

Victorian Taxi Directorate

A GUIDE TO CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS HANDLING



Department of Transport

Victorian Taxi Directorate, Level 23, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3001 GPO Box 2797, Melbourne VIC 3000 Phone: 1800 638 802 (toll-free) www.taxi.vic.gov.au
Authorised by the Victorian Government, 80 Collins Street Melbourne 3001.

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1 ABBREVIATIONS

DOT	Department of Transport.
VTD	Victorian Taxi Directorate.
NSP	Network Service Provider.

2 INTRODUCTION

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Handling procedures outline the process that the Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) deals with the issues raised by its customers, in regards to the provision of services by any of the transport industries regulated by the VTD. These are primarily services relating to:

- Taxi-cabs.
- Hire cars includes SVs tour vehicles/buses, etc.
- Driving instructors.
- Network Service Providers.

The handling of all customer feedback, including complaints, should be timely, accurate and non-discriminating. It should also demonstrate to potential customers a process of industry accountability which encourages increased confidence in the quality of the service provided.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

The Victorian Taxi Directorate (VTD) is committed to effective and efficient customer feedback and complaints handling. Information concerning the customer feedback and complaints handling process is made readily available to customers, complainants and other interested parties.

A Customer Feedback and Complaints Handling Procedure affects customers as well as service providers and responsible government departments. The VTD will:

- Provide an accessible, well publicised, transparent, timely, consistent and easy to use system for lodging feedback, in particular complaints.
- Adhere to the *Information Privacy Act 2000* when dealing with personal information.
- Examine and determine the nature of the customer feedback.
- Recognise and address the needs and expectations of the customer.
- Respect any request for confidentiality.
- Respect the cultural and religious beliefs of all customers.
- Provide, wherever possible, an accurate and realistic response to the customer.
- Ensure prompt referral to an alternative agency, such as Victoria Police, where the complaint is outside the responsibility of the VTD.

Privacy

A customer has the right to provide feedback and to complain if dissatisfied with the provision of a service or a product.

A customer also has the right to expect their personal details will be respected and handled in the manner prescribed by the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. In addition, a customer has the right for any special needs to be respected and to be treated without discrimination.

Personal information collected during the receipt and logging of feedback is used to facilitate the timely determination of that feedback. Personal information may need to be passed between VTD officers in order to complete all parts of feedback.

Customers must be made aware of the VTD privacy obligations at the point of collection of their personal information. This may be done with a statement by the VTD officer that illustrates why the personal information is collected and how it will be used. Written correspondence (letter, facsimile or email) must incorporate a privacy statement.

An example of a privacy statement is:

“All information collected for the purposes of customer feedback will be stored in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. Your information will not be disclosed to any other party except for the purpose for which it is collected. We are committed to respecting your right to privacy and protecting your personal information.”

All complaints and feedback made to the VTD are between the complainant and the VTD. The VTD will not provide information on the details or outcomes of individual cases to outside parties other than with the complainant's express consent.

A copy of the Privacy Whistleblowers Protection Act Statement is available on the Victorian Taxi Directorate website at www.taxi.vic.gov.au

Whistleblowers Protection Act

The *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001* is designed to protect people who disclose information about serious wrong-doing within the Victorian public sector and to provide a framework for the investigation of these matters.

A whistleblower is any person who makes a report or allegation, known as a disclosure, about improper conduct by public bodies or public officers. The Act defines improper conduct as:

- Corrupt conduct.
- A substantial mismanagement of public resources.
- Conduct involving substantial risk to public health or safety
- Conduct involving substantial risk to environment.

The Department of Transport (DOT) has established its own set of procedures for managing disclosures made pursuant to the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001*. The procedures are based on Ombudsman Victoria's Whistleblowers guidelines.

Within the Department of Transport contact:
The Protected Disclosures Coordinator
GPO Box 2797
Melbourne 3000
Phone: (03) 9655 6666

Alternatively you may wish to contact the ombudsman:

Ombudsman Victoria
Level 9, 459 Collins Street (North Tower)
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000
Telephone: (03) 9613 6222
Toll Free: 1800 806 314
Facsimile: (03) 9614 0246

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Email: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au
Website: <http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au>

For further information see the Whistleblowers Protection Act information on the Department of Justice website at www.justice.vic.gov.au

Language

The need for interpreter services must be considered, particularly if complex issues need to be addressed. Even when a customer has everyday English, they may need assistance if English is their second language.

