



ENERGY AND WATER  
OMBUDSMAN  
Victoria **Listen Assist Resolve**



# Compliments and complaints about EWOV

ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN (VICTORIA)

**26 August 2021**

*\*Note: this is an EWOV Board policy and cannot be changed without Board approval*



## Purpose

From time to time, the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) receives compliments and complaints about how we have undertaken our dispute resolution role. This policy sets out how our customers, energy and water providers and retailers, or other stakeholders, can provide compliments or complaints about our services and how compliments and complaints will be handled. This policy promotes continuous improvement of our services: using feedback to review our systems, processes and provide targeted staff training.

## Who can give a compliment or make a complaint?

Any person can give a compliment or make a complaint about our service. Compliments and complaints can be made over the phone, in writing (email, letter, webform) or via a third person.

## How we handle compliments and complaints

### *Compliments*

Compliments are recorded for reporting purposes and the compliment is passed onto the relevant employee and their manager.

### *Complaints*

We manage complaints about EWOV in accordance with the Commonwealth Government Benchmarks for Industry-Based Customer Dispute Resolution offices and the AS/NZS10002:2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations.

All complaints are accepted openly, treated seriously and investigated fairly, independently and in a timely way. In most cases, we will acknowledge complaints within two business days of receipt and the outcome of EWOV's investigation will be communicated within 10 business days (unless it is not reasonably possible to do so). We keep a record of complaints so we can respond to the individual complaint and improve our service.

Complaints can typically be categorised as:

*i. Complaints about a case: our service, our staff or the outcome of your matter*

Where a person isn't happy with the service provided by EWOV in relation to a case has been handled by us. They may be concerned about the progress of the matter, or they have a query about how we've applied policies or procedures to the case. This includes complaints raised about Privacy (also see EWOV's Privacy Policy for further information).

The majority of our cases close with a conciliated outcome (both parties agree a way forward).

Sometimes EWOV closes an Investigation on the basis that a fair and reasonable response and/or offer has been made by the scheme participant. We may also decide to stop our investigation if another body is better suited to manage the case or decide that the matter is out of our jurisdiction.

*ii. Complaints about the operation of the scheme*

Where an individual or organisational representative isn't happy with the overall service provided by EWOV, our policies as they apply to all cases, our levies, or another governance matter.

## Timeframes

All compliments and complaints will be acknowledged within two business days of receipt. We will assess and respond to most complaints within 10 business days. Complaints about our decision to close a case may take longer for us to respond to (depending on whether we need to undertake a detailed review of the matter). If a complaint requires more time to be finalised, we will let the complainant know.

## Possible outcomes

As stated above, all compliments will be passed on to relevant staff member(s) and to their manager(s) and will inform how we recognise our staff.

Outcomes of complaints made under this policy may include one or more of the following:

- An apology for the way we handled the matter
- A more detailed explanation (verbal or in writing) of the process and how we handled the matter
- The fixing of an issue raised
- A change in the way we are handling the matter (if still current)
- The re-opening of your matter (if already closed)
- Ongoing monitoring of issues
- A change to our process
- Staff training or counselling
- Notification/report to the EWOV Board
- Notification/report to another body (for example in the case of a privacy breach)
- An acknowledgement, but no further action (when a complaint is determined to be without merit).

## Unreasonable complainant behaviour

Occasionally, a person making a complaint may not act reasonably. This can include where a person makes multiple complaints about the same issue, even after a full response has been provided. Unreasonable behaviour may also include abusive, derogatory, racially vilifying communication, or communication otherwise intended to demean an employee. We may choose to stop engaging with the person and not accept any further correspondence after the full response has been provided.

## How to make a complaint

### *Complaints about a case: our service, our staff or the outcome of your matter*

**STEP ONE:** With any complaint, the first step is to raise it with the staff member that has been dealing with the case and explain the issue. If the complainant is not satisfied with the staff member's response, they can ask that their complaint be escalated to the Team Lead (or Team Manager if the Team Lead is managing the case). This can be done via phone, email, letter, or webform.

Once a matter has been escalated to a Team Lead or Team Manager, an acknowledgement of the complaint will be provided within two business days and contact will be made using the complainant's preferred contact method (e.g. phone, letter, email).

Within five business days the Team Manager will respond via the complainant's preferred contact method to advise of an outcome (as detailed above).

Complaints resolved at this stage will be noted on our case management system and will inform improvements to practice and normal staff coaching and performance management practices.

**STEP TWO:** If this does not resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction then the complaint can be escalated to the Head of Operations and Experience for review. This can be done via the Team Manager or in writing (letter, email, webform). An acknowledgement will be provided by the Head of Operations within two business days and an initial response within five business days.

If the complaint is about the outcome of a matter, the Head of Operations and EWOV's Principal Investigator will review the complaint and the case to decide on the next steps. This may result in the case being re-opened, no further action (depending on the review of the response at Step One), or an internal review of the case (see Step Three below).

Complaints resolved at this stage will be noted on our case management system and inform improvements as at Step One. These complaints will also inform operation-wide improvements and business planning (priority setting).

**STEP THREE:** If steps one and two have not resolved the complaint, then in certain circumstances the complaint can be escalated to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will review the case and the complainant's correspondence to determine whether further responses are required. An acknowledgement will be provided within two days and this will detail any other timeframes.

In the case of an internal review about the outcome of a matter, this will be conducted by a Team Lead or other senior staff member who hasn't been involved in the case. Internal reviews will be completed within 20 business days and a written report will be approved by the Ombudsman and then sent to the complainant.

If a scheme participant or member of the public is unhappy with the Ombudsman's response, the Ombudsman will inform the EWOV Directors and the Board Chair.

### ***Complaints about the operation of the scheme***

When a scheme participant or member of the public isn't happy about the operation of the scheme, the Ombudsman will consider written complaints, and respond in writing (email or letter) within 10 business days. The Ombudsman may appoint a person to investigate a complaint made about the Head of Operations and Experience or other senior employee.

**EWOV Board:** The Board does not review specific complaint investigation processes or outcomes because the Ombudsman has responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the EWOV scheme and the resolution of individual complaints.

If a complaint is raised about the Ombudsman's ability to perform her/his role or serious misconduct, the matter will go to the Board Chair for review. If a scheme participant or member of the public is unhappy with a reply from the Ombudsman, the EWOV Directors and Board Chairman will be informed.

The Ombudsman will report periodically to the Board on the number of complaints received and handled under this policy, including any steps taken to address any issues identified. Complaints resolved at this stage will inform system-wide changes and organisational development.