

Complaint Management Policy

Version No	V4.1
Approved By	Board
Approval Date	29 April 2024
Next Review Date	May 2027

Purpose

This policy outlines our commitment to managing complaints and resolving disputes and applies to all complaints received from both our customers and suppliers:

- by phone - [1300 720 711](tel:1300720711)
- by the National Relay Service (TTY Text Phone): [133 677](tel:133677) then ask for 5956 4100
(If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment)
- by mail (2 Boys Home Road, Newhaven, Victoria 3925)
- via online form (www.westernportwater.com.au/contact-us/feedback)
- by email (westport@westernportwater.com.au); and
- in-person.

Policy Application

Westernport Water welcomes complaints as an opportunity to retain customer and supplier confidence and trust in our corporation as well as improve our products, services, procurement, and contract management processes.

Westernport Water defines a complaint as a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about an action, proposed action or failure to act, including a failure of Westernport Water to observe its published policies, practices or procedures.

A public interest disclosure (PID) is a complaint or allegation made about corrupt conduct, improper conduct or detrimental action. This policy does not apply to PIDs, which must be addressed in line with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012*. See the Public Interest Disclosure Policy (INT14-06808) and SOP (INT18-05544) for detailed definitions and guidance if it is possible a complaint may be a PID.

Responsibilities

Westernport Water commits to ensuring that our staff have the appropriate attitudes, skills and knowledge to provide exceptional service in a timely and efficient manner. Customers and suppliers should expect that our people will:

- identify themselves.
- act in a polite and courteous manner.
- listen to their concerns.
- respect their right to privacy.
- obtain the necessary details to ensure they receive excellent customer service.
- attempt to resolve the matter at first point of contact or keep the complainant informed about timeframes for managing the complaint.
- log accurate records in our customer database or records management system of the contact to ensure the complaint can be tracked, monitored and reported.
- we will confirm with the customer that they don't need reasonable adjustments through the process due to disability or health concerns.

Guiding principles

We are dedicated to following the guiding principles outlined in AS ISO 10002-2022 (Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organizations) in the following ways:

Enabling Complaints

- **People focus**– We adopt a people-focused and proactive approach to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints. We demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing complaints raised within reasonable timeframes from both our customers and suppliers. We provide a number of different avenues to make a complaint to ensure that a wide range of needs are catered for. This includes a toll free centralised call centre with interpreter services when required. All customers and suppliers are treated with respect and where practicable we involved the complainant in the complaint process.
- **Ensuring no detriment to complainant** – We will take responsibility steps to ensure that the complainants are not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them or on their behalf.
- **Visibility and transparency** – We ensure that information about how and where a complaint can be made to or about our organisation is well publicised. We keep the complainant informed and ensure fair and transparent investigation.
- **Accessibility** – We provide customers and suppliers with a number of different avenues to make a complaint to ensure that a wide range of needs are catered for. This includes a toll free centralised call centre with interpreter services when required. Complaint handling procedures and information are accessible to accommodate customer and suppliers in different formats to suit their varying needs. Where needed we can provide support through this process. We acknowledge that a person or organisation can request that another person or organisation assist or represent them to make and progress their complaint as their authorised person.
- **No charges** – We do not charge for any part of our complaint process.

Managing Complaints

- Responsiveness – We are committed to meeting the needs and expectations of our customers and suppliers through the complaint handling process. We promptly acknowledge each complaint received within three working days of receiving the complaint where possible and we give appropriate priority in accordance with the urgency of the issues raised.
- Impartiality and fairness - We address complaints in a fair, considered and unbiased manner throughout the complaint management process.
- Equity – We ensure that all complaints are addressed in an equitable manner and we manage the conduct of complainant who act unreasonably through our escalation process.
- Privacy and disclosure – Personally identifiable information about an individual will only be used in accordance with all relevant privacy laws and ethical obligations when managing a complaint.
- Communication – To facilitate early resolution we ensure our staff have access to clear and simple information to inform their effective communication with complainants.
- Work health and safety – We ensure the health and safety of our staff involved in complaint management is of priority, including identity protection if needed.
- Complaint involving multiple parties – We give consideration to options for coordinating communications with the complainants, subject to privacy and confidentiality obligations. Where a complaint involves multiple areas within our organisation responsibility for communicating will be coordinate between the areas involved.
- Empowering staff – We ensure our staff are properly empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role.
- Probity - We will endeavour to ensure that the investigation of a complaint and subsequent response is overseen by a person not involved in the subject matter of the complaint.

Accountability, learning and prevention

- Accountability – We ensure that the accountability of our complaints management system is clearly defined.
- Continuous improvement – We analyse our complaint data to identify recurrent issues and use the information to identify service improvements.
- Prevention of ongoing issues - We hold ourselves accountable to the Australian Standards for complaint handling through routine audits and coaching programs. The quality of our complaints handling systems and records are open to scrutiny from the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria).

1. Lodging a complaint and early resolution

To submit a complaint, the customer or supplier can reach out to us via one of the many options outlined on page 1. We listen to and consider customer and supplier concerns and work with the complainant to try to resolve the matter at first point of contact.

If a customer would like to appoint a representative to act on their behalf, we will seek the account holders permission to authorise the representative on the account.

Customer Complaints

When submitting a complaint, we kindly ask customers to provide precise information regarding the impact of the issue and their preferred resolution. If the complaint relates to a specific location, we kindly request an address or description. We record all customer complaints in our customer relationship management system and a case will be generated.

Supplier Complaints

When submitting a complaint, we kindly request the complainant specify the grounds for the complaint and context demonstrating how our procurement and contract management practices were not correctly applied or adhered to. We record all supplier complaints in our record management system with each case being reviewed and monitored by the Strategy, Performance & Governance team.

Urgent complaints*

We will provide a response within 3 business days. If the nature of the complaint requires more time for investigation, we will communicate an updated timeline.

*eg. Water quality.

Supplier Complaints

We will provide a response within 10 business days. If the nature of the complaint requires more time for investigation, we will communicate an updated timeline.

2. Resolution & Escalation

After informing the customer or supplier of the investigation outcome, we will verify their satisfaction with our response to the complaint.

If you're not satisfied with our response to the complaint, the complainant may escalate it.

Westernport Water will advise the VGPB of all complaints that cannot be resolved.

Customer

Manager, Customer Relations

or

Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV)

Supplier

Manager, Strategy, Performance & Governance

or

Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB)

OFFICIAL

<p>Customers may escalate their complaint to the Manager, Customer Relations for review. If they remain dissatisfied following this review, the customer can lodge their complaint with Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria.</p>	<p>Customers may choose to escalate their complaint direct to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV) for external investigation. EWOV is an independent resolution body that can assist in the resolution of disputes within the energy and water sectors within Victoria.</p>	<p>Suppliers may escalate their complaint to the Manager, Strategy, Performance & Governance for review. If they remain dissatisfied following this review, the supplier can lodge their complaint with Victorian Government Purchasing Board, the Victorian Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, or the Independent Broad based Anti-corruption Commission.</p>	<p>If a complaint cannot be mutually resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, the supplier has the option to escalate the matter to the Victorian Government Purchasing Board, the Victorian Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, or the Independent Broad based Anti-corruption Commission.</p>
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Review Date

This policy is to be reviewed every three years and approved by the Board. The Policy will continue until replaced by a later version or rescinded.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Policy Owner – General Manager, Corporate & Customer

Responsible Policy Officer – Manager, Customer Relations