

Complaint Handling

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Approval by:	Council	Responsible Officer:	Manager Governance
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide customers and complainants with a clear pathway for how complaints will be handled and to assist Council staff in managing and processing customer complaints in an efficient and transparent manner.

This policy aims to:

- Put in place an open and transparent complaints handling system.
- Establish our timeframes for resolving complaints.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Give customers and complainants confidence Council will listen and be responsive to their concerns.
- Ensure staff handle complaints fairly and objectively.
- Set out how staff record and analyse complaint data to identify opportunities to improve our services.

2. Context

Council is committed to sound decision-making processes to ensure fair and reasonable outcomes for the Knox community. Council also recognises a customer's right to make a complaint and that they give Council:

- vital information about its services;
- a valuable opportunity to make things right; and
- insights to learn from complaints to improve our services.

This policy provides Council with an organisational approach to complaint handling and supports and empowers staff in the facilitation and resolution of complaints in an efficient and transparent manner. It also ensures that Council is accountable both internally and externally for its decision-making and complaint handling performance.

This policy is based on the Victorian Ombudsman's 'Councils and Complaints – A good practice guide' (July 2021), and the New South Wales Ombudsman's 'Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Model Policy' (2013).

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4. Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers across Council. It also applies to third party contractors carrying out services on Council's behalf.

The policy may not apply to the following complaints, which may be managed through other processes:

- Requests for review / appeal of an infringement or statutory decision (refer section 8.2.3)
- Dissatisfaction expressed when providing feedback to a community consultation exercise (refer section 8.2.2)
- Complaints involving an allegation of fraud or corrupt conduct (refer section 0)
- Complaints about Councillors (refer section 0)
- Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (refer section 0)
- Claims against Council for personal injury or property damage or other loss or damage
- Internal complaints which allege a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct or other internal policy.

5. References

5.1 Council Plan 2021-25

- Civic Engagement and Integrity - Strategy 5.3 - Ensure our processes are transparent and decisions are accountable.

5.2 Related Legislation

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

5.3 Related Council Policies

- Records Management Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety Policy
- Privacy and Data Protection Policy and Guidelines
- Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedures

6. Definitions

Complainant	A person or organisation that makes a complaint.
Complaint	<p>An expression of dissatisfaction with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the quality of an action taken, decision made or service provided by a member of Council staff or a contractor engaged by the Council; or (b) the delay by a member of Council staff or a contractor engaged by the Council in taking an action, making a decision or providing a service; or (c) a policy or decision made by a Council or a member of Council staff or a contractor. <p>A request for service is not a complaint.</p>
Council	Means Knox City Council.
Councillor	<p>Means a person who holds the office of member of a Council.</p> <p>Note: Councillors are not staff members and the role of a Councillor does not include the performance of any responsibilities or functions of the Chief Executive Officer (which include the day-to-day operations of Council).</p>
Council Staff	Means any employee of Council whether permanent, temporary or casual
First point of contact	The staff member who initially receives the complaint.
Request for service	Contact with the Council to seek assistance, advice, information, access to a new service or to inform/make a report about something for which the Council has responsibility. A request for service might become a complaint if the request is not properly dealt with.
Resolved complaint	<p>A complaint that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been addressed to the satisfaction of the resident or complainant; or • Has been addressed by Council (or a contractor) and the complainant notified of the outcome. (Including circumstances where the complainant is not necessarily satisfied with the outcome.)
Statutory decision	<p>A statutory decision a decision which includes a specific statutory appeal mechanism and includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decision under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 or the Building Act 1993 to issue or refuse a permit, with or without conditions, for which there is a routine appeal or review mechanism at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal or Building Appeals Board
Subject Matter Expert	A staff member that has special skills or knowledge on a particular topic or function of Council.
Unreasonable Complainant	A person or organisation who makes a complaint to Council and whose conduct would be deemed unreasonable.
Unreasonable Complainant Conduct	Any behaviour by a current or former complainant which, because of its nature or frequency raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for council, council staff, other service users and complainants or the complainant themselves.

