

General Warning

The purpose of this fact sheet is to give general introductory information about the complaints process. It does not contain legal advice.

WARNING: Alternative legal action should be considered before making a complaint. What is included in a complaint may be relevant to any current or future legal proceedings. If you are involved in legal action you should immediately see a lawyer and not proceed with a complaint.

If you (or the complainant, if you are complaining on their behalf) want financial compensation, support or money you should see a lawyer before making a complaint.

General complaint information

Complaints are rarely about just one thing. When you have a problem, it may be that a number of things have gone wrong. Below are some of the common areas where issues may arise that could lead to a complaint.

Discrimination	Disability and NDIS services	Policing, Custody and Detention
Seniors and Aged Care supports and services	Consumer and Business disputes	Phone and Internet services
Banking, Insurance and Superannuation	Energy and Water services	Housing and Real Estate
Health Care services	Employment issues	Education and Training providers
Government Agencies and Departments	Child Safety and Protection	State Fines and Debts
Corruption	Privacy and Access to Information	Media and Publications

There are different complaint bodies to handle different types of complaints. You should consider the different pathways available to decide the most appropriate pathway for your circumstances. One event could lead to multiple complaints. That means you may need to lodge more than one complaint to have all of your concerns addressed.

The online triage tool on this website can help you to identify the different complaint bodies that may be able to assist you.

It is usually quickest and easiest to try to resolve a complaint directly with the person or body you are having a problem with. Many complaint handling bodies will not act on a complaint unless you have tried to resolve your complaint directly. If you do not feel it is safe or appropriate to complain directly, you should contact the relevant complaint body to discuss your situation.

Complaints involving discrimination

There are state and federal complaints bodies that handle complaints that about discrimination. If your situation involves discrimination, you should consider making a discrimination complaint in addition to any other complaints. Discrimination may occur when someone is treated less favourably on the basis of: race; sex; gender; disability; age; sexuality; relationship status; pregnancy; caring responsibilities; or having or being thought to have an infectious disease.

WARNING: The state and federal bodies that handle discrimination complaints have different rules, including time limits. You can make a complaint to both the state and federal complaint bodies, but they may decide not to address your concerns if you have already complained elsewhere. For example, if you have already lodged a discrimination complaint to anti-discrimination NSW, it is likely that Australian Human Rights Commission will decide not to act on your complaint. Please carefully review the discrimination factsheets for information about your options before making a discrimination complaint.

Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria (DBDRV)

In this fact sheet, we introduce Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria (DBDRV). We outline how complaints can be made by people to DBDRV.

DBDRV is an independent government agency that provides free services to help resolve domestic (residential) building disputes to aim to reduce the cost and time often associated with courts and tribunals. DBDRV is a business unit of the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), within the portfolio of the Attorney-General.

Legislation and Key Terms

Relevant Legislation:

DBDRV is a business unit of the Department of Justice and Community Safety and has been established under the *Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995 (Vic)*.

Below are links to legislation that is relevant to DBDRV's dispute handling work.

- [Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995 \(Vic\)](#) (DBC Act).

Key Terms:

Below are key terms that appear throughout this factsheet and their meaning.

CDRO means Chief Dispute Resolution Officer.

DBC Act means the *Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995 (Vic)*.

DBDRV means Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria.

DRO means Dispute Resolution Officer.

VCAT means Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal.

Step 1: What type of Complaints can be made to this body?

