



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



Compliments and complaints about EWOV

ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN (VICTORIA)

August 2020

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



Table of Contents

Purpose	2
What is a complaint?	2
Who can give a compliment or make a complaint	2
How we handle compliments and complaints	2
Timeframes	4
Possible outcomes	4
Unreasonable complainant behaviour	4
Reporting to EWOV's Board	4
Complaints we don't handle under this policy	4
Appendix A - Process for handling complaints about EWOV (fig.)	6

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 external stakeholders (such as customers or scheme participants) can give compliments and complaints about the services provided by us and provides information about how compliments and complaints will be handled. This policy is designed to promote continuous improvement of our services by using complaints information to review our systems, processes and provide targeted staff training.

What is a complaint?

The Australian and New Zealand Standard *Guidelines for complaint management in organizations* (AS/NZS 10002:2014) defines a complaint as an "expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required." We will treat a complaint as having been made under this policy where there is an expression of dissatisfaction about the conduct of an employee, the delivery of our service, and a response or resolution is expected or legally required.

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 or in writing.

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. 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, in which case a progress report will be provided). We keep a record of complaints so we can respond to the individual complaint and improve our service.

We can receive the following types of complaints:

i. Complaints about case management

Sometimes, customers or scheme participants aren't happy with the way that 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 an EWOV policy or procedure to the case. We have an escalation process for dealing with these complaints.

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 they are not happy with the Team Lead and/or Team Manager's response, the complaint may be escalated to the General Manager Operations.

If a customer or scheme participant's concern remains unresolved at this point, it may be escalated to the Ombudsman for review.

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 preferred contact method (e.g. phone, letter, email). When reviewing the concerns, we might find that training or counselling of the staff member/s will help improve our service. We might also change our processes or let senior management know about the issue. The Ombudsman may also bring it to the attention of the Board.

ii. Complaints about the operation of the scheme

If a scheme participant or member of the public isn't happy about the operation of the scheme, they'll need to write to us. The Ombudsman will consider the complaint, and respond to the complaint in writing (email or letter) within 10 business days.

If the scheme participant or member of the public is unhappy with the Ombudsman's reply, the Ombudsman will let the EWOV Directors and Board Chairman know. The Chairman will decide if further action is needed.

If the complaint is about the physical or mental ability of the Ombudsman to perform his/her role or serious misconduct, the matter will go directly to the Board Chairman for review.

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

iii. Complaints about senior employees

The Ombudsman may appoint a person to investigate a complaint made about the General Manager Operations or other senior employee.

Complaints about the Ombudsman will be directed to the Chair of the Board, who will determine, in consultation with the Board, any steps to be taken to deal with the complaint.

Timeframes

Complaints will be acknowledged within two business days of receipt. We will assess and respond to complaints within 10 business days. If a complaint requires more time to be finalised, we will let the complainant know.

Possible outcomes

Possible outcomes of complaints made under this policy may include:

- an explanation of the process and information about how we handled the matter complained about
- fixing of an issue raised
- an apology for the way we handled the matter complained about
- a change in the way we are handling the matter complained about
- ongoing monitoring of issues
- a change to our process
- staff training or counselling.

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. We may choose to stop engaging with the person and not accept any further correspondence after the full response has been provided.

Unreasonable behaviour may also include abusive, derogatory, racially vilifying communication, or communication otherwise intended to demean an employee.

Reporting to EWOV's Board

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 we don't handle under this policy

This policy does not cover the following complaints:

Complaints about cases closed after a fair and reasonable assessment

We may decide to close an Investigation on the basis that a fair and reasonable response and/or offer has been made by the scheme participant. If we close a case because we think a scheme participant's response and/or offer is fair and reasonable but the customer doesn't agree, they can ask us to do an internal review of our investigation into their complaint. The customer will need to establish the grounds for an internal review. Please refer to our *Internal Review Policy* for more information.

Complaints about our jurisdiction to handle a complaint

If a scheme participant disputes our jurisdiction to handle a particular complaint, the scheme participant can formally challenge our jurisdiction. Please refer to our *Case Registration Procedure* for more information.

Complaints about privacy

We comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the *Australian Privacy Principles* with respect to the collection, retention, storage and disposal of personal information. Please refer to our *Privacy Policy* for more information.

Appendix A - Process for handling complaints about EWOV (fig.)