7. Council Policy

Dealing with complaints is a core part of Council business. We value complaints and encourage people to contact us when they have a problem with our services, actions, decisions, and policies. We are committed to:

- enabling members of the public to make complaints about the Council
- responding to complaints by taking action to resolve complaints as quickly as possible
- learning from complaints to improve our services.

We treat every complaint we receive on its individual merits, through clear and consistent processes.

7.1. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1.1. All Staff

Receive complaints and where possible, seek to resolve them at the first point of contact, within the scope of their role. Where complaints involve multiple business units, the first point of contact may be required to liaise with other staff across the business to coordinate a response.

Staff should seek the assistance of their immediate supervisor to assist and investigate as required, to enable the complaint to be resolved at this point of contact.

Complaints that cannot be managed at the first point of contact are to be referred to the appropriate officer, who is a subject matter expert, for investigation, coordination and response.

7.1.2. Teams Leaders, Coordinators, Managers and Directors

Provide training and support to staff so that they understand the complaint handling process and are empowered to manage complaints within the scope of their role.

Receive, investigate and manage any referred complaints or allocated internal reviews.

Where a complainant requests a review of the decision made, refer to an appropriate Manager, Director or the Chief Executive Officer.

7.1.3. Chief Executive Officer

Foster a complaint handling culture that actively adheres to this policy and ensures:

- complaints are resolved within established time frames;
- complaints are handled courteously, impartially and assessed on their individual merits and facts; and
- complaint data is used as the basis for improving services and preventing future complaints.

Receive and manage escalated complaints and certain complaints received under other policies (eg Protected Disclosures).

7.1.4. Contractors

Complaints relating to third party contractors may be made to Council or the relevant contractor.

Contractors are obliged to ensure the Council contract manager is informed of complaints received in relation to services provided to Council. Where appropriate, complaints may be escalated to the Council contract manager for investigation and management.

7.2. How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made via any of Council's usual customer contact channels.

We are committed to ensuring our complaints process is accessible to everyone. Tell us if you have specific communication needs or barriers so we can better 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.

7.2.1. Complaints lodged via Councillors

Councillors are not responsible for the response to any operational complaint as the role of Councillor does not include the management of the day-to-day operations of Council.

When a complaint is addressed to a Councillor, the information will be forwarded to the organisation to ensure the complaint is officially recorded and managed according to this policy.

Councillors will endeavor to ensure that complaints and issues forwarded to the organisation for a response are clear and contain enough information for the complaint/issue to be addressed.

Staff will endeavor to ensure Councillors are kept informed regarding the resolution of complaints and issues they have forwarded to the organisation.

7.3. Who can make a complaint

Anyone who has been affected by a decision or action (including a failure to make a decision or take action) can make a complaint.

Council will accept anonymous complaints. Depending on the circumstances, anonymous complaints may limit the Council's ability to investigate and resolve concerns, if we have not received enough information in the complaint. Council will also be unable to provide a response to anonymous complaints.

8. Complaint Handling Procedure

The following minimum standards for complaint handling must be read in the context of any service-specific processes and procedures that have been established for some Council services (for example Council's Early Years Service).

8.1. Overview

We take a four-tiered approach to complaint handling, as follows:

1. **Resolution at first contact.** The staff member who receives the complaint, assesses it and seeks to resolve it immediately, if possible.
2. **Investigation, if required.** If the complaint can't be resolved at first point of contact, it will be referred to the appropriate council officer for investigation.
3. **Internal Review.** If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution offered, or the process or outcome of an investigation, they can request an internal review.
4. **Access to external review.** If the complainant is aggrieved with the process or outcome of the internal review, they will be informed of any external avenues through which they may pursue their complaint.

