

Complaints Procedure – Corporate

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1. Purpose.....	2
2. Scope.....	2
3. Definitions	2
4. Responsibilities	3
5. Related Documents	3
5.1. Relevant Legislation and Standards	3
5.2. Relevant Council Documents and Policies	3
6. Procedure details.....	4
6.1. How to make a complaint.....	4
6.2. How we handle complaints	4
6.2.1. Initial assessment.....	5
6.2.2. First contact complaint resolution	5
6.2.3. Investigation	5
6.2.4. Internal review	5
6.2.5. External review.....	6
7. Privacy and Confidentiality	6
8. Procedure Review	7

1. Purpose

This procedure supports the Complaints Policy by explaining how corporate complaints can be made to Council and how those complaints will be handled.

It provides practical information for complainants and Council about the complaint process, including how complaints are received, assessed, responded to, reviewed and referred where appropriate.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to corporate complaints made to Council about Council services, actions, decisions, policies or delays.

It does not apply to matters that are managed under a separate statutory, regulatory, appeal, objection or service-specific complaints process. Where another process applies, Council will advise the complainant of the appropriate pathway where possible.

Where a complaint relates to a service area with additional legislative, regulatory, funding, notification, escalation or reporting requirements, the complaint must be managed in accordance with the Complaints Policy and any relevant service-specific procedure.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Corporate complaint	A complaint about Council services, actions, decisions, policies or delays that is managed under this procedure, unless another procedure or statutory process applies.
Service request	A request for Council to provide, improve, replace, inspect, maintain or deliver a service, facility or activity, where no expression of dissatisfaction has been made.
Internal review	A review of Council's handling of, or response to, a complaint, conducted by a senior Council officer who has not had prior involvement in the complaint, where practicable.
External review	The consideration of a complaint by an independent body outside Council that has authority to investigate, review or determine the matter.
Statutory review process	A review, appeal, objection or complaint process established under legislation and managed by Council, a tribunal, court, regulator or other authorised body.

4. Responsibilities

Responsibility	Role/Position
Make a complaint and provide relevant information to support assessment and response.	Complainant
Receive, record and acknowledge complaints.	Customer Service and employees receiving complaints
Provide information about the complaints process, accessibility support and other pathways where relevant.	Customer Service and employees receiving complaints
Assess complaints, resolve matters at first contact where possible, and refer complaints for investigation where required.	Customer Service, relevant employees, team leaders, coordinators and managers
Investigate and respond to complaints in accordance with this procedure and the Complaints Policy.	Relevant employees, team leaders, coordinators and managers
Conduct internal reviews where requested.	Senior Council officer
Oversee complaint handling, consistency and service improvement within their area.	Managers and Coordinators

5. Related Documents

5.1. Relevant Legislation and Standards

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the following legislation and standards, where relevant:

- Local Government Act 2020
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012

5.2. Relevant Council Documents and Policies

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the following Council policies/plans/strategies:

- Complaints policy
- Early Years Complaints procedure
- Privacy Policy
- Public Transparency Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Unreasonable Customer Conduct policy and procedure

6. Procedure details

6.1. How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint in a number of ways:

- Email info@towong.vic.gov.au
- Mail: PO Box 55, Tallangatta VIC 3700
- Telephone: 1300 365 222
- In person:

Tallangatta Customer Service Centre
32 Towong Street, Tallangatta
Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm

Corryong Customer Service Centre and Library
76 Hanson Street, Corryong
Monday – Friday 9am – 4.30pm.

When raising a complaint it is helpful to provide the following details:

- Name and contact details - you can complain anonymously, but this may limit how we are able to respond to you;
- The action, decision, service or policy you are complaining about, and why you are dissatisfied;
- Relevant details, such as dates, times, location or reference numbers, and documents that support your complaint;
- The outcome you are seeking from making your complaint;
- Whether you have any communication needs.

