

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.

Environment Protection Authority Victoria

This factsheet explains how you can report pollution, waste, and environmental harm to EPA Victoria.

EPA Victoria is the state's environmental regulator. They deal with complaints about:

- Pollution of air, water, and land.
- Illegal dumping and waste issues.
- Odours, noise, smoky vehicles, and banned plastics.

EPA investigates these problems and can issue fines, clean-up orders, or take legal action.

This factsheet will guide you through what EPA can do, how to make a complaint, and what happens next.

Legislation and Key Terms

Relevant Legislation:

- [Environment Protection Act 2017 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Environment Protection Regulations 2021 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Environment Reference Standard 2021 \(Vic\)](#)

Key terms:

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction where a response or resolution is wanted, expected or required.

Complainant: A person who has made a complaint.

Compliance Notice: A legal order from EPA requiring a person or business to fix a problem, stop polluting, or change how they operate.

Contaminated Land: Land that has been polluted with harmful substances, which could risk health or the environment.

Infringement Notice (Fine): A financial penalty issued by EPA for breaches of environmental laws, like illegal dumping or air pollution.

Investigation: The process EPA follows to assess complaints, gather evidence, and decide what action to take.

Licence (EPA Licence): Official permission from EPA allowing a business to operate certain activities (e.g. waste facilities, factories) under set environmental conditions.

Pollution: Any activity or substance that harms or is likely to harm the environment, human health, or local amenity (e.g. air, water, land pollution).

Public Register: EPA's online record of enforcement actions like fines, notices, and prosecutions, available for the public to view.

Waste: Any material (solid, liquid, or gas) that is discarded, recycled, or reused, which can impact the environment if not managed properly.

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

EPA Victoria is the state's environmental regulator. It accepts complaints about many types of pollution, waste issues and environmental hazards.	
Sub-category	Example
Air Pollution (Smoke and Dust)	You should make a complaint if you see or smell significant smoke, dust, or fumes in the air that may harm health or comfort. This includes thick smoke from fires (for example, illegal burning of waste or constant chimney smoke) and heavy dust blowing off construction or demolition sites. These air pollutants can irritate your eyes, lungs and impact the environment, so EPA Victoria can step in to investigate and require clean-up or control measures. <i>Examples:</i> • <i>A renter in suburban Melbourne notices a demolition site next door frequently letting clouds of dust drift onto neighbouring homes, coating their windows and garden. Attempts to speak with the site manager have failed.</i> • <i>A rural landowner seeing a neighbour burning plastic waste, creating acrid smoke.</i>
Offensive Odours from Industry	You should make a complaint if you are consistently smelling foul or strong odours in your area that make it unpleasant to live your daily life. Typically, these offensive odours come from industrial or large commercial sites like landfills, factories, farms, food processing plants, or sewage treatment facilities. If a bad smell is so persistent or strong that you can't open your windows or it causes headaches or nausea, it's likely a matter for EPA Victoria. They have rules for businesses to prevent odour pollution. <i>Example:</i> • <i>An older Australian living near a municipal landfill finds that on many mornings a rotten-egg garbage smell hangs in the air, making her feel sick.</i> • <i>A First Nations community notices pungent odours from a nearby fish farm affecting their ability to comfortably spend time on Country.</i>
Noise Pollution (Industry and Commercial)	You should make a complaint if loud noise from a non-residential source is unreasonable or disruptive to you, especially if it occurs at night or early morning. EPA Victoria handles noise issues from construction sites, factories and industrial operations, large commercial businesses (like supermarkets or gyms), and entertainment venues (like pubs or concert halls). If the noise is excessive, goes beyond allowable times, or causes stress, you can ask EPA to investigate. (Note: General neighbourhood noise such as loud music at a private party is dealt with by council or police, not EPA.) <i>Example:</i>