All VTD officers who receive feedback have access to a telephone interpreter service. It is usually not adequate to rely on family members to interpret.

For people whose first language is not English, VTD officers must be willing to accept written feedback in other languages and have the feedback translated into English. Accordingly, any written response to those persons must be translated into the specified language required to ensure they fully understand any action required or taken.

Disability awareness

Customers may have intellectual, physical, sensory, psychiatric or a combination of these disabilities and may therefore have specific communication requirements.

For example a person who is blind and does not have a voice-activated computer would be unable to complete a form on the internet. A person with an intellectual disability may need an advocate to assist them or may not be able to fully explain their needs.

VTD officers need to be able to assess each situation in a non-judgmental way and ensure the complainant is provided with whatever assistance is required.

Customer satisfaction

If a customer/complainant is dissatisfied with the response they receive from the VTD the matter will be referred to the Assistant Manager of Industry Compliance & Intelligence Unit for review and subsequent contact with the customer. If the customer remains unsatisfied following that review, they can request a further review from the Manager - Industry Compliance & Intelligence. If the customer then remains unsatisfied they are advised that they can contact the Ombudsman.

4 VTD COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT MODEL

TIER 1

Frontline complaint management

Staff empowered with clear delegations to resolve low-level complaints wherever possible at first contact. Staff log complaint details for later analysis. Higher-level complaints referred directly to next stage.

TIER 2

Internal review or investigation

More senior staff, or a designated complaints officer, reviews or investigates complaints either unresolved at frontline or referred by the Network Service Providers (NSP).

TIER 3

External review

Agency advises complainant of external options, e.g. Alternative dispute resolution, complaints agency such as the Ombudsman Victoria other avenues of appeal or legal remedy.

5 FEEDBACK HANDLING PRINCIPLES

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Handling procedures have been developed to reflect the guiding principles as described by the Australian Standards ISO 10002-2006. The VTD will:

- Recognise, promote and protect customer rights, including the right to comment and complain.
- Provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving customer complaints.
- Provide information to customers on the customer feedback and complaints handling process for the VTD.
- Increase the level of customer satisfaction with the provision of services and enhance the customer/provider relationship.
- Monitor and manage complaints in an endeavour to improve the overall quality of products and services.
- Ensure best practice application of the customer feedback and complaints handling procedure by appropriately trained staff that are monitored from time to time to test performance levels.
- Be audited regularly to determine the effectiveness of the results it produces.

Additionally, VTD officers must ensure that they conduct and implement the processes and principles of customer feedback and complaints handling as described by the Australian Standards ISO 10002-2006, summarised as follows:

Commitment

A commitment by VTD officers at all levels, to the efficient and fair resolution of complaints.

This is demonstrated by an organisational culture which acknowledges customers' rights to complain and provide feedback and which actively solicits feedback from customers.

Fairness

The customer feedback and complaints handling process will recognise the need to be fair and objective of both the customer/complainant and to those industry participants against whom a complaint is made.

Resources

Sufficient staff resources will be provided for the customer feedback and complaints handling process and each will have appropriate levels of authority and empowerment to deliver complaint determinations.

Visibility

The customer feedback and complaints handling process will be well publicised to customers and will include clear information to customers about their right to lodge a complaint and how such complaints can be submitted.

Access

The customer feedback and complaints handling process will be accessible to all and ensure that information is readily available on the details of making and resolving a complaint.

The customer feedback and complaints handling process and supporting information will be easy to understand and use and be in plain language.

Assistance

Assistance will be available for customers in the formulation and lodgement of a complaint.

Responsiveness

Customer feedback, in particular complaints, will be dealt with quickly and customers will be treated courteously. Specific timeframes will be established and communicated to customers to ensure that expectations are met.

Charges

Customer feedback and complaints handling will be at no charge to the customer.

Remedies

The customer feedback and complaints handling process will have the capacity to determine and implement remedies.

Objectivity

The customer feedback and complaints handling process will ensure that each customer is addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

Data collection

Appropriate systematic recording of customer feedback and complaints and the outcomes will be carried out. Any data collection undertaken at the VTD will conform to privacy legislation.

Systemic & recurring problems

Complaints will be classified and analysed for identification and rectification of systemic and recurring problems relating to particular industry sectors or specific industry entities.

Accountability

Monthly reporting on the operation of the customer feedback and complaints handling process against documented performance standards will be carried out.