8.2. What is a Complaint

A complaint includes a communication (verbal or written) to the Council which expresses dissatisfaction about:

- (a) the quality of an action taken, decision made or service provided by a member of Council staff or a contractor engaged by the Council; or
- (b) the delay by a member of Council staff or a contractor engaged by the Council in taking an action, making a decision or providing a service; or
- (c) a policy or decision made by a Council or a member of Council staff or a contractor.

8.2.1. Complaints vs. Request for Service

Accurately differentiating between a 'complaint' and 'service request' is important. One way to do so is to look at whether a person is:

- requesting something additional or new (a request for service)
- reporting what they believe to be a failing or a shortfall (a complaint)
- complaining about a Council's response to a service request (a complaint).

It should be noted that even if a complaint leads to a service request being lodged, it should still be considered a complaint.

Following are some examples of that differentiation:

Request for Service	Complaint
My neighbour's dog keeps barking and I can't sleep. Can Council do something about it?	Council said my neighbour's barking dog isn't breaching the law, but Council is wrong because staff haven't investigated properly.
There is a pothole on Lewis Road. Can you send someone to fix it?	I reported a pothole on Lewis Road to Council weeks ago and nothing has been done.
The same car parks illegally in a no stopping zone in my street every day. Can you send someone to investigate?	I reported an illegally parked car three weeks ago. The same car is still parking illegally every day and no one has been out to investigate.
Council doesn't mow the grass at my local reserve often enough. Can it be mowed more often?	Council has refused to mow the grass at my local reserve more often. Council is not providing a good enough service.

Request for Service	Complaint
The branches from the tree on my nature strip need to be pruned as they're hanging too low over the footpath.	Council doesn't trim the nature strip trees in my street often enough. I shouldn't have to call every year and ask for the branches hanging over the footpath to be pruned.
I forgot to put my bin out, can someone come and empty it?	My bin was out but wasn't collected this morning. Can someone come and empty it?
Can you tell me when my next rates payment is due?	You haven't sent out my rates notice and they are due for payment next week.
Can you tell me whether a planning permit is required for a pool?	Council's website doesn't have enough information about when a planning permit is needed for a pool.
What is the process for objecting to the development application on Burwood Highway?	The Council should not have approved that development on Burwood Highway.
What is the process for appealing the decision to allow the development application on Burwood Highway?	<i>Note – refer Section 8.2.3 – if this complaint becomes an “appeal” against that statutory decision, it may fall out of scope.</i>

8.2.2. Complaints vs. Consultation

Council undertakes a range of community engagement activities facilitating community input into Council decision-making. Such consultation will typically generate a diversity of views. An expression of dissatisfaction received during an engagement process prior to a decision being made does not meet the definition of complaint.

Stakeholder Feedback during consultation	Complaint
I am opposed to the proposal to install floodlights at my local sports oval. If you do this the lights will shine into my windows at night.	Council has just installed floodlights at my local oval. The engagement process for this decision was inadequate and did not give neighbouring residents an opportunity to have a say before this decision was made.
I am opposed to the proposed budget as the rate rise is too high.	Council has made a terrible decision by approving this budget. Our rates are too high and Council should be tightening its belt.

8.2.3. Complaints vs. Request to Review / Appeal an Infringement or Statutory Decision

A number of decisions made by Council or authorised officers of Council, are subject to statutory appeal processes and other review mechanisms. For example:

- Infringements are subject to a statutory appeal process and may be appealed to the Magistrates Court. This includes parking infringements and a range of other infringements or legal action issued under Council's local laws or legislation such as the:
 - Building Act 1993
 - Domestic Animals Act 1994
 - Environment Protection Act 2017
 - Food Act 1994
 - Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Decisions to issue or refuse planning permits may be appealed to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeal Tribunal (VCAT).
- Certain decisions on building permits or requests for consent made under the Building Act 1993 may be referred to the Building Appeals Board.

Requests to review / appeal an infringement, or to review a statutory decision have separate established processes and may not be considered as a complaint for the purposes of this policy.

