

COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

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Approval Date:	Xx/xx/xxxx
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Review Date:	Xx/xx/xxx
Responsible Officer:	Manager
Owner:	Customer Engagement & Communications
Responsible Director:	Corporate Performance
Relevant Legislation / Authority:	Local Government Act 2020 (Vic) <i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012 (Vic)</i> <i>Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)</i> <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)</i> <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)</i> <i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)</i>
DOCSETID:	

1. PURPOSE

The City of Greater Bendigo recognises that people have a right to complain about our actions, decisions, policies, processes and services.

We value complaints and are committed to resolving complaints fairly, efficiently, respectfully and transparently. Complaints provide an important opportunity to improve service delivery, strengthen community trust, identify systemic issues and support continuous improvement.

This policy establishes a complaint management framework that:

- provides a clear process for receiving and managing complaints
- promotes accessibility, fairness and transparency
- supports timely and consistent complaint resolution
- complies with legislative obligations
- protects privacy and confidentiality
- facilitates learning and continuous improvement from complaints

- promotes accountability for decision making and service delivery.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- all City employees
- volunteers
- contractors and consultants engaged by the City
- third parties delivering services on behalf of the City.

This policy does not apply to matters that are managed under separate statutory or regulatory processes, including:

- Councillor conduct complaints
- complaints about the Chief Executive Officer
- Public Interest Disclosures
- Freedom of Information applications
- privacy complaints
- employment related grievances
- election matters
- decisions subject to statutory review or appeal rights
- insurance and liability claims
- disputes between private individuals.

Where a complaint falls outside the scope of this policy, the complainant will be advised and referred to the relevant process or authority where appropriate.

3. DEFINITIONS

City Staff	any person employed by the City to carry out the functions of the organisation, this includes volunteers.
The 'City'	means the City of Greater Bendigo
Councillor	An elected community representative and part of the 'Council'
City Contractor	Any third party engaged by the City to carry out functions on the City's behalf

4. PRINCIPLES

The City's complaint handling system is based on seven principles.

Commitment	The City is committed to receiving, managing and resolving complaints. We recognise complaints are a valuable source of feedback and form part of our core business of serving and supporting the community.
Accessibility	People can easily make complaints and receive assistance to participate in the complaint process.
Transparency	We make it clear: • how to make a complaint • where to make a complaint • how complaints are managed • what timeframes apply • what review options are available.
Objectivity and fairness	Complaints are handled respectfully, impartially and on their merits.
Privacy	Personal information is handled in accordance with applicable privacy legislation and is only used for complaint management and service improvement purposes.
Accountability	We provide reasons for our decisions and remain open to internal and external review.
Continuous Improvement	Complaint information is analysed and used to improve services, processes and decision-making.

5. POLICY

What is a complaint?

A complaint is:

An implied or express statement of dissatisfaction where a response is sought, reasonable to expect, or legally required.

Complaints may relate to:

- customer service
- actions or decisions

- delays or failures to act
- policies, procedures or processes
- contractors acting on behalf of the City.

Feedback

Feedback is:

A compliment, criticism, comment or suggestion where a response is not sought or not reasonably expected.

Service Request

A service request is not a complaint and includes:

- requests for action
- requests for information
- requests for approval
- reports of faults or maintenance issues
- routine enquiries
- requests for assistance.

A repeated service request about an unreasonable delay or failure to act may become a complaint.

Our complaints process

The City operates a four-tier complaint handling model.



Tier one – Frontline Resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at the first point of contact.

Upon receiving a complaint our staff will:

- acknowledge the complaint
- clarify concerns raised
- identify the desired outcome
- assess risk, complexity and urgency
- seek immediate resolution where appropriate.

All complaints will be acknowledged immediately where possible, or within three business days.

In most cases, tier one complaints can be resolved when you first contact the City and our Customer Support Team.

If it's not possible to resolve your complaint when you first contact us, or if your complaint requires deeper consideration, investigation by a particular team or employee or must follow a statutory process we will inform you of the next steps and the escalation of your complaint to a tier 2 category.

Tier two - Investigation

When your complaint cannot be resolved at first contact it will be assigned to an appropriate officer for investigation.

Investigations may include:

- discussions with relevant parties
- review of records and documentation
- site inspections
- consultation with contractors
- consideration of legislation, policies and procedures.