Reviews

The customer feedback and complaints handling process will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is efficiently delivering effective outcomes.

Customer focused

Those VTD staff involved in the customer feedback and complaints handling process will adopt a customer focused approach, to ensure they are open to feedback, including complaints, and will show commitment in resolving complaints by their actions.

6 FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

6.1 How to make a complaint to the VTD

Customers can complain to the VTD if they are not happy with the services provided to them by any of the following industries:

- Taxi
- Hire Vehicles, Special Vehicles (including wedding cars) and small buses (less than 12 seats)
- Driving instructors
- Bus drivers.

What the VTD can investigate

The VTD can investigate complaints about organisations or individuals who work in the taxi, hire vehicle or driving instructor industries.

The types of issues customers could complain to the VTD about include:

- driver behaviour, knowledge or safety
- fare refusal
- vehicle safety
- fraudulent transactions
- taxi bookings
- touting
- vehicle condition
- driver cleanliness.

What the VTD cannot investigate

Serious crime

The VTD cannot immediately respond if a customer is involved in an altercation with an organisation or an individual.

In the event of an emergency, customers should contact Victoria Police on 000.

The VTD does not investigate criminal matters, so complaints of this nature may be forwarded to Victoria Police or other relevant agencies for further investigation. This includes complaints about:

- assault
- theft
- drink driving or drug use
- road rage
- vehicle accidents
- refunds (other than MPTP).

The VTD works closely with Victoria Police and may take action against an industry participant who is under investigation by the police.

Civil matters

Although the VTD can advise customers on the best course of action to take, it cannot resolve civil disputes or compensate customers for lost money or property, or assist if you have been involved in an accident with a taxi driver.

How to lodge a formal complaint or provide feedback

The VTD welcomes all feedback including complaints about the industries it regulates. Feedback can be made in writing or verbally and the VTD will assist individuals with communication difficulties if necessary.

The investigating officer will inform you if further information is required.

Online

- Lodge a formal complaint that will be investigated.
- Submit feedback that the VTD will use to help target poor performance.

You can also use the feedback form to compliment an individual or organisation, or to make a suggestion about how services could be improved in your area.

By telephone or facsimile

Customers can fax or contact the VTD by telephone if preferred.

Telephone: 1800 638 802
Facsimile: (03) 8683 0771

By mail

Customers can download a PDF or Word version of the form from the VTD website or request to have a copy posted out to them.

Completed forms should be sent to:

Victorian Taxi Directorate
GPO Box 2797
Melbourne VIC 3000

Information needed to lodge a formal complaint

It is important that customers provide the VTD with as much information as possible to assist in the investigation of their complaint.

This includes:

- the date and time of the incident they are complaining about
- information that may be required to help identify the individual or organisation their complaint is about, including:
 - their receipt
 - taxi registration number – painted on the door, on registration plate and in tactile lettering near the external passenger door handles

- hire vehicle registration number – a VHA, VHB or VHC registration plate
- vehicle registration number for driving instructor, Special Vehicle or small bus
- taxi driver identification number – displayed on the dashboard
- the individual or organisation's phone number your complaint relates to if you know it.

- a detailed account of the incident
- their name and contact numbers
- names and phone numbers of any witnesses.

What happens when customers make a formal complaint?

1. The complaint will be acknowledged promptly.
2. The complaint will be investigated to identify the industry participant concerned.
3. The VTD will take appropriate disciplinary action in relation to complaints based on the information provided to us. The VTD will contact the complainant if further information is required.
4. If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of this process or experience an undue delay in our response, they can ask for their complaint to be re-examined by a senior VTD Manager.
5. If the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they can ask for a member of the Department of Transport's leadership team to review their complaint.
6. At the conclusion of this process, they may wish to contact Ombudsman Victoria if they are dissatisfied with the way that the Department of Transport has managed their complaint.

Responding to unreasonable correspondence

The Victorian Taxi Directorate will not respond to unreasonable or vexatious correspondence it receives directly, indirectly or is copied into. Unreasonable correspondence may be sent from an individual or a company. The definition of unreasonable correspondence can be grouped into five categories:

- 1 Unreasonable persistence
- 2 Unreasonable demands
- 3 Unreasonable lack of cooperation
- 4 Unreasonable arguments
- 5 Unreasonable behaviour.

