

Complaints Policy September 2026

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Document Compliance

Council acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values that include freedom, respect, equality and dignity.

Greater Dandenong City Council Policies comply with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, the *Climate Change Act 2017*, the Child Safe Standards contained in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, (Amended) the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the Overarching Governance Principles specified in 9(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Acknowledgment of Country

Greater Dandenong City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Bunurong People and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their continuing connections to climate, Culture, Country and waters.

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1. POLICY OBJECTIVE (OR PURPOSE)

The objective of this policy is to ensure a fair, consistent and transparent approach to managing complaints, with clear communication and analysis of complaint data to support ongoing service improvement.

2. BACKGROUND

Under Section 107 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council has an obligation to develop and maintain a complaints policy. This policy has been developed with guidance from the Victorian Ombudsman – Council and complaints – A good practice guide 2nd edition, July 2021.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints about an action, decision or service provided by Council staff, contractors and volunteers. It also applies to the Council as a decision-making body.

This policy does not apply to requests for service, staff grievances, infringement reviews, matters that have already been reviewed by an external body, or where a statutory review process is conducted by an external body. See Appendix One (1) for a list of external bodies and the matters they handle.

Concerns or allegations about the abuse, harm or neglect of a child or young person are managed in accordance with Council's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

4. DEFINITIONS

Unless otherwise specified within the policy, the following words and phrases below are defined to mean the following in terms of this policy.

Complaint	A communication by a person to Council either verbally or in writing, expressing dissatisfaction about: • The quality of an action, decision or service provided by Council staff, a Council contractor or Council volunteer • A delay by Council staff, Council contractor or Council volunteer in taking an action, making a decision or delivering a service • A policy or decision made by the Council, Council staff, Council contractor or Council volunteer
Complainant	The person making the complaint
Customer	Any party that interacts with Greater Dandenong City Council

Council	The body of elected councillors
Councillor	A person democratically elected by residents and ratepayers of a municipality who is responsible for reviewing matters and debating issues before their Council
Council staff	All Council employees (including agency staff), contractors, consultants and volunteers
Council contractor	A third-party engaged by the Council to carry out functions on the Council's behalf
Council volunteer	A person who willingly gives their time, without financial gain, to assist in carrying out activities in designated volunteer positions
Request for service	A request made by a member of the public for a service to be provided or for an action to be taken
Senior Officer	A council staff member who holds a position at the level of Manager or above

5. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT

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

- the quality of an action, decision or service provided by Council staff, a Council contractor or Council volunteer; or
- a delay by Council staff, a Council contractor or Council volunteer in taking an action, making a decision or delivering a service; or
- a policy or decision made by the council, Council staff, a Council contractor or Council volunteer.

‘Complaint’ versus ‘service request’

It's important to identify the difference between a complaint and a request for service.

One way to distinguish a service request from a complaint is to look at whether a person is:

- requesting something additional or new (a service request)
- 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).

Refer to Appendix Two (2) for examples of complaints and requests for service.

6. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Any person, including a child or young person, can make a complaint. Complaints can be made by:

Phone	(03) 8571 1000
Online	greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/contactus
Email	council@cgd.vic.gov.au
Post	Greater Dandenong City Council PO Box 200 Dandenong VIC 3175
In Person	Dandenong Civic Centre Level 2, 225 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong Springvale Community Hub 5 Hillcrest Grove, Springvale Parkmore Customer Service Centre Shop A7, Parkmore Shopping Centre 317 Cheltenham Road, Keysborough

Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that our complaints process is accessible to everyone. Tell us if you have specific communication needs or barriers and we can 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 authorised to act on your behalf if you cannot make the complaint yourself.

Information to include when making a complaint

When making a complaint, it's important to provide as much relevant information as you can to help us understand the issue. This includes:

- your name, address and contact details
- a brief description of the issue and why you are dissatisfied
- relevant details such as dates, times, locations and any reference numbers
- previous correspondence relating to this complaint
- the outcome you are seeking
- any communication needs you have.

Sometimes we may ask you to put your complaint in writing to ensure that all the facts are clear, especially if the matter is complex or may need escalation. We can assist you with this if required.

Anonymous complaints

To properly investigate a complaint, we may need to contact the complainant to seek further information or clarification. Complaints can be made anonymously; however, this may limit how thoroughly we can investigate the matter. We also cannot provide the outcome of anonymous complaints.

7. HOW WE MANAGE COMPLAINTS

All complaints will be managed fairly, promptly and transparently, in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements. No person will be disadvantaged for making a complaint.

Council uses the following four-tiered approach to investigating and resolving complaints.

