


Document Title	COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY AND PROCEDURE	
Initial approval	CEO	
Final approval	The Authority	

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

This policy aims to:

- establish internal complaint management and feedback processes
- outline the steps that VARTA will take in managing complaints and feedback
- ensure that all complaints and feedback are treated equally and fairly
- set out roles and responsibilities of VARTA staff in relation to complaints and feedback
- ensure that VARTA's complaints and feedback process is maintained around the principles of commitment, accessibility, transparency, objectivity, fairness, privacy, accountability and continuous improvement

This policy only applies to complaints and feedback pertaining to VARTA and its staff. Members of the public are encouraged to make any complaints or feedback about VARTA and its staff to VARTA directly under this policy. This allows us to demonstrate to those who use our services that we are committed to handling their concerns and constructive feedback in a fair, objective and transparent way. It also allows us to improve our services for others in the future. However, if you wish to seek external assessment of your complaint or feedback, please refer to *Review processes and external bodies* (below).

COMMITMENT STATEMENT

VARTA acknowledges the importance of feedback, and a person's right to express their opinion about VARTA's services. Having a complaints and feedback policy allows VARTA to engage constructively with those who have used VARTA's services, in order to improve both our services and the consumer experience.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT OR PROVIDE FEEDBACK

An external individual can lodge a formal complaint via four methods:

1. Send us an email at varta@varta.org.au
2. Fill out the enquiries form on the Contact Us page;
3. Write us a letter: VARTA, c/o Level 30, 570 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000; or
4. by calling 03 8601 5250

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and provide an outline of timeframes for feedback within three business days.

If the feedback process is difficult for you to use, VARTA staff can help you fill out a feedback form or lodge a complaint through any of the above channels. Similarly, you can appoint a third party to make a complaint or give feedback on your behalf, and we can respond to you through them, provided you give them the appropriate written authority.

We welcome all types of feedback

You can comment on anything you think is appropriate for us to know. We welcome compliments and suggestions, of course, but just as important to us are complaints and criticisms. We acknowledge any feedback promptly and complaints go into a system of investigation and response. If you make a complaint, know that VARTA will take the matter seriously and treat you with dignity, respect and confidentiality.

Anonymous feedback and use of pseudonyms

Anyone providing feedback is entitled to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym if they wish. Although anonymous feedback is sometimes harder to investigate and respond to and may limit what we can do, we will always treat anonymous complaints seriously.

HOW VARTA MANAGES FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Your feedback or complaint goes to the relevant VARTA division manager, who is responsible for overseeing the feedback and complaints management process for their team.

The action they take will depend on what type of comment it is. Some feedback is positive or constructive, asking for no response or action; in this case, we will thank you for your comment and record it.

Local complaints are those which ask for a response and are relevant to a single service area within VARTA. Usually, these will be investigated and resolved quickly within the service area.

Complex complaints may involve various departments or service areas in VARTA and tend to be more serious. We may refer the complaint to an external agency for management or commission an independent investigation. Some complaints can involve the oversight and management of VARTA's CEO.

Responding to complaints

Within three working days after receiving the complaint, we will contact you, acknowledging our receipt of the complaint and setting out how we will respond to the issue raised.

If action has been requested, we will investigate the issue and decide on what actions we will take.

When required under legislation, we will also advise relevant government departments and external agencies of the matter.

Once we've completed our investigation and within 28 days of our acknowledging your complaint, we will tell you in writing how we investigated the issue and what the outcome is.

If VARTA cannot resolve the issue within this time, we will tell you the reasons for the delay and give you a revised timeframe.

If after our investigation your complaint is substantiated, we will tell you what we have done or will do to fix the issue. Where appropriate, a VARTA staff member can also provide an apology to you.

If after our investigation your complaint is **not** substantiated, you will be told why and given information about other avenues for action.

REMEDIES

If VARTA believes that an error has been made which requires a response, VARTA will take steps towards addressing the error and providing an appropriate response.

REVIEW PROCESSES AND EXTERNAL BODIES

If the person making the complaint believes that VARTA's response to the complaint is inadequate, there are a number of ways to review the outcome of the complaint.

VARTA can be contacted to commence an internal review. If the person making the complaint does not wish the complaint to be internally reviewed by VARTA, or an internal review has been conducted and the person is not satisfied with the outcome, there is the option to seek an external view.

Relevant bodies for such external review include: Minister for Health or the Secretary, Department of Health, the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Victorian Ombudsman.

Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection

The key body regulating the way Victorian government agencies and local councils collect and handle personal information.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

Responsible for eliminating discrimination in Victoria.

Victorian Ombudsman

Receives complaints about the administrative actions of Victorian government authorities and local councils.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

VARTA's complaints management and feedback process involves recording the details of complaints and the person making them. In keeping such records, VARTA complies with the requirements of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic). Therefore, any details provided will be held confidentially. The information will only be used and shared with VARTA staff to address the complaint. Your information may also be de-identified and used for reporting and statistical purposes.

A person who has made a complaint may access or correct the information submitted to VARTA as part of the complaints management process under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic). For information about making a Freedom of Information request, please contact VARTA.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff member	Responsibilities
All staff members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can receive a complaint and feedback about VARTA (staff or services). If the matter is a simple expression of dissatisfaction, it is not necessarily categorised as a complaint and may be managed directly and informally by all front-line staff members. All other feedback and serious complaints are to be escalated to the line Manager who will enter the complaint into the Complaints Register.
Chief Executive Officer and Division Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review complaints internally ensure that all staff are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures provide support for staff who are handling complaints
The Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> approve and review the Complaints and Feedback Policy biennially. ensure that appropriate internal controls, policies and procedures are in place to deal with complaints.

AWARENESS AND TRAINING

VARTA staff are required to be aware of this complaints and feedback policy, as well as any relevant internal procedures. Staff members administering this policy will also receive training regarding managing and responding to complaints.

RELATED LEGISLATION

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)

Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Protected Disclosure Act 2012 (Vic)

AUTHOR/CONTRIBUTORS/REVIEW

Document Holder	Reviewer	Approver / Committee	Date Approved	Review By
CEO	CEO	The Authority		