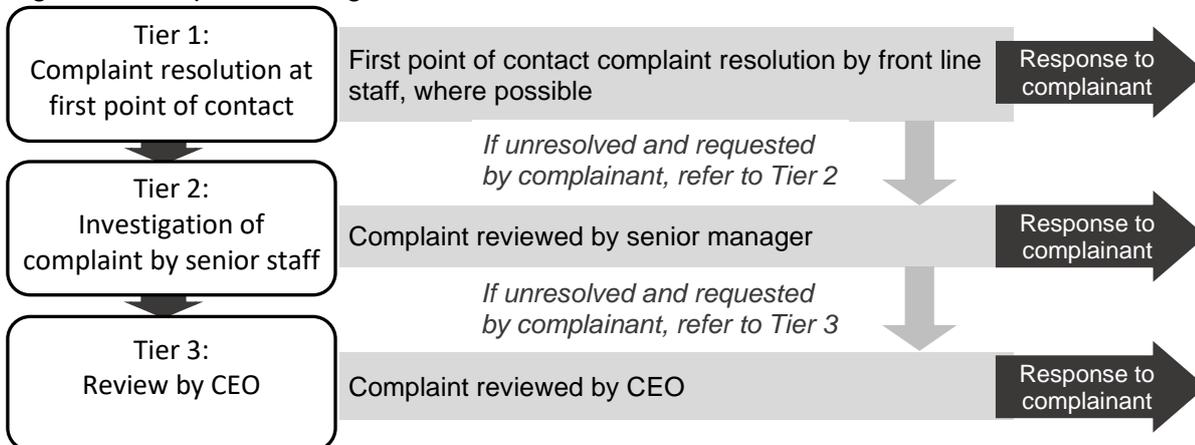
The complaints management system will provide mechanisms and strategies to gather and record feedback and other information to:

- meet any statutory, policy or procedural reporting requirements
- improve the training and capabilities of complaint management staff
- analyse the complaint data and identify complaint trends for performance improvement
- monitor the time taken to resolve complaints
- notify service providers of any changes necessary arising from a complaint as part of a continuous quality improvement approach.

5.5 Complaint Management Overview

Bellarine Bayside's complaint management approach promotes the resolution of complaints at the local level prior to issues being escalated to higher levels of management. The complaint management tiers are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Complaint Management Tiers



Note: Depending on the level of complexity, a complaint can immediately be assessed as Tier 2 or Tier 3

If after review by the CEO, a complainant feels that their complaint has not be adequately resolved, they have a right to refer their complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman or to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

The Ombudsman investigates complaints about administrative actions and decisions by government agencies and public authorities. This includes committees of management.

5.6 Making a complaint

General compliments or complaints

A general compliment, complaint or concern about the actions or inaction of Bellarine Bayside, the services it provides, or its staff can be made by [completing an online contact form](#) or by phoning on (03) 5254 4000.

Examples include:

- Compliments or complaints relating to our management of facilities along the coastal reserve
- Our responsiveness.

Decisions or actions

In the case of disagreement with a decision that Bellarine Bayside has made, or an action it has taken, further information should be sought from the nominated point of contact in the first instance if one has been provided. If no point of contact is provided or further information does not resolve the issue, a complaint can be lodged by [completing an online contact form](#).

Examples include:

- a decision regarding an application for a licence or permit
- an action taken by Bellarine Bayside as a result of a breach of a permit or licence condition.

Breaches of Information Privacy

If an individual believes that Bellarine Bayside has breached their information privacy by not complying with the Information Privacy Principles of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*; they can lodge a complaint by sending details of the complaint to foi@bellarinebayside.com.au

Improper conduct

A complaint of serious improper conduct or corruption by an employee of Bellarine Bayside should be reported as a Public Interest Disclosure in accordance with Bellarine Bayside's Public Interest Disclosure Policy.

A disclosure can also be made directly to the [Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission](#).

A Public Interest Disclosure under the *Public Disclosures Act 2012* receives protection from reprisal, the assurance of confidentiality and appropriate assistance in making the disclosure.

Procurement Complaints Management Framework

Complaints regarding a Bellarine Bayside procurement process should be made in writing to:

Business and Finance Manager
PO Box 40, Portarlington Vic 3223

Or email finance@bellarinebayside.com.au.

5.7 Complaints resolution timeframes

Complaints will be acknowledged in the same way in which they were received, generally within three business days.

Further to the initial acknowledgement, all complaints will be formally responded to as quickly as possible. However, the time taken to resolve, investigate or review a complaint will depend on the nature and complexity of the complaint. The response will outline the outcome of Bellarine Bayside's consideration of the complaint and detail any actions taken or proposed to be taken to resolve the complaint.

- Simple complaints will be responded to within 15 business days
- More complex complaints will be responded to within 20 business days.

5.8 Alternative complaint resolution pathways

A number of alternative pathways exist to resolve complaints. These pathways include legislated processes and external review processes. Many legislated processes involve the examination of complaints or grievances received by an external body. External review authorities that may accept complaints and refer them to Bellarine Bayside for action include the following:

- Victorian Auditor-General's Office
- Victorian Workcover Authority
- Victorian Ombudsman
- Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission
- Victorian Privacy Commissioner
- Freedom of Information Commissioner
- Commission for Children and Young People
- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission.

Review by date	11/06/2025
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11. REVISION RECORD

Date	Version	Revision description

END OF DOCUMENT