	• <i>A shift worker lives near an overnight freight warehouse and is kept awake each night by loud unloading noises and forklift beeping.</i> • <i>Residents of a regional town are disturbed by constant blasting sounds from a quarry beyond its approved hours.</i>
Water Pollution (Stormwater and Waterways)	You should make a complaint if you see liquids, chemicals or waste polluting water. This could be in stormwater drains, creeks, rivers, lakes or even on the beach. Examples include oily or toxic substances flowing into drains, muddy runoff from a construction site entering a creek, illegal dumping of liquids, or obvious signs of water pollution like foam, discoloured water, or dead fish in a waterway. These incidents can harm aquatic life and public health. EPA Victoria has authority to investigate water pollution and require clean-ups or fines. <i>Example:</i> • <i>A member of a Bunurong community notices dozens of dead fish floating in a creek that runs near a factory and suspect a chemical has been discharged from the facility.</i> • <i>A family in Melbourne sees a paint-like liquid flowing out of a stormwater pipe into a local park's pond.</i>
Contaminated Land and Soil Pollution	You should make a complaint if you suspect that land (soil or groundwater) is contaminated by harmful substances. This might be the case if you discover illegally buried waste, notice chemical odours coming from soil, see stained earth or dead vegetation, or learn of past industrial use of a site that wasn't cleaned up. EPA Victoria is responsible for addressing contaminated land to protect the community's health, under laws like the <i>Environment Protection Act 2017</i>. They can investigate and ensure the land is tested and cleaned if needed. <i>Example:</i> • <i>A young family in regional Victoria buys a property that was once a service station. They discover an old underground fuel tank that has leaked, causing oil and petrol smells in the soil.</i> • <i>A farmer finds rusting chemical drums buried at the edge of a paddock.</i>
Illegal Waste Dumping (Rubbish or Hazardous Waste)	You should make a complaint if you see someone dumping waste illegally, or find piles of dumped rubbish in the environment. Illegal dumping includes unloading trash, construction debris, garden or household waste, appliances, tires, or hazardous materials like asbestos in places not licensed for waste disposal. It's against the law to dump or bury waste without a license anywhere in Victoria. EPA Victoria can investigate illegal dumping (also known as illegal waste disposal) and prosecute or fine those responsible. This applies on public land, roadsides, bushland, waterways, and even private land if done without permission. <i>Example:</i>

	• <i>A First Nations land ranger discovers a large amount of building demolition waste dumped on Country in the bush, including broken asbestos sheeting and concrete.</i> • <i>A Melbourne resident driving at night sees someone pulling over and tipping paint cans and oil drums into a creek.</i>
Unlawful or Unsafe Waste Storage (Stockpiles)	You should make a complaint if you become aware of large stockpiles of waste or materials being stored in a way that could harm the environment or public safety. This includes scenarios like huge piles of recyclable materials (plastics, glass, paper) or tyres stored without fire prevention measures, or warehouses packed with hazardous waste or chemicals illegally. Such illegal storage of waste is within EPA's jurisdiction to address, especially after incidents where stockpiled materials led to fires and pollution. For instance, EPA now monitors things like soft plastic stockpiles that aren't licensed. If you see a potential "dump" on private property (like a factory or farm) that looks risky, it's worth reporting. <i>Example:</i> • <i>A worker at a semi-abandoned factory notices the site is secretly filled with hundreds of barrels of chemical waste and old batteries, with no safety controls. They fear a spill or fire might happen.</i> • <i>A community member living near an industrial area sees a mountain of used tyres piled in a yard without any fencing.</i>
Illegal Use of Banned Plastics and Packaging	You should make a complaint if you see a business using or supplying single-use plastic items that are banned in Victoria. The Victorian government has banned certain plastic products (like lightweight shopping bags, drinking straws, cutlery, plates and cotton-bud sticks) to reduce pollution. If a shop or business is still providing those banned plastics, or if you notice someone trying to dodge the rules (for example, giving out banned plastic bags), EPA Victoria can enforce the ban. This also applies to businesses illegally supplying other banned single-use items. <i>Example:</i> • <i>A shopper in a Melbourne market finds that one stall is handing out thin single-use plastic bags to customers, even though these bags are banned.</i> • <i>A cafe that continues to use single-use plastic straws after the ban.</i>
Littering from Vehicles	You should make a complaint if you witness litter being thrown or dropped from a vehicle on the road. EPA Victoria runs a specific program that allows the public to report litter from vehicles, such as cigarette butts flicked out of a car window or trash tossed from a truck. Even small litter like a cigarette end can cause fires or pollution, and it's illegal to litter in this way. EPA can issue fines to the registered owner of the vehicle based on public reports (you'll need details like the vehicle registration, location, time, and what was thrown). Under Victorian law, this kind of littering is an offence. For example, throwing a lit cigarette from a car is not only littering but a fire hazard.