DBDRV aim to assist in resolving domestic building disputes. DBDRV focuses on complaints about, but not limited to:	
Sub-category	Example
Defective or incomplete building work	You should make a complaint if the building work done on your home is faulty, damaged, unsafe, or doesn't meet expected standards. This includes poor workmanship, leaks, cracks, improper installations, or anything that doesn't meet contract plans, specifications or legal warranties. <i>Examples:</i> • <i>Jemima noticed water leaking into her bedroom ceiling shortly after an upstairs renovation. The builder denies it's their fault.</i> • <i>Jenny and Sam's new bathroom has waterproofing defects. The builder insists the work is fine, but they're still experiencing serious issues.</i> • <i>Amar found deep cracks in his concrete slab just months after moving into his newly built home.</i> • <i>Chris and Tina's new taps all leak slightly, and the builder keeps stalling on repairs.</i>
Incomplete Building Work	You should make a complaint if the builder hasn't finished the work agreed to in your contract. This includes works that have stopped, been abandoned, or were left unfinished without explanation. <i>Examples:</i> • <i>A contractor left halfway through a house extension, leaving exposed wiring and unfinished walls.</i> • <i>A kitchen renovation was abandoned after cabinetry was half-installed and plumbing left incomplete.</i>
Delays in Building Work	You should make a complaint if the work hasn't been finished by the date in the contract and there's no good reason. You can complain even if the work is eventually finished, if the delay was unreasonable, unexplained, or breached the contract timeline. <i>Example: Esther's granny flat was supposed to be done in four months, but it took 12 months, with no updates or valid explanations.</i>
Payment Disputes or Non-Payment for Building Work	You should make a complaint if there's a disagreement over payment, including being charged for work not done, or not being paid after doing the work. This includes disputes from either homeowners or builders about money owed, overcharging, underpayment, or bounced cheques. <i>Examples:</i> • <i>Arnold, a builder, completed a granny flat and invoiced the client, but the cheque bounced and the client stopped responding.</i>

	• <i>John finished a bathroom renovation, but the client is refusing to pay the final invoice.</i> • <i>A homeowner was charged 90% of the total cost before the project was halfway done.</i>
Breach of Legal Warranties	You should make a complaint if the builder didn't follow the minimum legal standards guaranteed by law (called "warranties"). These include that the work must be: • Done with proper skill and care • Finished by the agreed date • Fit for purpose and compliant with the law • Built using new and suitable materials • Safe to live in when completed <i>Example: A garage was built with warped timber and doesn't meet the plans in the contract, breaching the warranty for quality materials and compliance.</i>
Unapproved Variations to the Contract	You should make a complaint if the builder changed what was agreed in your contract without proper notice, pricing, or written approval. All contract variations must be documented and signed by both parties (unless it's an emergency or law requires it). <i>Example: A builder installed laminate benchtops instead of the stone benchtops listed in the signed contract, without asking the homeowner.</i>
Use of Wrong or Substandard Materials	You should make a complaint if your builder used poor-quality or different materials than those listed in your contract. Builders must use materials that are new (unless otherwise agreed), safe, and suitable for their purpose. <i>Example: Tarika's contract specified hardwood flooring, but her builder used cheaper laminate without telling her.</i>
Damage Caused During Building Work	You should make a complaint if the builder's work caused damage to your property or other structures. This includes accidental damage, excavation impacts, or cracked neighbouring walls due to building vibrations. <i>Example: During a driveway pour, the builder's equipment damaged the garden retaining wall, but they refused to take responsibility.</i>
Unsafe or Non-Compliant Building Work	You should make a complaint if the work done is unsafe, doesn't follow the building code, or breaches planning or permit conditions. DBDRV can arrange inspections and recommend urgent repairs or corrections. <i>Example: Sophie found exposed electrical wiring on site and tripping hazards left unattended. The builder said they'd "deal with it later".</i>
Failure to Provide Required Documents	You should make a complaint if your builder hasn't given you documents they're legally required to provide, such as contracts, certificates of insurance, or progress reports. This can also include foundation data, compliance certificates, or reports from inspectors.

