

## Public Complaints Policy

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- specify a consistent, transparent, effective and timely approach to handling public complaints across the organisation; and
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of Trust for Nature staff and ensure that staff handle complaints fairly and objectively.

### Policy Principles

- Trust for Nature supports a culture and establishes practices that facilitate the making and resolution of complaints;
- Complaints are acknowledged in a timely manner, and dealt with fairly, impartially, and effectively having regard to the nature and complexity of the complaint;
- Complaints are registered and reviewed regularly to understand any trends and to ensure complaint handling processes are effective and appropriate;
- Trust for Nature handles complaints consistently with the Victorian Ombudsman’s published best practices and staff act consistently with the VPS Code of Conduct for Public Sector Employees.

### Definitions

The Public Complaints Policy and any related procedures apply to all complaints received by Trust for Nature.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with:

- the quality of an action taken, decision made or service provided by Trust for Nature or its contractor
- a delay or failure in providing a service, taking an action, or making a decision by Trust for Nature or its contractor.

A complaint may be verbal or written.

A complaint is not:

- A passing negative comment made by an individual about Trust for Nature;
- A request for information or an explanation of policies;
- A disagreement about a Trust for Nature commercial decision or policy.

### Responsibilities

- All employees must follow the Public Complaints Policy and any relevant procedures in managing complaints.
- This Public Complaints Policy will be available on the Trust for Nature website and a hard copy may be made available on request.

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Review Responsibility: Legal Counsel	Approved by: Board

## Complaint handling procedure

Trust for Nature will have an internal complaint handling procedure that implements this policy and includes the following:

- **Overview of Procedure**

When dealing with a complaint we will follow these steps:

**1. Receipt and acknowledgement:** frontline staff receive the complaint, assess it, and resolve it immediately, if possible. Complaints that cannot be resolved immediately will be acknowledged within 10 business days.

**2. Investigation and resolution,** if required: if frontline staff cannot resolve the complaint, they will refer it to a responsible person within the organisation for investigation and follow up. We aim to resolve complaints within 20 business days. If this is not possible, the complainant will be advised of the reason why.

**3. Review:** if the complainant is aggrieved with the process or outcome of the resolution/investigation, they may request an internal review. If they are not satisfied with that, they may then request to have the complaint externally reviewed by a relevant agency such as the Victorian Ombudsman, the Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission, or WorkSafe Victoria.

Detailed procedures will be made available to staff on the TFN intranet.

- **Privacy**

When gathering information to respond to a complaint, we will:

- use it only to deal with the complaint or to address systemic issues arising from the complaint
- disclose it in a de-identified format when disclosing data to the public
- share it with staff on a need to know basis.

- **Recording complaints**

All complaints are recorded in our Public Complaints Register. We analyse our complaint data and provide annual reports to our Board.

We record the following information for each complaint:

- the complainant's details
- how the complaint was received
- a description of the complaint
- the person responsible for handling the complaint
- any action taken, including contact with the complainant, response times and the outcome

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- when the complaint was finalised
- any recommendations for improvement, and who is responsible for implementing them.

Any queries regarding the recording of complaints should be directed to Legal Counsel.

### Related Documents

#### External

- Victorian Ombudsman, *Complaints: Good Practice Guide for Public Sector Agencies*
- Victorian Public Sector Commissioner, *Code of Conduct for Public Sector Employees*

#### Internal

- Public Complaints Procedure
- Public Complaints Register

### Contact

Chief Operating Officer

### Policy Review

This document will be reviewed on a three year cycle or more frequently as required and is to be approved by the Board as recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee.

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