	<i>Example:</i> • A man driving home sees the driver ahead throw an empty drink can out of their car onto the roadside. • A passenger on a bus sees someone in a nearby vehicle flick a cigarette butt onto the dry grass by the highway.
Smoky Vehicle Emissions	You should make a complaint if you see a vehicle emitting excessive smoke from its exhaust, creating visible pollution in the air. Typically, EPA defines a “smoky vehicle” as one that continuously emits thick visible smoke for 10 seconds or more. This often indicates a poorly maintained engine and contributes to air pollution. The rule applies to standard vehicles under 4.5 tonnes, like cars, utes, vans, and small trucks, and only if they’re registered in Victoria. By reporting a smoky vehicle (with details like the license plate, make, model, time and place), you enable EPA to notify the owner to fix the problem or risk a fine. <i>Example: A cyclist in the city is overtaken by an older truck billowing black smoke from its exhaust for well over 10 seconds as it accelerates.</i>
Illegal Balloon Releases	You should make a complaint if you see someone releasing a large number of helium balloons into the sky, such as at an event or celebration. In Victoria, it’s illegal to intentionally release balloons because they end up as litter and can harm wildlife (when balloons fall back to earth, animals can choke on them or get entangled). A planned balloon release is considered an act of littering under environmental laws, so EPA Victoria can intervene or take action if notified. It’s better to pop balloons and bin them rather than release them. EPA has a reporting process for this specific issue.
Major Pollution Incidents (Notifiable Incidents)	You should make a complaint, or if you are the person responsible, report it immediately, if a serious pollution incident happens that is causing or threatens to cause significant harm to people or the environment. Under Victorian law, businesses must notify EPA Victoria of incidents that cause material harm (often called “notifiable incidents”). But anyone who becomes aware of such an incident should contact EPA (and emergency services on 000 if there’s immediate danger). These incidents could include large chemical spills, factory fires with toxic smoke, tanker accidents, or any event releasing a hazardous substance in significant quantities. EPA can coordinate emergency response and enforce clean-up in these situations. Time is critical with notifiable incidents, so don’t hesitate to call. <i>Example: A worker at a manufacturing plant accidentally punctures a tank, causing 1000 litres of chemicals to spill, some of which is flowing toward a stormwater drain. The business is legally required to call EPA Victoria right away, but does not.</i>
Exclusions	The following issues are not handled by EPA Victoria: • Neighbourhood Disputes: Disagreements between neighbours, such as fence disputes or tree overhangs, are typically managed by local councils or civil mediation services.

- **Residential Noise Complaints:** Noise from private residences, like loud music or parties, should be reported to local councils or Victoria Police.
- **Animal Nuisance Issues:** Concerns about barking dogs, stray animals, or animal welfare are addressed by local councils or the RSPCA.
- **Planning and Development Approvals:** Objections to planning permits or developments are handled by local councils or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).
- **Workplace Health and Safety:** Matters related to employee safety or workplace conditions fall under WorkSafe Victoria's jurisdiction.
- **Food Safety and Hygiene:** Issues concerning food handling, preparation, or hygiene in establishments are managed by local councils or the Department of Health.
- **Public Health Concerns:** General public health issues, such as disease outbreaks or health advisories, are overseen by the Department of Health.
- **Wildlife and Native Vegetation:** Protection of wildlife and native vegetation is the responsibility of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).
- **Heritage and Cultural Sites:** Matters related to heritage-listed sites or Aboriginal cultural heritage are managed by Heritage Victoria or First Peoples - State Relations.
- **Water Usage and Rights:** Concerns about water allocations, usage rights, or irrigation are handled by water authorities or DEECA.
- **Climate Change Policy:** Broader climate change policies and initiatives are developed and implemented by DEECA.
- **Environmental Education Programs:** Requests for educational resources or programs should be directed to local councils or educational institutions.
- **Littering on Private Property:** Littering issues on private land are typically the responsibility of the property owner or local council.
- **Graffiti and Vandalism:** Incidents of graffiti or vandalism should be reported to local councils or Victoria Police.
- **Illegal Fishing Activities:** Illegal fishing or breaches of fishing regulations are managed by the Victorian Fisheries Authority.
- **Marine Pollution from Ships:** Pollution incidents involving ships are addressed by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).
- **Air Pollution from Aircraft:** Concerns about emissions or noise from aircraft fall under the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).