	<i>Example: Maurice never received a copy of the domestic building insurance certificate, which he needed to make a claim.</i>
Builder is Unregistered or Unlicensed	You should make a complaint if you discover that your builder or a subcontractor is not registered or licensed to do the work. Builders must be registered for the type of work being done. Unlicensed building work is a breach of the law. <i>Example: Karen later learned that her concreter was not registered, and now the slab is crumbling.</i>
Communication Breakdown	You should make a complaint if your builder has stopped responding to your emails, calls, or requests for updates, especially when work is delayed or issues arise. While not a breach on its own, poor communication can point to a broader dispute that DBDRV can help resolve. <i>Example: George has emailed his builder five times to ask when the renovation will resume, but hasn't heard back for two months.</i>
Breach of a Stop Work Notice	You should make a complaint if your builder continued working after receiving a formal Stop Work Notice from DBDRV. These are legal directions issued during serious disputes or risks to safety. <i>Example: Despite a stop work notice issued over unsafe scaffolding, the builder continued building a second-storey frame.</i>
Breach of a Dispute Resolution Order	You should make a complaint if the builder or homeowner hasn't complied with a formal order issued by DBDRV, such as to fix or complete work, or make a payment. DBDRV can issue breach notices and escalate the matter further. <i>Example: A builder was ordered to fix cracked render within 21 days, but no action was taken by the deadline.</i>
Disputes About Payments from the Trust Fund	You should make a complaint if money paid into the DBDRV Trust Fund is not being managed properly or is being requested too early. The fund helps ensure money is only released when agreed work is completed. <i>Example: Dylan paid a progress payment into the trust fund. The builder tried to have it released even though the work wasn't finished.</i>
Exclusions	DBDRV can only help with disputes about domestic building work on homes. It can't deal with issues that fall outside its legal powers, including: • Work on commercial or business-only buildings: If the building is only used for business (like a shop, office, or factory), DBDRV can't help. • Farm buildings (unless someone lives there): DBDRV doesn't cover sheds or barns used only for farming. But if it's a home on a farm, DBDRV can help. • Buildings for animals: Work on kennels, stables, or animal shelters isn't covered.

	• Motels, hotels, clubs, or nursing homes: These places aren't considered "homes" under the law, even if people live there, so they're excluded. • Design work only (if done by an architect or engineer): If your complaint is only about design plans, and no building work was done, DBDRV can't help, even if the plans were done badly. • Moving a building from one place to another: If your dispute is only about transporting a building (like a relocatable home), DBDRV can't take the complaint. • Subcontractors with issues against builders: If you're a tradie or subcontractor working for a builder, you can't use DBDRV to resolve payment or contract disputes with that builder. • No direct building contract: If you don't have a domestic building contract. For example, if you're arguing with a real estate agent or developer and they're not also the builder, DBDRV can't help. • Insurance claims: DBDRV can't help with building insurance claims or disputes about decisions made by your insurer. These must go to VCAT. • Decisions already made by a court or tribunal: If your issue has already been decided by VCAT or a court, DBDRV can't take it on. • Problems not about building work: If your issue is about something else, like a fencing dispute with a neighbour, noise complaints, or planning permits, DBDRV can't help. • You haven't tried to sort it out with the other person yet: Before DBDRV will accept your complaint, you need to show you've already tried to fix the issue by talking to the other person (the builder, owner, etc).
Additional Info	What types of work are considered "domestic building work"? DBDRV covers building, renovating, extending, demolishing, or repairing a home, and also includes: • garages, carports, driveways, fencing • landscaping and paving (if done as part of broader work) • swimming pools and spas • site works, excavation, foundations, and retaining walls • preparation of plans, specs, or managing work under a domestic building contract What if my building work is partially finished or done in stages? If you have multiple contracts with the same builder for different stages, DBDRV will treat them as one contract for the purpose of resolving a dispute.

Step 2: What is the Jurisdiction of the complaints body?

Jurisdiction	Description
State	DBDRV has the power to assist in resolving domestic building disputes under the laws of Victoria.
Geographical Scope	You can apply for assistance from DBDRV to resolve a dispute regarding domestic building work undertaken in Victoria.
Time limitations	For your dispute to be eligible for the DBDRV service, it must not relate to building work that is more than 10 years old.
Exclusions	DBDRV cannot handle your complaint if: • The work was done outside Victoria: DBDRV can only deal with building disputes in Victoria. If the work happened elsewhere, even if one party lives in Victoria, DBDRV can't help. • Too much time has passed: You usually need to raise your dispute within 10 years of the work being completed. If the work happened longer ago than that, your complaint is likely out of time. • You haven't tried to resolve it with the other party yet: Before DBDRV will accept a dispute, you must show you've taken reasonable steps to try and sort it out directly with the other person (like emailing, calling, or asking for a fix). • The work is only a single trade job (not part of bigger works): If your complaint is only about one type of trade work, and not part of a larger building job, DBDRV may not be able to help. This includes work like: ○ Painting ○ Plastering ○ Plumbing ○ Electrical work ○ Tiling ○ Concreting ○ Installing insulation or floor coverings ○ Glazing (windows, glass) ○ Fencing (if a building permit isn't required) But if these jobs are part of a bigger renovation or new build, they are covered. • The dispute has already been decided at VCAT or court: If your building dispute is already being heard at VCAT, or was decided by a court or tribunal before, DBDRV usually can't take it again. (Limited exceptions apply, for example, if VCAT told you to go to DBDRV first.)