You will be advised:

- who is managing the complaint
- expected timeframes

- how they can contact the investigating officer
- the issues being examined.

The City aims to resolve complaints within 10 working days where practicable.

Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed and provided with updates.

Tier three – Internal Review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome or process, you may request an internal review.

The review will be undertaken by an officer who has not been involved in the original complaint.

The reviewer may:

- affirm the original decision
- vary the decision
- overturn the decision
- recommend additional action.

Internal review outcomes will be provided in writing.

Tier four – External Review

Where dissatisfaction remains after internal review, complainants may contact an external review body.

You can request an external review from the following organisations.

Complaint	Organisation to contact for external review
Actions or decisions of a Council, Council staff and contractors. This includes failure to consider human rights or failure to act compatibly with a human right under the Charter of Human	Victorian Ombudsman www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)	
Breaches of the Local Government Act 2020. Concerns about a councillor, council staff, a person providing advice to Council, or Council elections.	Local Government Inspectorate www.lgi.vic.gov.au
Breach of privacy. Complaint about a freedom of information application	Office of the Victorian Information Commission www.ovic.vic.gov.au
Corruption or public interest disclosure ('whistle-blower') complaints	Independent Broad-based Anticorruption Commission www.ibac.vic.gov.au
Management of child safety	Commission for Children and Young people www.contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au
Discrimination	Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission www.humanrights.vic.gov.au
Council elections	Victorian Electoral Commission www.vec.vic.gov.au

Unreasonable complainant conduct (UCC)

The City is committed to providing a fair, accessible and responsive complaint handling process. While the vast majority of customers raise legitimate concerns and engage respectfully in seeking a resolution, there may be occasions where a customer's conduct becomes unreasonable and has a significant impact on the City's ability to manage complaints effectively, efficiently and safely.

Unreasonable Complainant Conduct (UCC) is defined as "any behaviour by a current or former complainant which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues."

Where a customer's conduct is assessed as UCC, the City may manage the complaint in accordance with its Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure. This may include implementing reasonable measures to ensure staff well-being, maintain service delivery standards and enable the complaint to be managed fairly and effectively for all parties.

How to make a complaint

Any member of the public can make a complaint. Complaints can be made via the following methods:

- Online: <https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/Contact/Feedback-and-complaints/Feedback-form>
- Email: requests@bendigo.vic.gov.au
- Telephone: 1300 002 642
- Post: City of Greater Bendigo, PO Box 733, Bendigo 3552
- In person: GovHub (Galkangu) 189-229 Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo

It is helpful for you to keep City staff informed if there are any specific requirements regarding communication needs or barriers, we can assist you by:

- using an assistance service, such as an interpreter or TTY (for free);
- talking with you if you have trouble reading or writing.
- communicating with another person acting on your behalf if you cannot make the complaint yourself.

Privacy

We keep your personal information secure. We use your information to respond to your complaint and may also analyse the information you have provided for the purpose of improving services that relate to your complaint. Please refer to our [Privacy Policy](#).

We publish our complaint data including in our annual report. Published complaint data has personal information removed.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Frontline staff	The first point of contact for the customer. This is not limited to customer service frontline; it includes all officers who have direct contact with customers. They are responsible for clarifying and attempting to resolve the complaint where possible. If they are unable to resolve the complaint, they will refer the
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	complaint to the appropriate officer for investigation.
Managers	Managers are responsible for internal review of complaints including the final decision and providing a written outcome. Managers are expected to promote and ensure staff are adhering to this policy. An investigation of a complaint may be delegated to a leadership team member with no prior involvement.
Directors	On occasion managers may seek advice or support from Directors regarding a complaint. However, the Manager remains the officer responsible for the final decision and written outcome.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	The CEO will have an oversight of any formal complaints received from the Victorian Ombudsmans Office or against a direct report to the CEO.
Councillors	Councillors are responsible for ensuring all complaints received from members of the community are directed to relevant reporting process for operational issues.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of EMT or where required, resolution of Council.

9. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
<i>Month, year</i>	Insert initials	Business Unit	Eg. Develop, Review (significant) Review (administrative), Update	Increase version number each time document is updated/changed	<i>Month, year</i>
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