	• Radiation Hazards: Issues related to radiation are managed by the Victorian Department of Health (for licensing and safety within Victoria) or ARPANSA (for national matters). • Asbestos in Residential Settings: Asbestos concerns in homes are typically managed by local councils or licensed asbestos removalists. • Illegal Dumping on Private Land: Illegal dumping on private property is usually addressed by the property owner or local council.
Additional information	• Council or EPA? How to know where to go: If the problem is small, local, and affects just one or two homes (like a noisy air conditioner), it's usually a council job. If it's bigger, ongoing, or affects the community (like factory smoke or creek pollution), call EPA. • Big pollution incidents: You can still report it Companies must tell EPA if they cause a serious pollution problem (like a big spill). But if you see something bad happening and think the business hasn't reported it, you can call EPA yourself. • Sometimes EPA works with other agencies Some problems involve more than one regulator. For example, a smelly piggery might involve EPA for pollution and DEECA for animal rules. You can still report it to EPA, and they'll coordinate with the right people. • Complaints about EPA Victoria itself If you think EPA staff handled your complaint badly, or you're unhappy with their service, that's called a service complaint. EPA has a process for that. If they don't fix it, you can go to the Victorian Ombudsman.

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

Jurisdiction	Description
State	EPA Victoria is a state government agency. It enforces Victoria's environmental laws, including the Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic). It handles complaints about pollution, waste, and environmental harm within Victoria only.
Geographical Scope	EPA Victoria can only take complaints about pollution or waste issues that happen in Victoria. This includes complaints about people, businesses, or organisations causing environmental problems in Victoria, even if they are based elsewhere.

	If the problem happens outside Victoria (like in NSW or South Australia), EPA Victoria can't help. You'll need to contact that state's EPA.
Time Limitations	There is no strict time limit for making a complaint to EPA Victoria. However, it's best to report issues as soon as possible, especially for serious pollution incidents (like spills or illegal dumping). For old issues (e.g. historic contamination), EPA still has powers to investigate, but quick reporting helps with evidence and enforcement. In emergencies, call 000 first, then EPA.
Exclusions	Environmental problems outside Victoria: EPA Victoria can only deal with problems happening inside Victoria. Other states have their own EPAs.
Exercise of discretion	EPA Victoria has discretion to decide how serious a complaint is and whether to investigate. For small-scale, low-impact problems (like minor littering), EPA might refer you to council or decide not to investigate further. For complaints where you're not directly affected (e.g. you read about a pollution problem in the news), EPA can still investigate but might choose not to if there's no community harm or evidence.
Additional information	Multiple agencies might be involved. EPA works with councils, DEECA, and others for issues that overlap. If you're unsure, EPA will direct you to the right place. You can report anonymously, but giving your details helps EPA follow up. EPA can take legal action, issue fines, or require clean-up if a complaint leads to enforcement.

Step 3: Who can you make a complaint against?

Respondent	Description
Individuals	You can complain about any person (individual) who causes pollution, illegal dumping, waste problems, or other environmental harm in Victoria. It does not matter where they live, as long as the problem happens in Victoria. This includes private individuals, drivers (for littering from vehicles), farmers, landowners, or anyone illegally dumping waste, burning materials, or polluting waterways.
Businesses & Organisations	This includes: • Factories, warehouses, and industrial sites • Construction and demolition companies

	• Waste management and recycling businesses • Landfills and composting facilities • Farms and agricultural businesses (e.g. piggeries, dairies) • Retailers and suppliers using banned plastics • Transport and logistics companies • Event organisers (e.g. illegal balloon releases)
Government Departments & Public Authorities	You can complain about government agencies, councils, or public authorities if they are responsible for pollution or environmental harm. This includes activities like improper waste management, land contamination, or failing to prevent pollution from their operations. Example: A council-run landfill causing odour or leachate pollution can be reported to EPA Victoria.
Vehicle Owners/ Drivers	You can complain about the registered owner of a vehicle that: • Emits excessive smoke • Littering from a vehicle (e.g. cigarette butts, rubbish thrown out the window) The complaint goes to the vehicle owner (even if they weren't driving at the time).
Exclusions	EPA Victoria cannot take complaints about: • Private individuals causing neighbour-type nuisances • Pet owners and animal-related issues • Employers for workplace safety breaches • Government agencies or individuals when the issue is biodiversity, heritage, or cultural heritage For example: ○ DEECA deals with breaches involving wildlife, native vegetation, and biodiversity. ○ Heritage Victoria and First Peoples. State Relations handle heritage site or cultural heritage concerns. EPA's jurisdiction here is limited to pollution and waste, not heritage or biodiversity protection. • Operators of aircraft • Ship owners/operators for pollution outside Victorian waters (Managed by AMSA.) • Radiation sources and license holders • Homeowners for asbestos in private homes. (Unless it involves illegal dumping or mishandling of asbestos waste.) • Individuals or groups responsible for graffiti, vandalism, or property damage

	• Fisheries operators or recreational fishers • Any person, business, or authority outside Victoria
Additional information	You don't need to know who did it to report pollution. EPA can investigate and identify the responsible person or organisation. EPA acts on what happened (the pollution) and will assign responsibility to whoever is liable under environmental law. Even if it involves multiple parties (e.g. factory owner vs contractor), EPA determines who is accountable.

