

Complaints Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact wade.ho@vhka.org.au

Purpose

Our Complaints Policy is committed to treating complaints seriously and aims to address all complaints quickly and appropriately and learn from them to improve the way we provide services.

All VHKA staff and committee members must follow this Complaints Policy.

VHKA must protect the rights of the complainant and treat all parties with respect.

Scope

- This policy applies to complaints received from the public or person's who receive our services, regarding the way we provide services, our staff, facilities, programs and products.
- This policy applies to complaints related to current and historical matters.
- A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction made to the VHKA about the way we provide services, our staff or volunteers or our facilities, services, programs and products, where a response or resolution is sought, expected or legally required.
- Any individual or organisation may make a complaint about VHKA.
- This policy does not cover complaints related to employee grievances, code of conduct complaints, or internal allegations of fraud.

Complaint lodgement

1. Informal complaints

1.1 For complaints related to our facilities, services, programs or products, VHKA encourages members of the public to consider making an informal complaint in person to the staff they are dealing with when they first become dissatisfied. VHKA aims to resolve all informal complaints immediately or refer the person to a VHKA staff who can assist.

1.2 If a complainant is not comfortable in speaking directly to a VHKA staff or the staff is unable to resolve their complaint informally, a formal complaint should be lodged.

1.3 A formal complaint may be lodged in person where an informal complaint cannot be resolved, by requesting assistance from a VHKA staff.

2. Formal complaints

2.1 All formal complaints must be lodged in writing to VHKA:

- By letter, or
- By email

2.2 If a complainant is unable to lodge their complaint in writing, a request can be made in person or via telephone for assistance in lodging a complaint. AVHKA staff shall provide assistance to lodge a formal complaint on behalf of a complainant if requested to do so by the complainant.

2.3 Anonymous complaints are accepted where enough information is provided to conduct an assessment of the issues. Where an anonymous complaint is made, no final determination will be provided to the complainant.

2.4 VHKA will be flexible when dealing with complaints from vulnerable complainants (such as a child, young person, a person with a disability or those from a culturally or linguistically diverse background). In these instances, VHKA may provide communication support for the complainant or make reasonable adjustments to the complaints process to ensure that any barriers to full participation are removed.

3. Complaint handling principles

3.1 VHKA complaint handling system is underpinned by the following principles:

- Fairness – All complainants are treated fairly. Fairness rests on three qualities – impartiality, confidentiality and transparency
- Accessibility – People are encouraged to raise concerns, and VHKA provides a range of contact options and clear communication about how to access the complaint handling system.
- Responsiveness – VHKA complaint handling system is responsive to the needs of complainants, including providing additional support and flexibility when dealing with complaints from vulnerable persons.
- Efficiency – VHKA aims to address complaints in a way that is proportionate and appropriate to the matter being complained about.
- Integrated – Complaint handling is integrated with VHKA business activities, and information from complaints can be used to identify weaknesses and opportunities for improvement in VHKA services.

4 Child safety

4.1 VHKA has a zero-tolerance policy to child abuse and neglect in any form and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children by providing a safe and inclusive environment and by ensuring that relevant persons are educated and informed on their responsibilities to protect and look after children.

4.2 VHKA requires all employees and users of VHKA facilities to comply with VHKA Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy including to respond to allegations of prohibited and reportable conduct. VHKA will handle all complaints related to any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse or neglect towards children in accordance with VHKA Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy.

4.3 Complaints may be child-initiated or adult-initiated and VHKA encourages people to raise concerns to address the needs and safety of children.

4.4 VHKA will meet any legislated mandatory or other jurisdictional or industry reporting requirements.

4.5 VHKA will handle all complaints related to any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child safety in accordance with VHKA's Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

5 Sexual misconduct

5.1 VHKA has zero tolerance for sexual misconduct and for any behaviour that puts the wellbeing of people in the community at risk.

5.2 VHKA works with specialist service providers to support anyone impacted by sexual misconduct while under VHKA's care. This support is available to any person who has experienced, or is at risk of, any form of sexual misconduct, whether it is a recent event or something which happened in the past.

5.3 Anyone affected by sexual misconduct may contact wade.ho@vhka.org.au

5.4 VHKA requires all employees and users of VHKA facilities to comply with VHKA Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedure including to respond to allegations of prohibited and reportable conduct.