A request to review an infringement, or a complaint about a statutory decision may be deemed outside the scope of this policy for reasons including but not limited to:

- There being a statutory review process which is already underway
- It is reasonable in the circumstances to expect the complainant to go through the statutory review process
- A tribunal or court will settle or determine the matter faster
The complaint relates to a specialised area, and it is proper that a tribunal or court make a binding determination on the matter (noting the determination's possible precedential effect).

However, where such a request relates not to the merits of the infringement, or statutory decision, but addresses issues regarding for example:

- the adequacy, fairness or reasonableness of the decision making process; or
- the conduct of the staff members involved

then the request may also be considered according to the principles and processes set out in this policy.

8.3. Procedures for routine complaints

8.3.1. First Contact Resolution and Investigation by Council

Appropriate records (including file notes) must be kept throughout the following steps.

Step 1 Receive the complaint and ensure it is recorded appropriately.

Step 2 Acknowledge the complaint

- If a substantive response to the complaint is not possible (or likely) within 10 business days, we will provide a prompt written acknowledgement, including a reference number and the name and contact details for the responsible officer.
- An acknowledgement will provide an estimate of when we expect to contact the complainant with a resolution and where appropriate the name and relevant contact details for the investigating officer
- For telephone complaints resolved within the same phone call, we will provide:
 - a reference number where practicable;
 - written acknowledgment / response if requested by the complainant.

Step 3 Assess the complaint to determine how it should be dealt with.

- If required, we will contact the complainant to clarify the complaint and the outcome sought.
- If council is not the right organisation to respond to the complaint, we will refer the complainant to an organisation that can help.

Step 4 Take action to resolve the complaint.

- If the first point of contact cannot resolve the complaint, it will be assigned to the appropriate Council officer, who is a subject matter expert, for investigation. The complainant will be provided the name and relevant contact details for the investigating officer.
- If we are unable to provide a response within our estimated timeframe, we will contact the complainant and provide a revised timeframe.

Step 5 Provide a response to the complaint.

- We will provide a written response to the complainant unless agreed otherwise.
- We will endeavour to notify complainants of the outcome of their complaint within 28 days of receipt. Complaints that are not resolved within 28 days will be subject to review and staff may need to escalate the complaint if necessary to ensure that a resolution is expedited.
- The response provided will contain reasons for the decision made and contact information for the responsible officer.
- The response will include an explanation of the complainant's opportunities to request a review, if they are unsatisfied with the handling, or resolution of their complaint.

8.3.2. Internal Review by Council

The complainant may request an internal review of their complaint if they are not satisfied that the complaint has been resolved or was handled correctly.

All requests for review must be in writing and detail how the handling of the complaint or the resolution provided was unsatisfactory and/ or unreasonable.

The following principles will apply to the internal review process:

- The reviewing officer must not have been involved in the original decision, action or investigation.
- All reviewers must recognise and avoid conflicts of interest and perceptions of bias.

Internal reviews may not be available for certain decisions and processes where complainants have access to a separate statutory or other legislative appeal process such as planning decisions, local laws offences, parking infringements, certain building and health services decisions.

Internal reviews will be conducted, at first instance by the relevant area Manager or Director. If the area Manager/ Director was involved in the original decision, action or investigation they must not be involved in the review. In this instance the Manager Governance, Director City Strategy and Integrity or the Chief Executive Officer will select another reviewer.

Subsequent internal reviews will be conducted at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or a Council officer as selected by the Chief Executive Officer.

Relevant considerations for internal reviews include:

- The history of the matter, including any findings from any previous investigations (or internal review) and any responses and information provided to the complainant.
- Whether the original decision action or investigation met legal, policy, and procedural requirements.
- Whether the handling and resolution of the complaint (or previous internal review) appears to have been reasonable, fair and objective.

Appropriate records (including file notes) must be kept throughout the above process.

8.3.3. First contact resolution and investigation by Council Contractors

If a contractor receives a complaint, the contractor will assess and respond to the complaint in accordance with its own complaint handling process. The contractor will notify the Council contract manager of the complaint and its resolution.