Step 4: Are you eligible to make a complaint?

Eligibility	Description
Who can make a complaint?	Anyone can make a complaint to EPA Victoria: • You do not need to live in Victoria. • You do not need to be directly affected by the pollution. • You do not need to be a victim of the problem. This means: • Residents of Victoria. • Visitors to Victoria. • People from other states. • Businesses or community groups. • First Nations people concerned about harm to Country. • People who witness pollution (e.g. a passer-by sees illegal dumping). • People who hear about an issue through media or social channels. If the pollution, waste, or environmental harm happens in Victoria, any person can report it.
Pre-requisite steps	There are no mandatory steps you need to take before making a complaint. • You do not need to contact the person or business responsible first. • You do not need to make a complaint to council first. For serious emergencies (e.g. major chemical spills, immediate danger), you should call 000 first, then EPA. For minor local issues (like small-scale noise from a home), EPA may refer you to local council after you lodge your complaint, but this is not a barrier to you submitting it.

Can complaints be made on behalf of someone?	Yes. You can make a complaint on someone else's behalf. • No special form, written authority, or permission is required. • Example: Reporting pollution you witnessed that affects your neighbour's property. EPA does not require you to be personally affected to lodge a complaint. Community members, carers, advocates, or organisations can report environmental harm on behalf of others or the wider community.
Exclusions	No one is excluded from making a complaint to EPA Victoria based on: • Where they live. • Whether they are directly involved. • Age, profession, or any other factor. There are no restrictions on who can report pollution or waste issues. However, if the issue is not actually an EPA matter (e.g. barking dog, planning objection), EPA might decline to act and refer you elsewhere, but you are still allowed to lodge the complaint.
Additional information you need to know	You can report anonymously: • If you don't want to give your name, you can still make a complaint. • Providing your details can help EPA follow up and gather more evidence. You are protected from reprisals: • It is illegal for a person or business to take adverse action against you because you made a complaint to EPA Victoria. EPA may prioritise complaints based on risk: • While anyone can complain, EPA decides how urgent the issue is based on harm to health, the environment, and public interest. You don't need legal knowledge: • EPA accepts complaints from the general public, and you are not expected to know environmental laws to make a valid complaint.

Step 5: What remedies are available at this body?

Power	Description
Investigation and Compliance Notices	EPA can investigate pollution or waste issues raised in your complaint. If they find a breach of the law, they can issue Notices that legally require the person or business to: • Stop polluting (e.g. stop illegal waste burning).

	• Fix the problem (e.g. clean up dumped rubbish). • Change their operations to comply with environmental rules (e.g. install dust suppression). These notices are legally enforceable.
Clean-Up Notices	EPA can order individuals, businesses, or government bodies to remove pollution or waste, restore damaged land or waterways, and prevent further harm. This is common for illegal dumping, spills, or contaminated land. EPA monitors compliance and can escalate if orders are ignored.
Fines (Infringement Notices)	EPA can issue on-the-spot fines (Penalty Infringement Notices) for breaches like: • Littering from vehicles. • Using banned plastics. • Illegal burning. • Waste dumping. • Excessive smoke from vehicles. Fines vary depending on the offence and can range from hundreds to tens of thousands of dollars.
Prosecutions (Court Action)	For serious or repeated breaches, EPA can take legal action through the courts. This can lead to: • Court-ordered fines. • Orders to fix environmental damage. • Criminal convictions. • Other penalties like publication of breaches (naming and shaming).
Official Warnings	For minor or first-time offences, EPA may issue a formal written warning. This serves as a record of non-compliance but does not involve fines. Repeated breaches after a warning can lead to fines or stronger enforcement.
Licence Conditions and Revocations	EPA can: • Change the conditions of an operating licence (e.g. tighten pollution limits, increase monitoring). • Suspend or cancel licences for serious or ongoing non-compliance. This is typically used for large facilities like landfills, factories, or waste processors.