Tier 1 – First-contact resolution

Most issues can be resolved quickly and where possible, we will resolve a complaint at the first point of contact. When a complaint is received, we will assess it to decide the best way to manage it. This may happen during your initial conversation with us. After this assessment, we may:

- resolve the matter directly
- refer the matter to the appropriate team
- decline to deal with the matter if it should be managed under another Council policy or a separate statutory or legislative process
- guide you to another agency if the matter is outside Council's responsibilities.

Tier 2 – Investigation

When we are unable to resolve a complaint at Tier 1 or it needs further consideration, it will progress to Tier 2. Tier 2 investigations focus on whether Council policies, procedures, service standards etc. have been applied appropriately.

A Team Leader or Coordinator of the relevant department to which the complaint pertains will review the complaint, gather any additional information (such as records, correspondence, or advice from involved parties) and make an evidence-based decision. We will keep the complainant informed during the investigation and provide a written outcome explaining our decision and the reasons for it.

Complaints about Council staff, contractors and volunteers are initiated at Tier 2 and managed in line with the relevant procedures. While we will explain the complaints process to the complainant, we may not be able to share specific outcomes or actions taken in relation to individual personnel. All matters will be assessed impartially, based on available evidence, and addressed in a manner that is proportionate, confidential and consistent with the organisation's duty of care to Council staff.

Tier 3 – Internal review

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the Tier 2 outcome, they may request an internal review. A senior officer, independent of earlier stages, will conduct the review to determine whether the complaint should have been handled differently and whether the outcome should change. The reviewer may confirm, vary or overturn the original decision. We will provide the complainant with a written outcome explaining the decision and reasons for it.

Tier 4 – External review

If a complainant still believes we have made the wrong decision, they may seek an external review. This generally involves escalation to an oversight body, tribunal or court. External review bodies assess matters at their discretion and may decide whether to accept or review a complaint. We will participate with any external review process. External review options include:

Organisation to contact for external review	Complaint
Victorian Ombudsman ombudsman.vic.gov.au	Actions or decisions of Council staff, including human rights concerns
Local Government Inspectorate lgi.vic.gov.au	Breaches of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Office of the Victorian Information Commission ovic.vic.gov.au	Privacy breaches, Freedom of Information complaints and issues relating to the collection, use or disclosure of information
Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) ibac.vic.gov.au	Corruption, serious misconduct or public interest disclosure complaints
Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission humanrights.vic.gov.au	Human rights concerns, discrimination, sexual harassment or vilification
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission agedcarequality.gov.au	Breaches of provider obligations

Complaints about the Mayor or individual Councillors will be referred to the Manager Governance, Integrity, Legal and Risk and considered against the standards of behaviour outlined in the Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be referred to the Mayor for assessment and if necessary, referred to the Local Government Inspectorate.

Complaints made to councillors will be handled in accordance with this policy.

Timeframes

We will acknowledge complaints within 2 business days and aim to provide a response within the following timeframes:

- Tier 1: 10 business days
- Tier 2: 10 business days
- Tier 3: 20 business days

If more time is required because the matter is complex or requires additional investigation, we will inform the complainant before the original timeframe expires. Where additional time is needed, we will provide progress updates at least every 5 business days until the matter is finalised.

In limited circumstances where the matter is awaiting a fixed event or external dependency (such as consideration at a scheduled Council meeting), we may instead provide updates at key milestones. In these cases, we will advise the complainant of the reason updates will be less frequent and the date of the next expected update.

Sensitive or serious allegations

Some complaints involve sensitive or serious allegations such as misconduct, corruption, discrimination, harassment, family violence, occupational health and safety concerns, improper use of information, or matters raised by whistleblowers or through protected disclosures.

These matters may require confidential handling, mandatory reporting, or referral under other Council policies or legislation, including Public Interest Disclosures, Child Safety, Equal Opportunity, Whistleblower Protection, or Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption (IBAC) processes.

Your privacy

We understand that making a complaint may involve sharing personal or sensitive information and we take this responsibility seriously. We only collect information that is necessary to assess and respond to your complaint.

Your information is treated confidentially, accessed only by authorised staff, and stored securely in line with Council's Privacy and Personal Information Policy. We manage personal and health information in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Health Records Act 2001*.

8. DISCRETION TO REFUSE A COMPLAINT

At times, matters raised with Council may be assessed as feedback rather than a complaint and, as a result, may not be progressed through the complaints process.

If a decision is made not to action your complaint, we will explain why and where possible, guide you to the appropriate organisation or process.

9. UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT CONDUCT

Council acknowledges that some complainants may understandably feel upset, angry or disappointed, particularly if they believe they have been negatively affected, treated unfairly or have received information that was unclear or incorrect. Many complainants manage these feelings and communicate respectfully with us. However, in some circumstances a complainant's behaviour can become unreasonable.

