

# Procurement Complaints Management Policy

## Policy Statement

We are committed to maintaining strong relationships with our suppliers while upholding the highest standards of integrity, fairness, and transparency in our procurement practices. This Procurement Complaints Management Policy outlines our approach to handling procurement related complaints in accordance with the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB) guidelines and Ministerial Directions for Public Construction (Guidance 8.3).

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and transparent process for addressing and resolving complaints raised by our suppliers regarding procurement and contracting activities conducted by us. This policy serves several key purposes:

- **Ensure Timely and Efficient Response:** The policy aims to establish clear procedures for staff to understand and promptly address issues raised by suppliers. By doing so, it ensures that complaints are not only acknowledged but also dealt with efficiently, minimising any potential disruptions to procurement processes.
- **Continuous Improvement:** By providing a mechanism for suppliers to voice their concerns, the policy enables us to identify areas for improvement in our procurement and contracting practices. It fosters a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging the organisation to learn from supplier feedback and implement corrective measures where necessary.
- **Supplier Relationship Management:** A transparent and fair complaints management process demonstrate our commitment to maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with our suppliers. By addressing complaints in a timely and respectful manner, the policy helps to build trust and collaboration with suppliers, enhancing overall supplier relationship management.
- **Compliance and Accountability:** Having a documented Procurement Complaints Management Policy ensures that we adhere to relevant regulations, guidelines, and best practices in procurement and contracting. It promotes accountability by outlining clear procedures for handling supplier complaints and ensuring that they are managed in accordance with established standards.
- **Public Confidence:** Transparent and effective management of procurement complaints enhances public trust and confidence in our procurement processes. By demonstrating a commitment to fairness, integrity, and accountability in addressing supplier concerns, the policy helps to uphold our reputation and credibility with stakeholders and the broader community.

## Scope

This policy applies to all suppliers engaged in procurement and contracting activities with us, including but not limited to goods, services, and construction contracts.

## Guiding Principles

We are dedicated to the continuous enhancement of our methods for receiving, addressing and leveraging supplier feedback. The following principles underscore our strategic approach:

- **Fairness:** Ensure that all complaints are treated impartially and with fairness, regardless of the supplier's size or relationship with the organisation.
- **Transparency:** Maintain transparent communication throughout the complaints management process, keeping suppliers informed about the status of their complaints and the steps being taken to address them.
- **Timeliness:** Respond to complaints promptly and within defined timelines, minimising delays and demonstrating a commitment to efficient resolution.
- **Accountability:** Hold staff accountable for adhering to established complaints management procedures and for addressing complaints in a timely and effective manner.
- **Accessibility:** Provide accessible channels for suppliers to submit complaints and ensure that the complaints management process is easy to understand and navigate.
- **Learning and Improvement:** View complaints as opportunities for learning and improvement, and use feedback from complaints to identify systemic issues and implement corrective actions.
- **Consistency:** Apply complaints management procedures consistently across all supplier interactions, ensuring fairness and equity in how complaints are handled.
- **Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of supplier complaints and sensitive information related to complaint investigations, protecting the privacy of both the complainants and any other involved parties.
- **Compliance:** Ensure that the complaint management process complies with relevant laws, regulations, and organisational policies, including those related to data protection and privacy.
- **Customer Focus:** Maintain a customer-centric approach to complaints management, prioritising the resolution of complaints in a manner that meets the needs and expectations of suppliers while also aligning with organisational goals and objectives.
- **Commitment:** We are committed to resolving supplier complaints and having a culture that recognises a right to complain. We value complaints and accept them as being part of our business of serving our communities and improving service delivery.

- **Continuous Improvement:** We regularly analyse complaint data to assist us to identify problems and improve services.

## Procedure

### 5.1. Complaint Submission

Suppliers are encouraged to submit complaints in writing via email or can do so through letter to the Manager Contract and Procurement or the Chief Financial Officer. Complaints should include detailed information regarding the nature of the complaint, relevant documentation or evidence, and contact details for follow-up communication. (Supplier name, postal address, email address, contact details, tender or contract number, description and statement regarding the nature of the complaint)

### 5.2 Initial Assessment

When a complaint is received, it will be overseen by the Chief Financial Officer, or an equivalent officer not directly involved in the subject matter. The Chief Financial Officer will designate a Reviewing Officer to assess the complaint's validity and severity. If necessary, the Reviewing Officer may request additional information from the complainant or other relevant parties.

### 5.3 Complaint Acknowledgement

We will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within five business days, and promptly appoint the Reviewing Officer responsible for reviewing the complaint.

The supplier will be informed of the Reviewing Officer's name.

We will outline the process to be undertaken and provide an approximate timeline for addressing the matter, ensuring it does not exceed twenty business days.

If necessary, we will request further information to facilitate the resolution process.

### 5.4. Investigation

Valid complaints will be subject to a thorough investigation, which may include reviewing procurement documents, contract terms, correspondence records, and conducting interviews with the parties involved. The investigation will be conducted by impartial personnel not directly involved in the procurement or contracting process under review.

### 5.5. Resolution

Based on the findings of the investigation, a proposed resolution will be formulated to address the complaint effectively and prevent similar issues in the future. The proposed resolution will be communicated to the complainant in writing, along with any necessary explanations or clarifications.

## 5.6. Appeal Process

If the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, they may request a review of the decision through our appeal process. Appeals will be reviewed by senior management or an impartial review panel, and the outcome will be communicated to the complainant in writing. At this stage the Complainant will also be advised of their rights to pursue the matter with the Victorian Government Purchasing Board (for tendering complaints) or the Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation (for competitive neutrality complaints).