All outcome letters written by contractors in relation to complaints must include the name and contact details of the Knox City Council staff member to whom the complainant may escalate their complaint.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they can ask the Council to review the decision.

8.3.4. External Review

If the complainant is not satisfied with Council's final response, they can contact the Victorian Ombudsman's Office and/or other external agencies to request an independent review or make a complaint.

Contact information for a variety of relevant regulatory bodies is included at Appendix 1.

8.4. Procedures for specific complaints

8.4.1. Complaints alleging corrupt conduct

Where a complaint involves allegations of corrupt conduct, it will be handled in accordance with Council's Protected Disclosures Policy.

Complaints alleging corrupt conduct may also be made to the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC).

8.4.2. Complaints about Councillors

Complaints about Councillors will be acknowledged in writing by the organisation.

Complaints about Councillors that relate to routine business or operational matters, will be managed by staff in accordance with this policy, in consultation with the Mayor and Councillors as appropriate.

Recognising the Mayor's statutory role to promote behaviour among Councillors that meets the standards of conduct set out in the Councillor Code of Conduct; complaints about Councillors that relate to Councillor Conduct will be referred to the Mayor. If they relate to the conduct of the Mayor, complaints will be referred to the Deputy Mayor.

The Councillor(s) who are the subject of the complaint will be notified by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer as appropriate, having regard to the circumstances and details of the complaint.

The complaint will be recorded in writing and all interactions with the complainant will be documented.

Under certain circumstances complaints may be referred to the Local Government Inspectorate.

8.4.3. Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer may be outside the scope of this policy and handled in accordance with other relevant Council policies or procedures, including the Chief Executive Officer Employment and Remuneration Policy.

9. Remedies

Where Council finds we have made an error, we will take steps to redress the situation. Possible remedies available at Council's discretion, include, but are not limited to:

- An apology.
- An explanation of why the error occurred and the steps taken to prevent it happening again.
- A reversal of a decision.
- Counselling or disciplinary action taken with a staff member.
- Another means of redress requested by the complainant.

10. Privacy

Council will handle all records in accordance with the Privacy & Data Protection Act 2013 and Council's Privacy and Data Protection Policy and Guidelines.

Complainants can expect their complaint will be investigated in confidence, to the extent possible, however it is noted that all complaints lodged with Council are subject to the Freedom of information Act, 1982 and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed under the provisions of that legislation.

11. Record Keeping

All staff are responsible for record keeping in accordance with Council's Records Management Policy.

Complaints within the scope of this policy will generally be recorded in:

- Pathway – Council's Customer Request System (CRS);
- Knox Explorer - Council's Document Management System; or
- Another appropriate line of business system.

Typical records that should be kept in relation to all complaints and reviews will include:

- The complainant's details;
- How and when the complaint was received;
- A description of the complaint;
- The complainant's desired outcome (if known);
- Details of the officer(s) responsible for handling the complaint;
- Details of any action taken and/or how the matter has been investigated, including key dates, contact with the complainant, notes of discussions, investigation response times, copies of correspondence, and the outcome (including the reasoning for the decision);
- When the complaint was finalised;
- Relevant demographic or other statistical information that could help improve services; and
- Any recommendations for improvement, and who is responsible for implementing them.

12. Analysing and Reporting on Performance

The Executive Management Team will be responsible for monitoring and improving the timeliness and efficiency of Council's complaint handling, as well as monitoring trends and patterns in complaints that may identify areas where improvements can be made in Council's service delivery.

13. Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Most complainants act reasonably and appropriately when dealing with Council. However, in the minority of cases some complainants may behave in ways that are considered unacceptable.

When complainants behave in this way, we consider their conduct to be unreasonable. Unreasonable behaviour is that which because of its frequency and/or nature raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for Council, that impacts on staff, volunteers, contractors or Councillors, other service users and/or the complainant themselves.