	• The contract isn't a domestic building contract: If the work doesn't count as "domestic building work" under the law, for example, it's only business-related, design-only by an architect, or there's no actual building, DBDRV can't handle the dispute. • No work has started yet: There usually needs to be actual work underway, completed, or overdue. If the work hasn't started yet, and no contract has been breached, DBDRV may not be able to act. If you're not sure whether your issue is eligible: You can call the Building Information Line on 1300 55 75 59 (9am–5pm, Monday to Friday) before applying to VCAT.
Exercise of discretion	DBDRV has broad discretion to accept an application for its dispute resolution service. Generally, DBDRV will consider if the dispute is suitable for conciliation against certain criteria include: • the referring party has not provided any information, documents or evidence requested or required or has not provided them within the time required by the conciliation officer • the referring party has failed without reasonable excuse to take reasonable steps to resolve the dispute before the referral • there is no reasonable likelihood of the dispute being settled by conciliation for any reason other than because no other party is willing to engage in the conciliation; or • the referral is frivolous or otherwise lacking in substance, vexatious or was not made in good faith; or • the dispute has been resolved.

Step 3: Who can you make a complaint against?

DBDRV aims to assist in resolving domestic building disputes	
Respondent	Description
Builders	The person or company you entered into a domestic building contract with to carry out residential building work, including new builds, renovations, or repairs.
Registered Building Practitioners	People registered under the Building Act 1993 to perform domestic building work, such as registered domestic builders, project managers, or engineers, even if they're not the main contractor.
Subcontractors	A tradesperson or business hired by your builder to do part of the building work, such as concreting, roofing, or tiling, if you contracted with them directly (e.g. as an owner-builder).
Architects	Architects engaged to manage or arrange domestic building work under a domestic building contract, especially if the architect was

	responsible for supervising the build and issues arose due to their role.
Clients / Building Owners / Homeowners	If you're a builder, tradesperson, or contractor, you can lodge a complaint against a customer or homeowner for things like non-payment, delays, or breaches of contract.
Owner-Builders	People who take on the role of builder for their own home, often hiring subcontractors or trades directly, they can be respondents if the dispute relates to domestic building work they arranged or managed.
Exclusions	DBDRV does not handle complaints relating to: • Real Estate Agents: DBDRV cannot deal with complaints about real estate agents, even if they sold the property where building issues have occurred. • Developers (if they're not also the builder): If your complaint is only about a developer, and the developer didn't also carry out or manage the building work, DBDRV won't have jurisdiction. • Designers (not registered architects or builders): Unregistered designers or draftspersons who only provided plans and were not involved in carrying out or managing the work cannot be respondents through DBDRV. • Subcontractors (if you did not contract with them directly): If the subcontractor was hired by your builder, and you have no direct agreement with them, you cannot lodge a complaint against them at DBDRV. • Insurers: DBDRV cannot handle complaints about insurance claims or insurer decisions, these must be taken to VCAT or the insurer's dispute process. • Financial Institutions / Banks: Disputes about finance, loans, or mortgage conditions related to the building project are outside DBDRV's powers. • Occupants or Tenants (not party to the building contract): Tenants or other non-contracting occupants cannot be named as respondents unless they were directly involved in the domestic building work contract. • Government Authorities or Councils: If your complaint is about planning permits, inspections, council approvals or regulations, DBDRV cannot investigate. These matters must be raised with the responsible authority.

Step 4: Are you eligible to make a complaint?