Public Registers and Transparency	EPA publishes information about enforcement actions on its public register, including: • Notices issued. • Fines and prosecutions. • Licence breaches. This creates transparency and public accountability.
Pollution Abatement Measures	EPA can require businesses or individuals to install or improve pollution control measures. This might include filters, barriers, improved drainage, or better waste storage.
Community Engagement & Education	While not a direct “remedy,” EPA uses complaints data to: • Educate businesses and community members. • Improve compliance through information campaigns. • Work with local councils to address systemic issues.
Exclusions	EPA cannot provide these remedies: • Mediation or conciliation between you and the person/business causing pollution. • Personal apologies from the respondent to you. • Compensation or reimbursement for personal loss or property damage. • Writs, injunctions, or other court orders on your behalf (they prosecute in the public interest, not for private claims). • Reports to Parliament or political recommendations as a remedy for individual complaints. • Dispute resolution for private neighbour issues (e.g. smoke from a home BBQ).
Additional information you need to know	EPA acts in the public interest to protect health and the environment, their remedies focus on stopping harm, not personal redress. EPA’s decisions are based on risk, harm, and public impact. Not every complaint will lead to formal enforcement. Even if a complaint doesn't result in a fine or prosecution, it can still inform EPA monitoring, future inspections, or education campaigns. You can still report anonymously, and your complaint will be considered based on the facts and risk.

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

Requirement	Description
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Format	You can make a complaint to EPA Victoria: • Online (preferred method): via EPA's Report Pollution form. • By phone: using EPA's 24-hour Pollution Hotline (1300 372 842). • By email or letter: less common, but accepted for complex or formal matters. For urgent problems (e.g. chemical spills), calling is recommended. For complex or ongoing issues, using the online form is best. Interpreters and translators are available if needed. You can ask for help when calling EPA. EPA accepts complaints from people of any age and offers support where possible.
Personal Details	You will be asked for: • Your name. • Your contact phone number. • Your email address or mailing address (so EPA can follow up). You can choose to report anonymously. • If you stay anonymous, EPA will still assess your complaint. • However, it may be harder for EPA to get extra details or keep you updated. • Anonymous complaints are taken seriously, but less detailed info may limit action.
Respondent's Details	You should provide as much information as you know about who is responsible, such as: • Name of person, business, or organisation (if known). • Location/address of the incident. • Vehicle registration number (for smoky vehicles or littering from cars). If you don't know exactly who is responsible, you should still report what happened. EPA can investigate further.
Relevant Facts	Include the following in your complaint: • What happened: clear description of the pollution or waste problem. • When it happened: date and time. • Where it happened: exact location (address, landmarks, GPS if possible). • How it is affecting people or the environment (e.g. health impacts, bad smells, water pollution, visual pollution).

	• Who else witnessed it (if anyone): names or contact details if they agree to be included. • Any action you've already taken (e.g. spoken to the business, reported to council). • Photos or videos: very helpful as supporting evidence. • Documents or reports (if available and relevant): e.g. expert assessments, council reports. • There is no specific limit on how much evidence you can submit, but large files may need to be emailed or shared via links. • EPA recommends factual, clear, and honest information: stick to what you know and saw.
What NOT to include	Do not include false or misleading information. Avoid emotional or abusive language, stay factual. Don't make legal claims about responsibility. EPA will investigate and determine breaches. Do not speculate if you are unsure. Only report what you have witnessed or know to be true.
Additional information you need to know	The respondent may be informed of your complaint, especially if it leads to an investigation or enforcement. • EPA will manage your privacy but may need to disclose facts of the case. • If you report anonymously, your identity will not be shared because EPA won't know who you are. You do not need legal representation or a guardian's consent to complain, even if you are a minor. EPA does not act on behalf of individuals seeking personal remedies (e.g. compensation). Delays in lodging a complaint can reduce EPA's ability to act (evidence may be lost), but there are no official time limits for reporting. EPA cannot provide case management or advocacy services, but they will guide you through the complaint process if you ask for help. Complex or large-scale complaints may be followed up with a site visit or further information request.

Step 7: Lodging your complaint and next steps.

Step	Description
Where to lodge your complaint	• Online form: Go to EPA Victoria's website and fill out the Report Pollution form. This is the easiest and fastest way, especially for detailed complaints. You can do this anytime, 24/7.