5.5 VHKA will meet any legislated mandatory or other jurisdictional requirements.

6 Historical allegations

6.1 VHKA has zero tolerance for abuse or neglect and for any behaviour that puts the wellbeing of people in the community at risk.

6.2 VHKA works with specialist service providers to support anyone impacted by historical abuse or neglect while under VHKA's care. This support is available to any person who has been negatively impacted by their experiences, whether it is a recent event or something which happened in the past.

6.3 Anyone affected by historical abuse or neglect may contact wade.ho@vhka.org.au

6.3 VHKA will meet any legislated mandatory or other jurisdictional requirements.

Complaint handling

7. Complaint handling process

7.1 Identify and log the complaint: All formal complaints received will be logged in VHKA complaints register. Note that formal complaints must be lodged in writing.

7.2 Acknowledgement: All formal complaints will be acknowledged upon receipt.

7.3 Assessment: An initial assessment will be undertaken by VHKA Complaints team. Where insufficient information is provided, VHKA may contact complainants to request further information or provide advice on the process for managing the complaint. Where the complaint is outside of VHKA responsibility, VHKA will assist complainant in referring complaints to the correct organisation or agency.

7.4 Resolve or Investigation: Where possible, early resolution of complaints will be undertaken. Where early resolution is not possible, an investigation of the complaint will be undertaken by VHKA, and where required, action taken. This process will usually be finalised within 28 days. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be advised of the anticipated timeframe for completion and kept informed of progress related to the complaint.

7.5 Communicate: All formal complaints (that require a response) will receive a final written determination, usually within 28 days, which includes details of the assessment(s) undertaken, final outcome and further options available to the complainant.

7.6 Finalisation: All complaints will be finalised once an outcome has been provided and any actions related to the complaint are completed.

7.7 Escalation: If a complainant is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled or the resolution provided by VHKA, a request can be made to have the complaint escalated. Where a request for escalation has been received, VHKA will conduct an independent internal review of the handling of the complaint.

7.8 Record Keeping: All formal complaints will be recorded for continuous improvement and monitored through regular review to improve VHKA programs and services. Confidential or personal information will be accessible only by authorised VHKA employees.

8. Privacy

8.1 VHKA requires all employees involved in the handling of complaints to adhere to VHKA Privacy Policy in the management of personal information.

8.2 Confidential or personal information will not be disclosed by VHKA to third parties without the prior consent of the complainant unless the information is required by legislation to be provided to regulatory agencies.

8.3 VHKA may also need to provide personal information to external parties where:

- VHKA is required to by law or has a public duty to do so. For example, a Court, a regulator (such as the Australian Taxation Office) or the police can compel VHKA to disclose personal information to them; or
- persons have expressly consented to their personal information being supplied to others for particular purposes.

9. Unreasonable complaint conduct

9.1 If a complaint is received that is deemed vexatious, contains abuse or material clearly intended to intimidate, VHKA may choose not to respond to the complaint.

9.2 If a complainant is verbally abusive or threatens harm towards VHKA and/or VHKA employees, contact with the complainant may be terminated.

9.3 If a complaint's conduct is considered unreasonable, VHKA may choose to terminate contact with the complainant. Unreasonable conduct is behaviour which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for VHKA.

Accountability and responsibilities

| Who | Responsibilities |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Chairman / Vice-Chairman | Ensure that complaint handling is a priority for VHKA |
| Secretary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish an effective, professional complaint handling system - Ensure that VHKA's staff are aware of the policies and procedures related to complaints handling |
| Committee member | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage the Complaints function - Receive and manage complaints where there is high sensitivity and confidentiality required - Authorise investigations - Manage complaints referral to the Australian Federal Police as required |

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| Complaint Handling Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate the complaints handling system. - Implement escalation protocols, where relevant - Manage the Complaints Register - Review the Complaints Handling Policy every 2 years |
| Child Safety Officer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage complaints related to Child safety issues. - Refer as required to law enforcement and Child protection agencies |
| Staff/employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comply with the VHKA Complaints Policy - Treat all complainants with respect and courtesy - Comply with escalation protocols, where required - Appropriately report any complaints to their manager, or where a formal complaint is requested, to the Complaints Handling team |

Related policies and procedures

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Risk Management
- Staff and Volunteers Policy
- Privacy Policy

Approval and review

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| Created date | 12 August 2022 |
| Endorsed by | VHKA's committee |
| Endorsed on | 14 August 2022 |
| Next review date | 14 August 2022 |