## 5.7. Documentation and Reporting

All complaints, investigations, resolutions, and appeals will be documented thoroughly for record-keeping purposes. Deidentified reports summarising complaint trends, resolution outcomes, and opportunities for process improvement will be generated periodically and shared with relevant stakeholders.

## 5.8. Training and Awareness

We will provide training and awareness programs to employees involved in procurement and contracting activities to ensure compliance with this policy and the VGBP guidelines. Suppliers will also be informed of their rights and responsibilities under this policy through our supplier engagement initiatives.

## 5.10. Conclusion

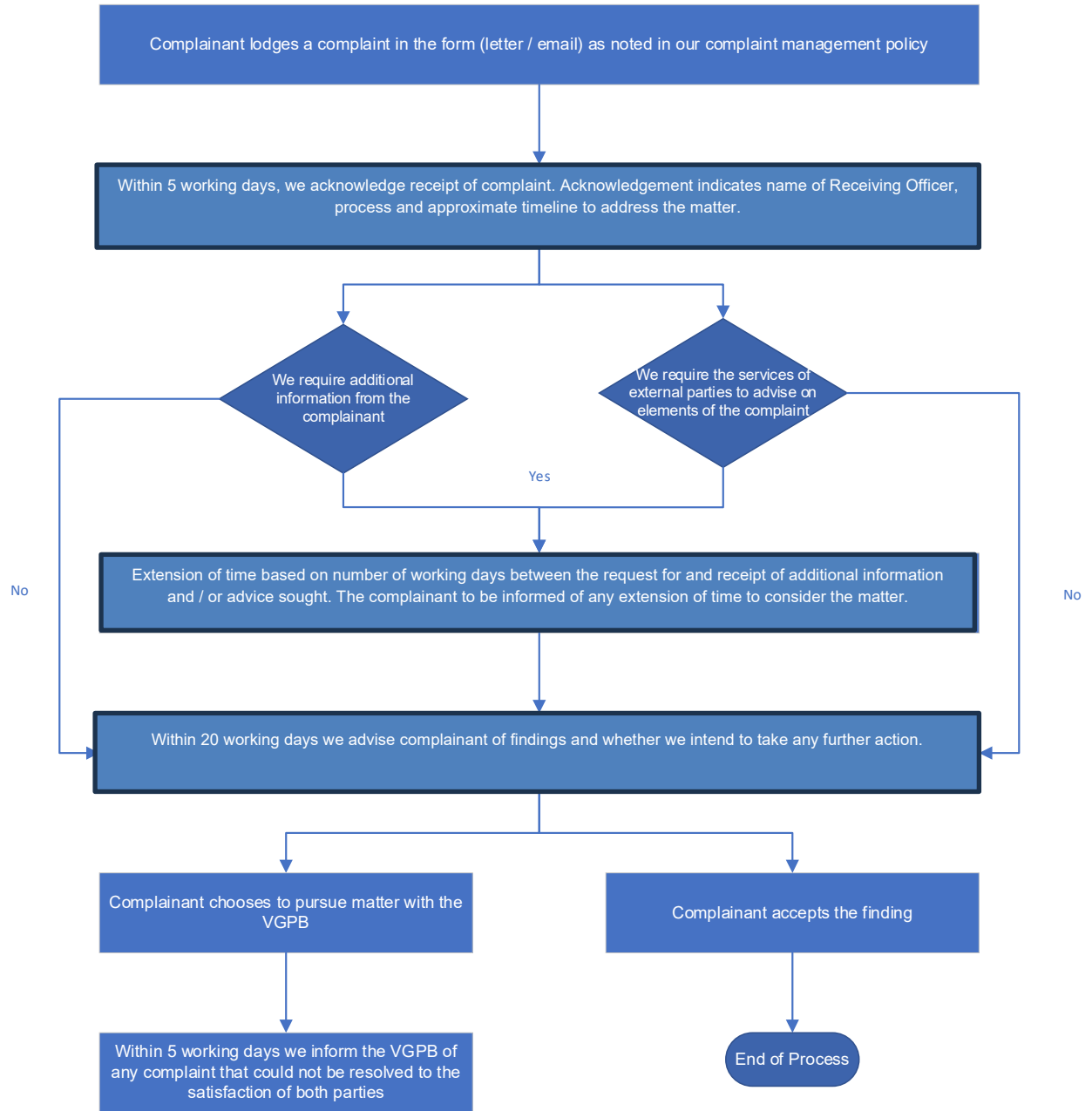
We are committed to fostering a positive and collaborative relationship with our suppliers, and this Supplier Complaint Policy reflects our dedication to addressing supplier concerns promptly, fairly, and in accordance with the VGBP guidelines.

## How to make a Supplier Complaint

Supplier complaints should be made to Gippsland Water as soon as possible after the issue occurs:

- Mail: Gippsland Water – PO Box 348 Traralgon Vic 3844
- Telephone: 1800 050 500
- Email: [suppliercomplaint@gippswater.com.au](mailto:suppliercomplaint@gippswater.com.au)
- In person: 55 Hazelwood Road, Traralgon Vic 3844
- Website: <https://www.gippswater.com.au/about-us/feedback-complaints-and-compliments>

## Supplier Complaint Flow Chart





## Policy review and approval

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively without requiring approval of the approving body. Examples include only a change to the template, name of a position or department, or a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact.

<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Review Frequency</b>	<b>Approving Body</b>
Manager Contracts and Procurement	Annual	Executive Leadership Team

## Normative references

- [Victorian Government Purchasing Board](#)
- [Better Regulation Victoria](#)
- [Purchasing Policy](#)
- [Ministerial-Directions-for-Public-Construction-Procurement-in-Victoria.](#)