Correspondence which lacks the authenticity of an author, particularly where the sender cannot be reliably identified will be reviewed on an individual basis to determine if the correspondence is unreasonable or vexatious.

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7 RECORDING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

The VTD has introduced the Resolve Integrated Response Management System (Resolve) to manage feedback (including complaints) from the general public to the VTD. Resolve is a complete customer contact management system. Feedback forms on the VTD website are automatically captured in Resolve.

7.1 Assessment

- All details are to be entered into the Resolve database at the earliest instance, regardless of how the feedback is received. Customer feedback and complaints lodged through the internet are recorded directly in Resolve.
- The customer feedback/complaint is assessed to determine the appropriate course of action. At the assessment level it may be appropriate to provide the customer with the relevant information and close the file.
- Those complaints relating to customer service, provided by the NSP, i.e bookings will be referred, in the first instance, to the Network Service Provider for appropriate resolution.
- An acknowledgement is forwarded to the customer advising of the actions to be taken by the VTD. The acknowledgment may also request further evidence such as receipts to substantiate the claims being made.
- For all customer feedback and complaints, regardless of how they are received, if the matter is outside the jurisdiction of the VTD the customer must be advised of this.
 - For example, if the feedback/complaint is a police matter the customer must be advised that they should report the matter to the police. The VTD will record the matter on Resolve and close the file. If the customer requests further action the VTD will keep the file open until all internal and external avenues have been exhausted.
 - The file is then forwarded on Resolve to the relevant officer for investigation and preparation of an investigation and response.

7.2 Populating Resolve

- Customer's name and contact details.
- The issue type (complaint, compliment, other, query, suggestion).
- How the feedback/complaint was received (email, fax, in person, internet, letter, other, telephone).
- The feedback/complaint priority (1 = Urgent, 2 = Serious, 3 = Less Serious).
- Incident date and time.
- The issues relevant to the feedback/complaint.
- The feedback/complaint summary section.
- Diary notes to capture all work that has been done and action that has been taken relevant to the feedback/complaint.
- Where possible the incident location, driver's name (relevant details will then be populated from Resolve), vehicle registration number, place of pick up and drop off.
- The outcome code and description for each issue. Note that these fields cannot be completed until the investigation has been finalised and required actions have been determined.

7.3 Investigation

Complaints Investigations Officers are to familiarise themselves with the feedback/complaints and prioritise the required actions.

The Officer will, where appropriate:

- check the background of the driver on the database. The officer is to check all available information eg. Driver Licensing System (DLS) when handling a complaint against a driver
- ensure that all matters raised by the customer are addressed
- maintain a detailed log of investigation that is updated on Resolve every time action is taken
- scanned and recorded on Resolve all documentation in relation to customer feedback and complaints.

7.4 Review

- The complaint file with the original complaint, details of the investigations and proposed response, together with recommendations, are to be forwarded to the Assistant Manager of Industry Compliance & Intelligence Unit.
- A copy of the proposed letter/email to be sent to the customer will be attached to the complaint file.
- If an administrative process is initiated against the industry representative and an appropriate legislative tool is utilised, details of the administrative procedure and/or notice are also to be attached to the complaint file.

7.5 Closure

- The contents of the complaint file are assessed for thoroughness of the investigation and accuracy of the proposed response to the customer.
- If approved for completion the proposed response is forwarded to the customer and the file is closed on Resolve.
- If approval is not gained the file is returned to the appropriate VTD officer via Resolve for additional work as noted on the file and in Resolve.
- As a matter of standard procedure, most files should be finalised within ten days if practicable. Very few files should remain outstanding after thirty days unless there are specific administrative requirements.

7.6 File security

- When completed, customer feedback and complaints files are to be stored in a document tray on the Feedback Handling Coordinator's desk.
- At the end of each shift the tray is to be locked away in the appropriate storage facility.