Eligibility	Description
Who can make a complaint?	Each of the following people can apply for assistance from DBDRV: • Building owners • Builders • Sub-contractors: Subcontractors can only apply if they contracted directly with the building owner. They cannot apply if their dispute is with the head contractor or builder. • Architects • Engineers engaged in the building industry Other building practitioners such as surveyors and draftspersons are also eligible to apply.
Pre-requisite Steps	You must have made reasonable attempts to resolve your dispute with the other party before you apply to DBDRV. This is a legal requirement and DBDRV will refuse any application if you have not made reasonable steps to resolve your dispute with the other party before you apply to DBDRV. "Reasonable steps" depends on the circumstances, but generally you should: • trying to contact the other party to raise your concerns, repeatedly if they do not respond • clearly informing the other party of the issues you are disputing, preferably in writing • giving the other party an opportunity to respond to you and carry out any agreed actions • preferably advising the other party that you intend to lodge an application with DBDRV if the issues cannot be resolved. For more information please view DBDRV's Tips to help you resolve your dispute page.
Can a complaint be made on behalf of someone?	No. Only disputes from building owners, builders, sub-contractors, architects or engineers engaged in the building industry. There is no ability for disputes to be referred on behalf of someone else.
Exclusions	DBDRV cannot take your complaint if: • You didn't sign the building contract: If you weren't part of the contract (e.g. you're just a tenant, neighbour, or family member), DBDRV can't take your complaint.

	• You're a subcontractor chasing money from a builder: If you're a tradie or subcontractor who worked under a builder, you'll need to go through a different process, not DBDRV. • The building work wasn't done in Victoria: DBDRV only deals with domestic building disputes in Victoria. • You have no real link to the dispute: You can't complain unless the issue directly involves you, for example, you must be the builder, the owner, or someone named in the contract. • You haven't tried to sort it out with the other person: Before DBDRV steps in, you must show you've tried to fix the issue by contacting the other party (e.g. sending an email or asking them to fix the problem). • You're asking for urgent legal action (like a stop work order): DBDRV can't issue emergency orders or injunctions. You'll need to apply directly to VCAT or a court if it's urgent. • You made your complaint to Building Advice and Conciliation Victoria (BACV) before 26 April 2017: Older complaints from before this date can't be taken on by DBDRV.
Additional information you need to know	DBDRV's services are free. You do not need a lawyer for the dispute resolution process, but you can seek legal advice at any time.

Step 5: What remedies are available at this body?

Power	Description
Record of Agreement	If both parties agree during conciliation, the dispute resolution officer (DRO) will record what was agreed. • This record sets out what each person has to do (e.g. fix the work, pay money) and when it must be done. • DBDRV treats this agreement seriously. If a party doesn't follow it, DBDRV may issue a dispute resolution order or certificate of conciliation.
Certificate of Conciliation	If no agreement is reached, or someone doesn't follow the agreement, DBDRV can issue a certificate saying the dispute has not been resolved. • This certificate allows either party to apply to VCAT to have the matter heard.
Dispute Resolution Orders (DROs)	These are binding legal orders issued by the Chief Dispute Resolution Officer (CDRO) when a matter is unresolved or only partially resolved. A DRO can: Against a builder: • Require the builder to: ○ Fix defective work

	○ Complete unfinished work ○ Fix any damage they caused during works ○ Pay the owner to get another builder to do the work (if it's unsafe or inappropriate for them to return) ○ Pay compensation for delays or contract breaches ○ Arrange for a registered builder to fix the work (if they're not properly licensed) • Include a finding that the building work is not defective or incomplete (where applicable) Against a building owner: • Require the owner to: ○ Pay money to the builder for work done ○ Pay money into the DBDRV Trust Fund to be held until work is completed or fixed ○ Not interfere with the builder meeting their contract or warranty obligations
Breach Notice	If someone fails to follow a dispute resolution order, DBDRV can issue a Breach of Dispute Resolution Order Notice. • The notice formally confirms the breach and can lead to: ○ VCAT proceedings ○ Termination of the building contract (by the other party) ○ Notification to the VBA (which may trigger disciplinary action against a builder)
Re-opening or escalation of the complaint	If someone breaks a record of agreement, DBDRV may: • Resume conciliation • Issue a Dispute Resolution Order • Issue a Certificate of Conciliation
Building Assessment Reports	Where there's disagreement about whether work was done properly, DBDRV can send an assessor to inspect the site and provide an expert report. • These reports can confirm whether there's been a breach, whether work is defective/incomplete, or whether parties complied with orders. • DBDRV can use this report to: ○ Inform next steps (e.g. breach notice, dispute resolution order) ○ Recover the cost of the assessment from the party at fault

