



Whitehorse
Manningham
Libraries
open for discovery

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www.wml.vic.gov.au

Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Number	POL/18/35[v3]
Effective date	4 January 2019
Last Review date	December 2023
Next Review Date	As required
Responsibility	Manager Library Operations

Introduction

Whitehorse Manningham Libraries is committed to resolving complaints. We recognize people's right to complain and consider complaint handling to be part of the core business of serving the community and improving service delivery.

Objectives

This policy aims to;

- put in place an open and transparent complaint handling system
- establish our timeframes for resolving complaints
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of library staff
- ensure staff handle complaints fairly and objectively
- set out how to record and analyse complaint data to identify where we can improve our services

Guiding Principles

This policy is based on seven principles, as outlined in the Victorian Ombudsman's *Councils and complaints – A good practice guide*

1. Commitment

We are committed to resolving complaints that we receive. Our culture recognizes people's right to complain and considers complaint handling to be a core part of serving the community and improving service delivery.

2. Accessibility

People can easily find out how to complain to us, and we actively assist them with the complaint process.

3. Transparency

The complaint handling system clearly sets out how to complain, where to complain and how the complaint will be handled. The steps taken to respond to a complaint are recorded and will stand up to scrutiny.

4. Objectivity and fairness

Under the complaint handling system, complainants and staff are treated with respect and courtesy and complaints are judged on merit and fact.

5. Confidentiality

The complaint handling system protects the personal information of people making a complaint, library staff are informed only on a 'need to know' basis.

6. Accountability

We are accountable for our decision making and complaint handling performance. We provide explanations and reasons for decisions and ensure that our decisions are subject to appropriate review processes.

7. Continuous improvement

We regularly analyse complaint data to find ways to improve how we operate and how we deliver our services. We then implement these changes.

Scope

This policy applies to all library employees.

In circumstances where a complaint is made in relation to the way in which WML employees engage with children, the procedures within the Reportable Conduct Policy apply.

Definition

Complaint A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with;

- the quality of an action taken, decision made, or service provided by the library
- a delay or failure in providing a service, taking an action, or making a decision by the library

Employee For the purposes of this Code “employee” includes:

- full and part-time employees;
- temporary and casual employees;
- volunteers;
- contractors undertaking work for the Corporation; and
- work experience and industry placements.

Roles and responsibilities of library employees

Frontline Staff

Role

Receive face-to-face, written, electronic and phone complaints.

Responsibility

- be receptive to complaints
- ask questions to ensure that they understand the issue from the customer perspective
- establish the complainant's desired outcome (if known)
- aim to resolve the issue immediately
- understand, follow and explain the complaint handling process
- identify complaints which need to be escalated and explain this process to the complainant
- record the complaint

Managers

Role

Receive face-to-face, written, electronic, phone and referred or escalated complaints for decision or investigation.

Responsibility

- engage with referring staff if an issue has been referred
- investigate the complaint
- respond to the complainant within agreed timeframes
- conduct investigation, if warranted
- Update the record of complaint

Senior Managers

Role

Receive escalated or direct complaints. Conduct internal reviews.

Responsibility

- engage with referring staff if issue has been referred
- respond to complainant within agreed timeframes
- conduct internal review if requested
- determine if library policies / procedures need to be changed as a result of this complaint process and direct these changes or make recommendation to the CEO to do so
- Update the record of complaint

Chief Executive Officer

Role

Final internal point of escalation for complaint issues. Conduct internal review.

Responsibility

- engage with referring manager
- respond to complainant within agreed timeframes
- conduct internal review if requested
- determine if library policies / procedures need to be changed as a result of this complaint process and direct these changes
- Update the record of complaint

How to make a complaint

A person can make a complaint in a number of ways.

Mail: Manager Library Operations
 Whitehorse Manningham Libraries
 PO Box 3083
 Nunawading VIC 3131

(Pre-addressed *How was your visit today?*
Forms are available at all library branches)

Fax: Administration 9896-4348

Telephone: Administration 9896 4333
 Blackburn Library 9896 8400
 Box Hill Library 9896 4300
 Bulleen Library 9896 8450
 Doncaster Library 9877 8500
 Nunawading Library 9872 8600
 The Pines Library 9877 8550
 Vermont South Library 9872 8650
 Warrandyte Library 9895 4250

Email: Blackburn Library bla@wml.vic.gov.au
 Box Hill Library box@wml.vic.gov.au
 Bulleen Library bul@wml.vic.gov.au
 Doncaster Library don@wml.vic.gov.au
 Nunawading Library nun@wml.vic.gov.au
 The Pines Library pin@wml.vic.gov.au