Council's management of unreasonable complainant conduct is informed by the following principles:

- Every complainant deserves to be treated with respect.
- Every staff member, contractor, volunteer and Councillor deserves to be treated with respect.
- Every complainant should have their complaint properly and reasonably considered.
- A complainant whose conduct is unreasonable may still have a legitimate complaint.
- The substance of a complaint dictates the level of resources allocated to it, not the seniority of the person receiving the complaint, or the complainant's identity, wishes, demands or behaviour.

13.1. Categories of Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Unreasonable Complainant Conduct can be grouped into five categories:

- 1. Unreasonable behaviour** - conduct that is unreasonable in all circumstances – regardless of how stressed, angry or frustrated that a complainant is – because it unreasonably compromises the health, safety and security of our staff, volunteers, contractors or Councillors, other service users or the complainant themselves. Some examples include:
 - Acts of aggression, verbal abuse, derogatory, racist, discriminatory or grossly defamatory remarks.
 - Harassment, intimidation or physical violence.
 - Offensive, abusive, confronting and threatening correspondence or behaviour.
 - Threats of harm to self or third parties, threats with a weapon or threats to damage property including bomb threats.
 - Stalking (in person or online).
 - Emotional manipulation.
- 2. Unreasonable persistence** - continued, incessant and unrelenting conduct by a complainant that has a disproportionate and unreasonable impact on our organisation, staff, volunteers, contractors or Councillors, our services, time and/or resources. Some examples include:
 - An unwillingness or inability to accept reasonable and logical explanations including final decisions that have been comprehensively considered and dealt with.
 - Persistently demanding a review simply because it is available and without arguing or presenting a case for one.
 - Pursuing and exhausting all available review options when it is not warranted and refusing to accept further action cannot or will not be taken on their complaints.
 - Reframing a complaint in an effort to get it taken up again.
 - Repeatedly calling, visiting, writing to or emailing (including cc'd correspondence) our staff / organisation / councillors after being asked not to do so.
 - Contacting different people within our organisation and/or externally to get a different outcome or more sympathetic response to their complaint – internal and external forum shopping.

3. **Unreasonable demands** – are express or implied demands made by a complainant that have a disproportionate and unreasonable impact on our organisation, staff, volunteers, contractors or Councillors, services, time and/or resources. Some examples include:
 - Issuing instructions and making demands about how we have/should handle their complaint, the priority it was/should be given, or the outcome that was/should be achieved.
 - Insisting on talking to the CEO, Director, or a senior manager personally when it is not appropriate or warranted.
 - Emotional blackmail and manipulation with the intention to generate guilt, to intimidate, harass, shame, seduce or portray themselves as being victimised – when this is not the case.
 - Insisting on outcomes that are not possible or appropriate in the circumstances – eg for someone to be sacked or prosecuted, an apology and/or compensation when there is no reasonable basis for expecting this.
 - Demanding services that are of a nature or scale that Council cannot or does not provide when this has been explained to them repeatedly.
4. **Unreasonable lack of cooperation** - an unwillingness and/or inability by a complainant to cooperate with our organisation, staff, volunteers, contractors or Councillors, or complaints system and processes that results in a disproportionate and unreasonable use of our services, time and/or resources. Some examples include:
 - Sending a constant stream of comprehensive and/or disorganised information without clearly defining any issues of complaint or explaining how they relate to the core issues being complained about – only where the complainant is clearly capable of doing this.
 - Providing little or no detail with a complaint or presenting information in ‘drips and drabs’.
 - Refusing to follow or accept our instructions, suggestions, or advice without a clear or justifiable reason for doing so.
 - Arguing frequently and/or with extreme intensity that a particular solution is the correct one in the face of valid contrary arguments and explanations.
 - Displaying unhelpful behaviour – such as withholding information, acting dishonestly, misquoting others, and so forth.
5. **Unreasonable arguments** - are arguments that aren’t based in reason or logic, that are incomprehensible, false or inflammatory, trivial or delirious and that disproportionately and unreasonably impact upon our organisation, staff, volunteers, contractors or Councillors, services, time, and/or resources. Arguments are unreasonable when they:
 - fail to follow a logical sequence
 - are not supported by any evidence and/or are based on conspiracy theories or personal belief
 - lead a complainant to reject all other valid and contrary arguments
 - are trivial when compared to the amount of time, resources and attention that the complainant demands
 - are false, inflammatory or defamatory.