	• Email: You can send an email to contact@epa.vic.gov.au. This is good for more complex issues or if you need to provide extra documents. • Post: You can post your complaint to: Environment Protection Authority Victoria GPO Box 4395 Melbourne VIC 3001 Posting takes longer and is less common. • Telephone: Call EPA's Pollution Hotline on 1300 372 842 (that's 1300 EPA VIC). This line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including public holidays. Best for urgent problems like chemical spills or strong odours. • In person: EPA does not take walk-in complaints. If you need to meet with EPA, contact them first to arrange a meeting.
Step 1: Acknowledging Your Complaint	If you submit your complaint online, you'll get an immediate confirmation on the screen. If you call or email, EPA might give you a quick verbal or written confirmation that your complaint has been received. EPA does not send a formal receipt for every complaint unless they need to follow up with you.
Step 2: Assessing Your Complaint	EPA will look at your complaint and decide: • Is this an EPA issue? • Is it serious? Could it harm people or the environment? • How urgent is it? They might contact you for more info if needed. Urgent problems are acted on quickly. Less serious issues are managed based on risk. Simple reports (like smoky vehicles or banned plastics) are handled faster. Bigger cases (like illegal dumping or water pollution) take longer to investigate.
Step 3: Investigation or Referral	If it's an EPA matter, they will investigate. • This could involve site visits, inspections, or gathering more evidence. • EPA can give warnings, fines, clean-up orders, or prosecute serious breaches. If it's not EPA's job (like a noisy neighbour or stray animals), they will refer you to the right place.
Step 4: Telling You the Outcome	If you've given your contact details, EPA may update you on: • What action was taken. • Whether the problem has been fixed.

	If you complained anonymously, EPA can't contact you, but they will still act on the issue if it's serious.
Step 5: Public Reporting of Serious Breaches	EPA publishes serious enforcement actions (like fines, clean-up orders, prosecutions) on their public register. Your personal details are never made public.
Additional information you need to know	Always keep a copy of your complaint (e.g. screenshot or save your online form submission). Try to give all your evidence and information upfront: photos, dates, locations, and witness details. Adding info later slows things down. If the situation changes (gets worse or resolves), let EPA know. Anonymous complaints are welcome, but giving your details helps EPA follow up if they need more info. EPA works for public health and the environment. Their actions aim to stop pollution and protect everyone, not fix personal disputes.

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

Avenue	Description
Internal review opportunities	EPA Victoria has an internal complaints and feedback process. If you're unhappy with: • How your complaint was handled. • The service you received from EPA. • A lack of response or action. You can make a service complaint to EPA directly. This is not the same as challenging a pollution decision. It's about how EPA staff dealt with you or your complaint (e.g. slow responses, poor communication, unfair treatment). You can lodge a service complaint: • Online: https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback • By phone: 1300 372 842 • By email: contact@epa.vic.gov.au EPA aims to acknowledge service complaints quickly and resolve them within 30 days where possible. There is no formal "appeal" process for EPA's enforcement decisions (e.g. if they decide not to fine someone or close an investigation).

External review/ remedies	Include any timeframe for lodging] If you believe EPA's decision or handling of your complaint was wrong, unfair, or unreasonable, you can go to: Victorian Ombudsman: You can complain to the Ombudsman about how EPA Victoria handled your complaint. The Ombudsman reviews whether EPA acted fairly, reasonably, and followed proper processes. The Ombudsman cannot force EPA to investigate your complaint again, but they can make recommendations. There is no strict time limit, but it's best to lodge complaints soon after the EPA's response. Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT): If you are directly affected by an EPA decision (e.g. as a business or landholder), you may have a right to appeal EPA's decision to VCAT. This is more common for licence holders or people subject to EPA enforcement, not general complainants. Legal advice is recommended for this process. Supreme Court of Victoria (Judicial Review): In rare cases, you can apply to the Supreme Court for a judicial review if you believe EPA acted unlawfully. This is a complex legal process. You should get legal advice. Strict time limits apply: usually within 60 days of the decision. Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC): If you believe EPA staff acted corruptly, seriously misused their position, or engaged in misconduct, you can report this to IBAC.
Other option	Making a Public Interest Disclosure: If you have information about serious wrongdoing within EPA (e.g. misconduct, corruption), you can make a protected disclosure. This can be done through IBAC. Raising the issue with your local MP: If your concern relates to broader environmental policy or systemic failures, you can raise the issue with your local Member of Parliament.
Additional information you need to know	EPA decisions focus on environmental enforcement, not private remedies. - EPA doesn't provide personal compensation or legal redress. - If you seek compensation for damage caused by pollution, you may need to pursue civil action through the courts. Always keep records of: - Your original complaint. - EPA's response.

