

## Need more information?



Call Consumer Affairs Victoria on 1300 55 81 81.

## Quick tip



An effective complaints handling system needs someone in the company to drive it and take ultimate responsibility.



Successful businesses work hard to keep their customers satisfied. Although prevention is better than cure, it is almost inevitable that at some stage you will receive a customer complaint. Don't presume a customer complaint is a negative experience because, if handled well, it can be a valuable learning tool.



### Benefits for your business

An effective complaints handling system is essential to your business. Your business can benefit in several ways:

- improved product quality and service delivery
- fewer mistakes and less time spent fixing them
- better understanding of customers' needs
- greater customer loyalty
- more customers through word of mouth advertising from satisfied clients
- less time and money spent attracting customers
- improved business reputation
- a healthier bottom line.

Remember you could be pushing profits out of the door if you do not have an effective complaints handling system.

### How to do it

Handle complaints effectively by:

- having a policy of welcoming customer complaints
- setting up a system to handle complaints effectively
- training your staff to handle complaints well
- dealing with the complaints you receive immediately
- ensuring the process for making complaints is easy for your customers
- regularly reviewing your complaints record.

## Quick tip



Implement a company policy that contact is to be made with the customer within 48 hours of the initial complaint.

## Set up a system to handle complaints effectively

An effective complaints handling system needs someone in the company to drive it and take ultimate responsibility. This is a person who has the best interest of both the customer and the company at heart, and the interpersonal and managerial skills to ensure the system is performing well.

The complaints officer needs to ensure that:

- there is adequate information available to the public about how to address any problems with your business, especially at the point of sale
- front line staff are aware of:
  - the complaints handling policy
  - their authority to settle complaints
  - when and to whom they need to refer complaints
- there is a process to handle the more difficult and complex cases
- complaints are reviewed regularly to identify any ongoing issues
- reports are made to senior management about complaints.

## Train your staff to handle complaints constructively

Make sure all staff understand the complaints handling policy, why it was introduced, how it will work and the benefits for your business.

Encourage and reward your staff for dealing with disgruntled customers and handling their complaints well.

## Deal with the complaints you receive immediately

Implement a company policy that contact is to be made with the customer within 48 hours of the initial complaint. This will ensure that the customer knows the complaint is being processed. Although the issue may not be resolved, the customer will be aware that it is being addressed.

## Ensure the process for making complaints is easy for your customers

Some suggestions are:

- Have a desk within your store where people can take their enquiries or complaints.
- Arrange a dedicated phone line for complaints or problems.
- Consider using a simple sign at your point of sale, or a paragraph on company invoices, such as 'Your custom is important to us. If you are not satisfied, please let us know'.
- Include a customer feedback option on your website.

## Review your complaints regularly

Regular reviews of complaints will give you a good indication of how and where your business could improve.

- Use a standard form to record the details of complaints (see following page for example).
- Review complaints monthly or quarterly to establish whether there are any trends, or obvious things you could change or improve.
- Use complaint records to check how well and how quickly your staff handle complaints.

Because this publication avoids the use of legal language, information about the law may have been summarised or expressed in general statements. This information should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional legal advice or reference to the actual legislation.

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## More information

Information on fair trading is available from:

### Consumer Affairs Victoria

#### Victorian Consumer & Business Centre

113 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne 3000  
Telephone 1300 55 81 81  
Website [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)

#### Regional Offices

Consumer Affairs Victoria also has regional offices located in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Morwell, Mildura, Wangaratta and Warrnambool together with a mobile outreach service that regularly visits rural communities. To find details on the office or mobile service nearest you, ring 1300 55 81 81 or go to the Consumer Affairs Victoria website on [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au) and click on the Contact Us link.

# Customer Complaint Form

## 1. Customer details

|                               |                           |                         |  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Title (Mr, Mrs, etc)          | Family name (surname)     | Given names             |  |
| <input type="text"/>          | <input type="text"/>      | <input type="text"/>    |  |
| Street address                | Suburb                    | Postcode                |  |
| <input type="text"/>          | <input type="text"/>      | <input type="text"/>    |  |
| Home telephone number         | Business telephone number | Mobile telephone number |  |
| <input type="text"/>          | <input type="text"/>      | <input type="text"/>    |  |
| Email address (if applicable) |                           |                         |  |
| <input type="text"/>          |                           |                         |  |

## 2. Details of other person or supplier involved in this complaint

|                               |                           |                         |  |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Name                          |                           |                         |  |
| <input type="text"/>          |                           |                         |  |
| Street address                | Suburb                    | Postcode                |  |
| <input type="text"/>          | <input type="text"/>      | <input type="text"/>    |  |
| Home telephone number         | Business telephone number | Mobile telephone number |  |
| <input type="text"/>          | <input type="text"/>      | <input type="text"/>    |  |
| Email address (if applicable) |                           |                         |  |
| <input type="text"/>          |                           |                         |  |

## 3. Details of goods or services supplied to the customer

|   |
|---|
| Date of purchase or service   |
| <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>                                |
| Description of the goods or service including make, model, type of service, purchase method, etc. |
| <input type="text"/>  |
| <input type="text"/>  |

## 4. Details of what the customer complaint is

|                      |
|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/> |

### Office use only

|  |  |                                     |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| Complaint received by  | Date received  | In person <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| <input type="text"/>   | <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> | In writing <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Action taken or required   |  |                                     |
| <input type="text"/>   |  |                                     |
| Date action completed  | Signature  |                                     |
| <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> X   |                                     |