13.2. Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

In managing unreasonable behaviour we try to ensure that:

- The complainant understands that unreasonable complainant behaviour is a health and safety issue for our staff volunteers, contractors or Councillors, and Council will not tolerate behaviour which unreasonably impacts upon their physical and emotional safety and wellbeing.
- The complainant's expectations are clear and realistic, something which can be determined when contact is made after receiving a complaint.
- Our communication, whether in writing or verbally, is firm and clear.
- The complainant understands what Council can do in relation to their complaint.
- We provide clear reasons for our decisions.
- We avoid unnecessary delays.
- We provide clear guidance and procedures for staff, volunteers and contractors to deal with complaints.

13.2.1. Strategies for managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Strategies for managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct may include limiting or adapting the ways that the organisation interacts with and/or deliver services to complainants by restricting:

1. **Who they contact** – eg limiting a complainant to a sole contact person/staff member in our organisation.
2. **What they can raise** – eg restricting the subject matter of communications that we will consider and respond to.
3. **When they can contact us** – eg limiting a complainant's contact with our organisation to particular times, days, or length of time, or curbing the frequency of their contact with us.
4. **Where they can contact us** – eg limiting the locations where we will conduct face-to-face interviews to secured facilities or areas of the office.
5. **How they can contact us** – eg limiting or modifying the forms of contact that the complainant can have with us. This can include modifying or limiting face-to-face interviews, telephone and written communications, prohibiting access to our premises, contact through a representative only, taking no further action or terminating our services altogether.

Any such strategies or protocols will be employed and reviewed in accordance with Council's Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedures, which include appropriate opportunities for review, and appeal by affected complainants.

14. Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this policy. Where an update does not materially alter this policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, it must be considered by Council.

Regulatory bodies for external appeals

	Ombudsman Victoria (For general complaints)	Local Government Inspectorate (for Councillor conduct matters)
Phone:	9613 6222 Toll Free: 1800 806 314 (regional only) TTY: 133 677 or 1300 555 727	1800 469 359
Email:	ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au	inspectorate@lgi.vic.gov.au
Website:	www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au	www.vic.gov.au/lgici
Writing:	Level 2, 570 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000	GPO Box 2392 Melbourne VIC 3001
	Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (For public sector corruption)	Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (for Commonwealth Home Support Programme)
Phone:	1300 735 135	1800 951 822
Email:		info@agedcarequality.gov.au
Website:	www.ibac.vic.gov.au	www.agedcarequality.gov.au/
Writing:	GPO Box 24234 Melbourne VIC 3001	GPO Box 9819 IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY
	Disability Services Commissioner (For services if you have a disability)	Office of the Public Advocate (For services if you have a disability)
Phone:	1800 677 342	1300 309 337
Email:	complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au	
Website:	www.odsc.vic.gov.au	www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
Writing:	Level 20, 570 Bourke St Melbourne VIC 3000	Level 1, 204 Lygon Street Carlton VIC 3053
	Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (For the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People)	Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (For complaints regarding the collection, use and disclosure of information.)
Phone:	1300 650 172	1300 309 337
Email:	enquiries@dhhs.vic.gov.au	
Website:	www2.health.vic.gov.au	www.ovic.vic.gov.au
Writing:	50 Lonsdale Street Melbourne VIC 3000	Level 1, 204 Lygon Street Carlton VIC 3053

Victorian Civil and Administrative
Tribunal (VCAT)

Phone:	1300 018 228
Email:	Refer www.vcat.vic.gov.au/contact-us
Website:	www.vcat.vic.gov.au
Writing:	GPO Box 5408 Melbourne VIC 3001