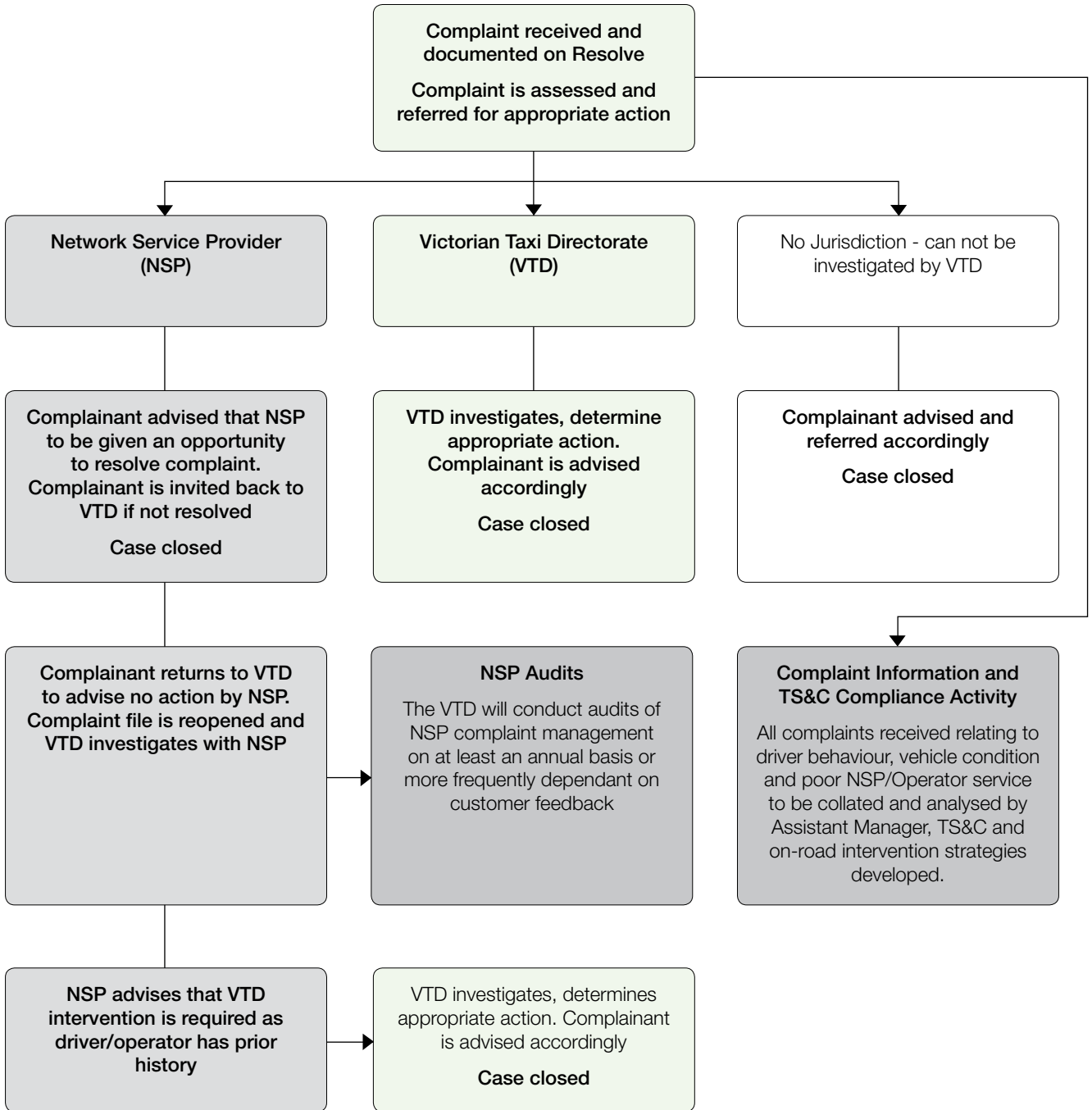
7.7 Expected timelines

- The customer should be advised of action within two business days of receipt of feedback by:
 - acknowledgement of receipt of an issue that is classed as a priority 1, 2 or 3
 - referral to an external body such as the Network Service Provider.
- Where possible, substantive responses are required for:
 - Priority 1 complaints within 10 business days of receiving the feedback.
 - Priority 2 complaints within 60 business days of receiving the feedback.
 - Priority 3 complaints within 90 business days of receiving the feedback.
- Where the issue raised is identified as being too complex for a substantive response within the required time, a letter advising of any delay must be forwarded to the complainant within 28 business days of receiving the feedback.

7.8 Complainants review rights

- If the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they can ask a member of the Department of Transport's leadership team to review their complaint.
- At the conclusion of this process, they may wish to contact Ombudsman Victoria if they are dissatisfied with the way that the Department of Transport has managed their complaint.

8 ATTACHMENT 1 – COMPLAINTS ASSESSMENT PROCESS



For further information please contact the Victorian Tax Directorate
on 1800 638 802 or visit www.taxi.vic.gov.au