	Any further correspondence. Delays in escalating a complaint can make it harder to get a review. Act promptly if you're unhappy. You do not need a lawyer to complain to the Ombudsman, but you might for court or tribunal reviews.
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Step 9: Other bodies that handle complaints about environmental related complaints:

Complaint body	Description
Australian Human Rights Commission	The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) can handle complaints about discrimination that occurs in employment, education, the provision of goods and services, accommodation, sport or the administration of Commonwealth laws and services. If you have experienced discrimination, bullying or harassment on the basis of you sex, disability, race, age or sexual preference the AHRC may be able to help. There are also State Government discrimination complaint bodies who may also be able to assist.
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner	The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) can handle complaints about the way personal information has been handled by Australian Government agencies and some private organisations. The OAIC can also review freedom of information decisions that are made by Australian Government agencies and ministers. There are also State Government privacy and information complaint bodies who may also be able to assist.
National Anti-Corruption Commission	The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) handles complaints about serious or systemic corruption in the Australian Government public sector. There are also a State Government corruption complaint bodies who may also be able to assist.
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)	DEECA Victoria manages issues relating to: - Wildlife protection. - Native vegetation clearing. - Biodiversity conservation. - Water rights and access. If your concern relates to harm to native plants, wildlife, or land clearing (not pollution or waste), DEECA is the correct authority.
Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA)	The VFA handles complaints about illegal fishing, fishing licences, and aquatic wildlife offences. If your complaint involves harm to marine species or breaches of fishing rules, the VFA is responsible.

Victorian WorkSafe Authority (WorkSafe Victoria)	WorkSafe Victoria is responsible for workplace health and safety. If your complaint is about worker exposure to pollution or unsafe environmental conditions at work, this is a WorkSafe issue. EPA deals with public environmental risks, while WorkSafe protects workers.
Local Councils	Councils handle: • Noise and odour complaints from private residences. • Littering and minor dumping on local council land. • Animal nuisances (e.g. barking dogs). • Neighbour disputes about smoke, noise, or waste. EPA handles larger-scale or industrial pollution; councils manage local nuisance issues.
Heritage Victoria & First Peoples – State Relations	Heritage Victoria deals with complaints about damage to heritage-listed sites. First Peoples: State Relations handles complaints about harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage sites. If your concern is about destruction or damage to cultural heritage (not pollution), these bodies are responsible.
Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC)	OVIC handles complaints about: • Privacy breaches by Victorian public agencies (including EPA Victoria). • Freedom of Information (FOI) access issues with Victorian agencies. If you have a complaint about how EPA Victoria handled your personal information, or you're unhappy with an FOI decision, contact OVIC.
Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC)	IBAC Victoria deals with serious misconduct or corruption in the Victorian public sector, including EPA Victoria. If you suspect EPA staff of corrupt conduct, serious misconduct, or abuse of power, IBAC is the right place.
Victorian Ombudsman	The Victorian Ombudsman can investigate complaints about how EPA Victoria has handled your complaint. They review if EPA acted fairly and reasonably. They do not investigate pollution directly.
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)	If you are directly impacted by an EPA decision (e.g. as a licence holder), you might be able to appeal to VCAT. This is generally for businesses, not general public complainants.

Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)	CASA deals with complaints about aircraft noise and emissions. EPA Victoria does not manage aircraft-related pollution.
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)	ARPANSA regulates radiation safety and protection. If your concern involves radiation sources, ARPANSA is responsible.
Additional information you need to know	EPA Victoria only deals with pollution, waste, and environmental harm within Victoria. Other complaint bodies exist for issues like privacy, discrimination, biodiversity, corruption, workplace safety, and personal disputes. If you're unsure who to contact, EPA Victoria can often direct you to the right body. For compensation claims, you may need to seek legal advice and pursue private legal action.

Need help to preparing or pursuing your complaint?

Below are organisations that may be able to help you to make your complaint, provide support or advocacy during the complaint process or give you more information.

Organisation	Contact Details	How they can help
Victorian Ombudsman	Website: https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/ Email: complaints@ombudsman.vic.gov.au Telephone: 1800 806 314	You can contact the VO 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	Provide support to 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.
Deaf or Hearing Impaired Users	Telephone: Choose preferred NRS channel then 1800 806 314	Provides communication support for deaf or hearing impaired individuals through the National Relay Service (NRS), where you can choose their channel for assistance.

Self-help tools and additional resources

Resource	How this helps
Where to Make a Complaint	A list of complaint services depending on your complaint type from the VO.
Call It Out	Online register for racism/discrimination experienced or witnessed towards First Nations Australians. Not an official complaints body.
How to Make a Complaint	Guidance from the VO 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.