End the Building Contract	If a breach notice has been issued: • The owner can end the contract if the builder hasn't complied and all review timeframes have passed. • The builder can end the contract if the owner hasn't complied with an order and all required steps have been followed.
Payment Directions Using the Trust Fund	DBDRV can: • Direct parties to pay money into the DBDRV Trust Fund (held until work is done) • Direct money to be paid out of the fund when work is completed or other conditions are met • Allow a party to appeal the decision to release or withhold funds through VCAT
Referral to the VBA (Victorian Building Authority)	If the builder doesn't comply with an order or agreement, DBDRV may: • Refer the matter to the VBA for disciplinary investigation
Amend, Vary, or Cancel Dispute Resolution Orders	The Chief Dispute Resolution Officer can: • Change the terms of a dispute resolution order (e.g. new timelines or conditions) • Cancel it if circumstances change or it's no longer needed • Combine or cancel multiple orders if related
Recovery of Costs	DBDRV can recover the cost of: • Building assessments • Expert reports • Inspections or enforcement actions This applies if the assessor confirms that one party breached the agreement or order, and that party may have to repay DBDRV for those costs.
Exclusions	DBDRV: • Can't award compensation for stress or inconvenience: You won't get money for frustration, time wasted, or emotional distress. • Can't fine or punish the other person: DBDRV doesn't issue penalties. Only VCAT or the VBA can do that. • Can't issue urgent stop orders (injunctions): If you need something stopped immediately, you'll need to go to VCAT or court. • Can't cancel your building contract for you: Only you (or the other party) can end the contract, not DBDRV.

- **Can't handle insurance disputes:** If you're unhappy with an insurer, you'll need to go to VCAT or the insurer's complaints process.
- **Can't make someone pay your legal or expert fees:** DBDRV won't order the other side to cover costs like lawyers or reports.
- **Can't enforce orders:** If someone doesn't follow a DBDRV order, you'll need to go to VCAT to enforce it.
- **Can't deal with non-building issues:** DBDRV can't help with fences, trees, planning permits, or tenant disputes.
- **Can't decide legal questions like who owns the property:** It doesn't decide who's on the title or if a contract is valid.
- **Can't give compensation for lost rent or income (unless it's in your contract):** Financial losses like lost rent or business income aren't covered unless your contract clearly allows for it.

Step 6: Preparing your complaint. What should your complaint look like? What should it include?

Requirement	Description
Format	Complaints can be lodged as follows: • Online: fill in the online form available here. • By post: Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria, PO Box 430, Port Melbourne VIC 3207 If you're not sure whether DBDRV can help, if you'd like to speak with DBDRV about your concerns or if you need help completing the complaint form, then please don't hesitate to contact DBDRV. If you would like the assistance of an interpreter or translator this can be arranged by DBDRV free of charge.
Personal Details	Generally speaking, to make a complaint, you should include: • First and last name • Contact number • Email or postal address DBDRV's online complaint form allows you to lodge a complaint anonymously. If you do not provide your name or contact details, there is no way to identify you. You can also submit a paper complaint form and post it to Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria, PO Box 430, Port Melbourne VIC 3207
Respondent's Details	You should provide information about the other party.

Relevant Facts	You should provide basic facts about the dispute, including the building address and type of dispute. You should provide as much detail as possible to help DBDRV understand your dispute. If you have any documents to support your dispute they should be provided, including any correspondence you had with the other party about your dispute.
What NOT to include	Do not make false or misleading statements.
Additional information you need to know	The application form will request your permission to share your dispute details. If you do not give permission, DBDRV may not be able to do anything about your complaint.

Step 7: Lodging your complaint and next steps.