We do not expect Council staff to tolerate behaviour that is abusive, aggressive, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or which places excessive demands on time and resources.

Where a complainant's conduct raises concerns about the health, safety or wellbeing of staff or creates inequity or unreasonable pressure on resources, we may need to modify how we communicate or interact with them.

We will follow our Complaint Handling Guidelines when responding to unreasonable conduct. This includes informing the complainant of any restrictions that are introduced, clearly explaining the reasons for these decisions and how long they will be in place for, and advising them of the available options for review and appeal.

Below are some ways we may modify how we communicate or interact with unreasonable complainants:

Who you can contact

In some cases, Council may direct all communication through a single officer (a case manager), who will manage the complaint(s) and communication with the complainant. This helps ensure consistency and reduces the risk of misunderstandings or conflicting information.

What you can raise

If a person continues to pursue issues that have already been fully considered or reviewed under this policy, Council may limit the matters we continue to engage with.

When and how you can contact us

Where a person's behaviour involves persistently rude, abusive, aggressive or disruptive communication or places unreasonable demand on staff, Council may place limits on the timing, frequency or method of contact, such as restricting communication to writing.

Access to services or facilities

If a person's conduct presents a safety risk to Council staff or members of the public, Council may restrict their access to certain services or facilities.

10. RESPONSIBILITIES

Customer	• Provide honest, factual information • Treat Council staff with courtesy and respect • Respond to requests for additional information in a timely manner • Use the complaints process responsibly and in good faith.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	• Promote positive behaviours and practices relating to enabling, responding to and learning from complaints • Support service improvements that arise from complaints • Review and publish complaint data.
Executive Directors, Managers and Leaders	• Recruit, train and empower staff to resolve complaints promptly and in accordance with Council's policies and procedures • Manage conflicts of interest in the complaints process • Report on and identify improvements from complaint data • Support staff who handle complaints.
Manager Governance, Integrity, Legal and Risk	• Participate and cooperate with external review processes. • Investigate complaints made about the Mayor and Councillors.
Senior Officer	• Conduct independent reviews of Tier 2 decisions • Make evidence-based decisions and provide written outcomes • Maintain clear and accurate internal review records.
Coordinators and Team Leaders	• Investigate tier 2 complaints • Maintain clear and accurate investigation records • Communicate with complainant and provide progress updates • Make evidence-based decisions and provide written outcomes.
All Council staff	• Familiarise themselves with this policy and Council's complaints process • Assist customers to make a complaint • Treat people with respect and professionalism • Resolve complaints in accordance with this policy • Where required, seek the assistance of their supervisor, to enable the complaint to be resolved at this point of contact • Undertake training in relation to complaint handling • Ensure all complaints are recorded as complaints.
Councillors	• Familiarise themselves with this policy and Council's complaints process • Refer complaints for resolution in accordance with this policy.
Contractors	• Familiarise themselves with this policy and Council's complaints process • Cooperate with Council's complaint handling processes • Undertake training in relation to complaint handling.

Volunteers	• Familiarise themselves with this policy and Council's complaints process • Cooperate with Council's complaint handling processes • Undertake training in relation to complaint handling.
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11. REPORTING, MONITORING, REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

Reporting and Monitoring	The Manager Customer Experience alongside the Chief Customer & Information Officer is responsible for the oversight, implementation, periodic review, monitoring and evaluation of this policy. These responsibilities ensure alignment with complaint-handling best practices recommended by the Victorian Ombudsman.
Review	This policy will be reviewed every 4 years.
Stakeholder Engagement	The following stakeholders will be consulted as part of the review process: Manager Customer Experience, Executive Management Team, CEO, Audit and Risk Committee, Staff Consultative Committee, Manager Governance, Coordinator Risk Management, Council, Legal and Risk.
Implementation	This Policy will be published on Council's website and intranet and implemented through staff induction and training, supporting procedures and clear allocation of responsibilities.

Performance reporting

We will report on complaints and complaint handling performance using the following measures:

- Total number of complaints received
- Number of complaints resolved within set timeframes
- Average resolution time
- Number of complaints escalated to external review

These measures will be published in Council's Annual Report.

Additional detailed measures will be reported internally to our Executive Team.

How we learn from complaints

We recognise that complaints provide valuable feedback and insight into our performance. Analysing data from complaints allows us to identify trends and help uncover potential issues that may require further attention. We will use this information to create solutions and ongoing improvements to our services.

12. REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Legislation

- [Aged Care Act 2024](#)
- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#)
- [Gender Equality Act 2020](#)
- [Health Records Act 2001](#)
- [Local Government Act 2020](#)
- [Ombudsman Act 1973](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012](#)

Related Council and Other Policies, Procedures, Strategies, Protocols, Guidelines

- [Rights and Responsibilities | Greater Dandenong Council](#)
- [Greater Dandenong City Council Access, Diversity and Equity Policy](#)
- [Greater Dandenong City Council Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [Greater Dandenong City Council Fraud and Corruption Prevention and Control Policy](#)
- [Greater Dandenong City Council Public Transparency Policy](#)
- [Greater Dandenong City Council Privacy and Personal Information Policy](#)
- [Greater Dandenong City Council Public Interest Disclosures Policy](#)
- [Greater Dandenong City Council Staff Code of Conduct](#)
- [Victorian Ombudsman – Council and complaints – A good practice guide 2nd edition, July 2021](#)
- [Model Councillor Code of Conduct](#)

Administrative Updates

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. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, the change to an existing policy or document referred to in this policy and minor updates to legislation and the like which does not have a material impact. All changes or updates which materially alter this policy must be by resolution of Council.

Date	Update

13. APPENDIX ONE – EXTERNAL BODIES

Regulatory Body	Type of complaint
Victorian Ombudsman ombudsman.vic.gov.au	Actions or decisions of Council staff, including human rights concerns
Local Government Inspectorate lgi.vic.gov.au	Breaches of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Office of the Victorian Information Commission ovic.vic.gov.au	Privacy breaches, Freedom of Information complaints and issues relating to the collection, use or disclosure of information
Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) ibac.vic.gov.au	Corruption, serious misconduct or public interest disclosure complaints
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) vcat.vic.gov.au	Planning disputes and appeals, including planning permit decisions
Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission humanrights.vic.gov.au	Human rights concerns, discrimination, sexual harassment or vilification
Disability Services Commissioner odsc.vic.gov.au	Complaints about disability services
Office of the Public Advocate publicadvocate.vic.gov.au	Concerns about the rights and wellbeing of people with disability
Victorian Electoral Commission vec.vic.gov.au	Complaints and feedback about Council elections
Social Services Regulator ssr.vic.gov.au	Reportable Conduct matters and complaints involving abuse, harm or neglect of children or young people by Council staff
Victorian Building Authority (VBA) vba.vic.gov.au	Building related complaints where statutory review applies
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission agedcarequality.gov.au	Complaints about poor or unsafe care in aged care services

14. APPENDIX TWO – COMPLAINT VS REQUEST FOR SERVICE

The following section provides examples of the differences between request for service and a complaint across multiple scenarios.

Summary definition of a complaint

Communication by a person to Council, expressing dissatisfaction about the quality of an action, decision or service provided by Council staff, a Council contractor or Council volunteer.

Summary definition of a request for service

A request made by a member of the public for a service to be provided or for an action to be taken.

Please refer to Section 5 for further information.

Request for service	Complaint
How can I object to the development on Walker Street?	Council shouldn't have approved the development on Walker Street.
Can you tell me if a planning permit is required for a backyard pool?	Council's website doesn't have enough information about when a planning permit is needed for a pool.
I want to make a complaint that my neighbours business is very noisy.	Council's investigation into noise from a business wasn't thorough and didn't look at peak times.
Can Council fill in a pothole in my street?	I reported a pothole to Council two months ago and it hasn't been fixed.
There should be a speed hump on Clow Street.	I asked Council to put a speed hump on Clow Street and it hasn't happened and I haven't heard from Council.
I want my parking fine withdrawn.	The officer who issued me a parking fine was very rude and unprofessional.
The same car parks illegally in a no stopping area in my street every day. Can you send someone to investigate?	I reported a car parked illegally three weeks ago and the car is still parking there every day. You haven't actioned my request.
The nature strip on the corner of McCrae Street is overgrown. Can Council please mow it?	I'm unhappy that Council stopped maintaining the nature strip without notifying residents.
There's loose gravel on the shared bike path behind the library. Could it be swept?	I'm unhappy that Council hasn't been maintaining the shared Path. It's dangerous.

I want to make a complaint that the air-conditioning wasn't working during my hall booking.	I'm unhappy that my previous concerns about hall conditions weren't addressed and no alternative room was offered.
There seems to be an error on my rates notice. Can someone review it?	I'm unhappy with the way staff handled my enquiry about the rates error. They didn't explain the situation clearly.
I'd like to report a trailer parked on the nature strip for several days. Can an officer take a look?	I'm dissatisfied with how parking officers respond. Previous issues have been closed without explanation.
I would like to change the time of my personal care service.	No one has arrived for my personal care service.

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