Council is committed to ensuring the complaints process is accessible to everyone. If you have specific communication needs or barriers, Council can assist by using an assistance service such as an interpreter or TTY, talking with you if you have trouble reading or writing, or communicating with another person acting on your behalf if you cannot make the complaint yourself.

6.2. How we handle complaints

When you make a complaint to us, we will record and acknowledge receipt of your complaint. A staff member will get back to you regarding next steps within 21 calendar days.

Our staff will be respectful and responsive in all of their communications with members of the public. We expect the same of you when communicating with our staff. We may change the way we communicate with you if your behaviour or conduct raises health, safety, resource or equity issues for Council staff involved in the complaints process. Where customer conduct is considered unreasonable, Council may implement communication or service management strategies in accordance with its Unreasonable Customer Conduct Policy and Procedure.

6.2.1. Initial assessment

We will initially assess your complaint and identify whether the complaint triggers any statutory, regulatory, safeguarding, privacy, public interest disclosure, contractual, or service-specific requirements. If you make your complaint in person or over the telephone, this may happen while we are talking to you.

After our initial assessment, we may:

- Take direct action to resolve your complaint;
- Refer your complaint to an appropriate staff member for investigation;
- Decline to deal with your complaint if you have a right of statutory review of your complaint, such as a right of appeal to VCAT.

6.2.2. First contact complaint resolution

Where possible, we will attempt to resolve your complaint the first time you contact us. If we cannot resolve your complaint quickly and it requires investigation, we will advise you who will be investigating your complaint.

If we decide not to take action on your complaint, we will explain why, and where possible, inform you about other options.

6.2.3. Investigation

When complaints cannot be resolved at first contact, they may be referred to an appropriate staff member for investigation. We will advise you how long it may take and, as the investigation proceeds, we will let you know if we anticipate that it may take longer. As part of our investigation we may:

- Assess the complaint against relevant legislation, policies and procedures;
- Refer to relevant Council documents and records;
- Involve relevant staff or other parties who can provide information to assist in resolving the complaint;
- Discuss possible solutions with the affected parties.

We will advise you of the outcome and explain our reasons and inform you about other options if relevant.

6.2.4. Internal review

If you are dissatisfied with our decision and how we responded to your complaint, you can request an internal review. The internal review will be conducted by a senior Council officer who has not had any prior involvement with your complaint.

We will endeavour to complete the internal review and inform you of the outcome in writing within 30 calendar days of the date of your request and, as the review proceeds, will let you know if we anticipate that it may take longer.

6.2.5. External review

There are external bodies that can deal with different types of complaints about us. You can request an external review from the following organisations:

Type of complaint	Organisation to contact
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 Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).	Victorian Ombudsman www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au 1800 806 314
Breaches of the Local Government Act	Local Government Inspectorate www.lgi.vic.gov.au 1800 469 359
Breach of privacy or complaint about a freedom of information application	Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner www.ovic.vic.gov.au 1300 006 842
Corruption or public interest disclosure ('whistleblower') complaints	Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission www.ibac.vic.gov.au 1300 735 135
Discrimination	Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission www.humanrights.vic.gov.au 1300 292 153
Council elections	Victorian Electoral Commission www.vec.vic.gov.au 13 18 32

7. Privacy and Confidentiality

The collection, storage, use, and disclosure of personal information will comply with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) to the extent that it applies to Council and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic), which provides for the responsible handling of personal information by Victorian local governments. For the avoidance of doubt, all personal health information provided to Council in the course of administering this procedure will be treated in the strictest of confidence and will only be used for the purposes of this procedure.

8. Procedure Review

This procedure should be reviewed every four (4) years from the date of adoption, or when there is:

- a change in relevant legislation,
- a change in Council's position,
- a recommendation from a governance body (e.g. Audit and Risk Committee, Regulatory Authority, external auditor etc.)

Authorised by:



Narelle Taylor

Acting Chief Executive Officer