Step	Description
Where to lodge your complaint	Complaints can be lodged as follows: - Online: fill in the online form available here. - By post: Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria, PO Box 430, Port Melbourne VIC 3207 If you're not sure whether DBDRV can help, if you'd like to speak with DBDRV about your concerns or if you need help completing the complaint form, then please don't hesitate to contact DBDRV. If you would like the assistance of an interpreter or translator this can be arranged by DBDRV free of charge.
Receipt	Online applications For online applications, after you submit your application, you will receive a dispute reference number and confirmation email attaching your completed application form along with information about next steps. Postal applications Once DBDRV receive your application, DBDRV will call you to provide you with a dispute reference number and to advise if your application can be accepted by DBDRV. DBDRV will also send you a copy of your completed application form, together with information about next steps.
Jurisdiction check	Once your application is received, a DRO will evaluate whether your dispute is within DBDRV service's jurisdiction. If your dispute is not within DBDRV's jurisdiction, DBDRV will advise you and refer you to the most appropriate agency. If your dispute is within DBDRV's jurisdiction, your application will progress to the initial assessment phase of the dispute resolution process.

Initial assessment	A DRO will assess whether your dispute is suitable for conciliation. The criteria include the steps that have already been taken to resolve the dispute and the likelihood that conciliation will help resolve the dispute. During this step, the DRO will contact you and the other party to obtain further information. If your application is not accepted as suitable for conciliation, a DRO will: • notify both parties and explain your options • provide both parties with a certificate of conciliation (dispute not suitable). This certificate is necessary if a party wishes to apply to VCAT. If your application is accepted as suitable for conciliation, a DRO will: • notify both parties and discuss next steps • provide both parties with a notice of decision which outlines the applicant's stated reasons for the dispute.
Prepare for conciliation	DBDRV conducts conciliations to suit the nature of the dispute and the circumstances of the parties. Your DRO will work with both parties to assess and understand the dispute and determine the best way forward. All parties to the dispute must attend conciliation, which will be facilitated by an experienced conciliator. You may be asked to provide documents before the conciliation, including: • your domestic building contract or agreement, and associated plans and specifications • architectural and/or engineering drawings • your building permit and plans • records of any inspections undertaken by a building surveyor • variation requests • extension of time requests • correspondence with the other party relevant to your dispute • your occupancy permit (for newly built homes) or your certificate of final inspection (for renovations).
Building assessment	As part of the dispute resolution process, DBDRV may organise a DBDRV assessor to examine the disputed building work. Assessors determine whether domestic building work is defective or incomplete. They may also specify the cause of a defect and a timeframe for any work required to rectify or complete the building work. When examining building work, DBDRV's building assessors must also consider whether there have been any contraventions of

	building legislation. If the assessor identifies any contraventions, these must be reported to the Victorian Building Authority. The issues that will be assessed are determined by the DRO based on information provided by the parties. Not all issues raised may be assessed. Prior to the assessment, both parties will be notified about the full list of issues that will be assessed. Additional items will not be considered on the day. Assessments are carried out in the presence of all relevant parties. Ahead of the scheduled assessment date, the DRO will confirm who will be attending the assessment. Only the people confirmed by the DRO should be present and it is important that all parties act respectfully throughout this process. Recordings of the assessment are not permitted. Building assessments may take place in person or via videolink. The method of assessment will be confirmed before the assessment takes place. During the assessment, the assessor will not advise whether they believe the disputed building work is defective or incomplete. The parties will receive an assessment report after the assessment is complete. The parties have five business days to make submissions in relation to the report, if they wish. There is no fee for an assessment unless the party requests an assessment when the dispute has not been accepted or the dispute was not resolved by conciliation.
Conciliation	The conciliation conference is facilitated by the conciliator and brings the parties together to discuss the issues in dispute, in a safe and confidential environment. The conciliator will: • facilitate the conciliation conference • encourage understanding and communication between the parties, and • listen to the parties and help them come up with ways to resolve the dispute. Conciliation conferences will either be held at DBDRV's offices or may be conducted by teleconference or video link and, on some occasions, with an assessor present. We will liaise with the parties before determining the most suitable option. All parties with authority to resolve the dispute should attend conciliation. Other attendees may include the building assessor or an interpreter. The parties may request to bring a support person or legal representative to the conciliation conference. We will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis. If you choose not to participate, DBDRV may do any of the following in your absence: • appoint an assessor to conduct a building assessment of the domestic building work in dispute

	• issue a Dispute resolution order, or • issue a certificate stating that you failed to participate in conciliation.
Additional information you need to know	The conciliation process is confidential, with some limited exceptions. Your DRO will explain this to all parties. In deciding whether to issue a Dispute resolution order, the CDRO can consider the conduct of the parties during the conciliation. More information regarding the process is available here.