Vermont South Library
Warrandyte Library

ver@wml.vic.gov.au
war@wml.vic.gov.au

In person: Blackburn Library
Corner of Blackburn & Central Roads
Blackburn 3130

Box Hill Library
1040 Whitehorse Road
Box Hill 3128

Bulleen Library
Bulleen Plaza
Manningham Road
Bulleen 3105

Doncaster Library
MC2
687 Doncaster Road
Doncaster 3109

Nunawading Library
379 Whitehorse Road
Nunawading 3131

The Pines Library
The Pines Shopping Centre
Corner of Blackburn & Reynolds Roads
Doncaster East 3109

Vermont South Library
Pavey Place
Vermont South 3133

Warrandyte Library
Warrandyte Community Centre
168 Yarra Street
Warrandyte 3113

Internet: www.wml.vic.gov.au
Click on Contact
Click on Feedback & General Enquiries

Complaint handling procedure

Overview

The library takes a four-tiered approach to complaint handling, as follows;

1. Frontline resolution: frontline staff receive the complaint and resolve it immediately. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints through frontline resolution.
2. Investigation: if frontline staff cannot resolve the complaint, they will refer it to a manager for investigation.
3. Internal review: if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they can request an internal review.
4. Access to external review: if the complainant is not satisfied with the process or outcome of the internal review, we inform them of any external avenues through which they can pursue the complaint.

Procedures

Frontline resolution

- We will acknowledge all complaints within 10 business days of receipt.
- Frontline staff will clarify the complaint and the outcome the complainant is seeking.
- Frontline staff will assess the complaint to determine how it should be dealt with.
- If the library is not the right organization to respond to the complaint, frontline staff will refer the complainant to an organization that can help.

Investigation

- If frontline staff cannot resolve the complaint, it will be referred to a manager for investigation.
- The manager handling the complaint will advise the complainant who the contact person is and how long it will take to respond to the complaint.
- We aim to resolve all complaints within 28 days.
- The complainant will be contacted if it is anticipated to take longer than 28 days to resolve a complaint.
- Complaints that are not resolved within 28 days will be subject to review and escalated if necessary to ensure that a resolution is expedited.
- The manager responsible for handling the complaint will write to the complainant to advise them of the outcome. The outcome letter will contain reasons for the decision made and the contact information of the responsible officer.
- Where possible, the manager handling the complaint will contact the complainant via telephone to discuss the outcome of their complaint prior to sending the outcome letter.

Internal review

Staff responsible for internal reviews will be members of the Senior Management Team who were not involved in the original issue.

- The responsible senior manager will contact the complainant to provide their contact details and outline how long it will take to complete the review and respond to the complainant.
- If the resolution takes longer than anticipated, the senior manager will contact the complainant to explain the delay.

- A written outcome letter signed by the senior manager responsible for the internal review will be provided to the complainant at the conclusion of every internal review.
- Where available, the outcome letter will advise the complainant of any avenues of external review available in relation to the matter.

Remedies

Where we have found that we have made an error, we will take steps to redress the situation. Possible remedies include, but are not limited to

- an explanation of why the error occurred and the steps taken to prevent it happening again
- reversal of a decision
- disciplinary action against a staff member

Where we identify an error, we will consider offering a genuine apology to the complainant, in addition to any other remedies offered, irrespective of whether the complainant specifically requests this.

Privacy and confidentiality

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

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

Recording complaints

All complaints are recorded in our central complaints file.

The Branch Management Team reviews complaints and makes recommendations on how we can reduce complaints and improve services. Senior management is responsible for acting on the recommendations, pending approval from the Board where required.

Any queries regarding the recording of complaints should be directed to the Manager Corporate Services.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

- Unreasonable complainant conduct does not preclude there being a valid issue.
- Anger is an understandable emotion among frustrated complainants as long as it is not expressed through aggression or violence.
- Staff will be trained to manage and assess complainant behavior and refer to senior management any behavior identified as unreasonable.
- The decision to change or restrict a complainant's access to services as a result of their behavior, will only be made at a senior management level.

Related Internal Documents

- Customer Service Charter
- Information Privacy Policy
- Local Law Number 4 : Library Services Local Law
- Reportable Conduct Policy

- Child Safe Policy

Related External Documents

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Local Government Act 1989
- Protected Disclosure Act 2012
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010