Step 8: Post-complaint – what if you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint?

Avenue	Description
Internal review	If you feel dissatisfied or wronged with the quality of DBDRV's services, you are eligible to make a formal complaint. We deal with most complaints within 30 days. Complaints that are complex can take longer before DBDRV make a final decision. Please ensure that you provide the following information: • Case Reference Number • Who your complaint is about • What you think has been done wrong • Basic Personal Details You can email your complaint to complaints@dbdrv.vic.gov.au Alternatively, you can send your complaint to: Client Services Manager Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria Level 12/222 Exhibition Street Melbourne VIC 3000
Apply directly to VCAT	If the dispute is not resolved, the DRO will recommend to the CDRO whether it is appropriate to issue a dispute resolution order or issue a certificate of conciliation (dispute not resolved), enabling either party to make an application to VCAT.
Additional information you need to know	More information about how DBDRV handles decisions it has made is available here.

Step 9: Overlapping or Related Jurisdiction to the complaints body?

Jurisdiction	Description
Consumer Affairs Victoria	Consumer Affairs Victoria provides general information and advice for home owners and builders, to assist them throughout the duration of a building project. This includes information on: • building contract requirements • plans and permits • implied warranties • deposits and payments, and • building as an owner builder. The Consumer Affairs Victoria website also lists the steps to try and resolve a building dispute before applying to DBDRV. For more information: • home owners: visit the Building disputes, defects and delays page of the Consumer Affairs Victoria website. • builders: visit the Builders and tradespeople section of the Consumer Affairs Victoria website.
Victorian Building Authority (VBA)	The VBA regulates the building industry in Victoria. It undertakes inspections, investigations and audits, to ensure builders comply with their obligations under the building regulations and the Building Code of Australia. The VBA also takes complaints about builders and building practitioners. For more information and to search the registered building practitioner database, visit the VBA website. The VBA can also provide useful information on insurance for building and plumbing work.
Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA)	The VMIA issues domestic building insurance policies to eligible builders for building contracts that exceed \$16,000. VMIA insures a homeowner against defective or incomplete building work if the builder dies, becomes insolvent, or disappears. If your insurance policy was issued after 1 July 2015, it also provides coverage in some circumstances where the builder has failed to comply with a VCAT or Court order. For more information and to find out about making a claim, visit the Domestic Building Insurance section of the VMIA website.
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)	VCAT hears domestic building disputes when the dispute: • does not involve the owner and is between the builder, architect, subcontractor or tradesperson, or any combination of them • was rejected by us as not suitable for conciliation • was lodged with us and not resolved at conciliation

	• was lodged with us but the owner or builder "ends" the building contract after a dispute resolution order has been issued, or • is outside DBDRV's jurisdiction
Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV)	The DSCV provides free dispute resolution services for neighbourhood disputes between property owners, including fences, trees and drainage. DSCV also offers a variety of training and education opportunities, from nationally accredited mediation training through to half-day workshops, seminars and bespoke programs.
Architects Registration Board of Victoria (ARBV)	The ARBV registers architects, approves companies and partnerships, and handles complaints about architects.

Need help?

Organisations that can help you make your complaint, provide support or advocacy or give you more information

Organisation	Contact Details	How they can help
DBDRV	Website: https://www.dbdrv.vic.gov.au/ Telephone: 1300 55 75 59 between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays). Email: feedback@dbdrv.vic.gov.au .	You can contact DBDRV directly if you have any further questions or need assistance with your complaint.
Translating and Interpreter Service	Website: www.tisnational.gov.au Telephone: 131 450	Provides interpreting and translation services for people if English is not their first language.
National Relay Service	Website: www.accesshub.gov.au	Provides a range of services to support people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment to communicate.

Self-help tools and additional resources

Resource	How this helps
Where to make a complaint	Guidance from DBDRV on how to make a complaint.
Law Society: Know Your Rights	Guidance for individuals who are uncertain about where to start when seeking legal advice.
Call It Out	Online register for racism/discrimination experienced or witnessed towards First Nations Australians. Not an official complaints body.