

### 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.

### Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

In this fact sheet, we introduce the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). We outline how complaints can be made by members of the public to DFFH about its services or the services it funds.

DFFH is a Victorian Government department responsible for delivering and overseeing a wide range of social services across the state. These include child protection, out-of-home care, disability services (under Victorian law), public housing, homelessness support, family services, youth programs, and family violence services.

You can make a complaint to DFFH if you or someone you support has experienced unfair treatment, a lack of support, disrespect, poor service, or a breach of rights while receiving a DFFH-funded or provided service.

### Legislation and Key Terms

**Relevant Legislation:** [List any pieces of legislation that are relevant to the work of the complaint body. Include a link to the legislation.] *Example:*

- [Disability Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Housing Act 1983 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)

#### Key terms:

**Carer:** A person who provides ongoing support to a child or person with disability, either formally (e.g. foster carer) or informally (e.g. relative).

**Child protection:** A government service responsible for keeping children safe from abuse, neglect or harm, often by working with families.

**Complainant:** A person who has made a complaint.

**Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction about a service or decision, where a response, explanation, or resolution is expected.

**Disability service provider:** An organisation or person funded or registered to deliver services to people with disability under the Disability Act 2006 (Vic).

**Funded service provider:** An external organisation that receives money from DFFH to deliver services to the public (e.g. foster care agency, youth support service).

**Out-of-home care:** Living arrangements for children who cannot live with their families, including foster care, kinship care, and residential care.

**Public housing:** Government-owned housing for people on low incomes, managed by Homes Victoria (part of DFFH).

**Service user:** A person who receives or tries to access a service delivered or funded by DFFH.

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

The DFFH in Victoria can receive complaints about any service it provides directly or funds through other organisations. In general, you should consider making a complaint if you feel a service was unsatisfactory, you were not given enough information or choice, or you were denied respect, dignity or privacy when receiving help.

DFFH has a wide scope. Select which you think is closest to your complaint for quick navigation:

- [Child Protection Complaints](#)
- [Out-of-Home Care \(Foster, Kinship, Residential\) Complaints](#)
- [Disability Services Complaints \(Services under the Disability Act 2006\)](#)
- [Supported Accommodation Services Complaints](#)
- [Family Services Complaints](#)
- [Youth Services Complaints](#)
- [Family Violence Services Complaints](#)
- [Public Housing Complaints](#)
- [Homelessness Services Complaints](#)
- [Other Services Funded or Provided by DFFH](#)

### Child Protection Complaints

| Sub-category   | Example   |
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| Unjustified removal or intervention (Child Protection) | <p><b>You should make a complaint if child protection removed a child from their family without proper cause, or intervened in a way that was unfair or not in the child's best interests.</b> This means you believe the department's decision to take action was wrong or not backed by evidence.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A mother with a newborn baby feels the department took her child into care based on incorrect information. She believes she was managing fine and that the removal was not in the baby's best interests.</i></li> <li>• <i>A father discovers that his children were taken away after an investigation he wasn't informed about. He has evidence that the allegations were false and wants to complain that the intervention was unjust.</i></li> </ul> |
| Failure to protect a child at risk                     | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the department failed to act on reports or clear signs that a child was being abused or neglected, leaving the child in a dangerous situation.</b> In other words, child protection did not step in when a reasonable person would expect them to.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p>   |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An aunt repeatedly alerted child protection that her young nephew was being physically abused at home. She is upset that no action was taken for months, and the child was later hospitalised with injuries.</i></li> <li>• <i>A teacher reported serious neglect of a student (lack of food, supervision, medical care) several times and nothing was done.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Lack of communication or information in a case | <p><b>You should make a complaint if child protection staff did not keep you informed about important developments, decisions or plans regarding a child, or failed to provide you with information you needed.</b> This includes not explaining decisions or not telling you about meetings, outcomes or your rights.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A mother involved with child protection wasn't told that her case would be going to court until the last minute. She feels blindsided and complains that the caseworker never explained what was happening or what she needed to do.</i></li> <li>• <i>A foster carer wasn't given crucial information about the child's medical needs or history when the child was placed with her. She struggled to care for the child without this knowledge.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Not being included in decision-making          | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you (or your child, if they are old enough) were not given a say in decisions that affect the child's care or future.</b> This means the department or agency made plans or decisions without considering the views and wishes of the family or the child.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A 15-year-old in foster care finds out his school will be changed, but no one asked him or his parents for input. He feels ignored and contacts an advocate to complain that he had no voice in a major decision about his life.</i></li> <li>• <i>A single mother with an intellectual disability was excluded from her child's case planning meeting. The child protection worker did not seek her opinions on the support plan. A community legal service helps her file a complaint that her perspective was not considered.</i></li> </ul> |
| Inappropriate or disrespectful staff behaviour | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a child protection worker or other DFFH staff treated you in a rude, threatening, or discriminatory way during a case.</b> No one should experience bullying, lies or prejudice when seeking help or during an investigation.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A caseworker made demeaning comments about a young parents' ethnic background and threatened to remove their baby without clear reason. The parents felt disrespected and scared.</i></li> <li>• <i>A father reports that a child protection officer raised his voice and called him "unfit" in front of others during a home visit. The father believes this was unprofessional.</i></li> </ul>   |

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| Breach of privacy or confidentiality       | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the department improperly shared or failed to protect personal information about you or your family.</b> Your private details should only be used as allowed by law. For example, it's wrong if a worker discloses your information to someone who isn't authorised.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A mother discovers that her personal case file was left open in a community office, where other clients could read details of her situation. She complains that her privacy was violated.</i></li> <li>• <i>A child protection worker sent an email about a family's case to the wrong person, exposing sensitive information. The family files a complaint about this breach of confidentiality.</i></li> </ul>  |
| Improper process or unfair decision-making | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you believe child protection did not follow proper procedures or made a decision based on incorrect, incomplete, or biased information.</b> This covers situations where the outcome might have been different if the process was fair and correct.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A mother feels the investigation into an incident was not done correctly. The worker never spoke to key witnesses before deciding to substantiate abuse.</i></li> <li>• <i>Parents were promised a review of their case within 3 months, but it never happened. The department closed the case without the promised review or explanation.</i></li> </ul>  |
| Inadequate planning or support for a child | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the care plans or support arrangements made for a child are clearly not meeting the child's needs.</b> This includes cases where a case plan or a leaving care plan is substandard, insufficient, or not put into action, potentially harming the child's well-being or future.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A teenager in foster care is about to turn 18, but the department has not prepared any leaving care plan or housing for him. His mentor files a complaint that the young person is being forced out with no support for independent living.</i></li> <li>• <i>A case plan for three siblings focused only on the eldest child's needs and ignored the needs of the younger two. The children's advocate complains that the plan doesn't reflect each child's situation and fails to provide necessary support</i></li> </ul> |
| Exclusions                                 | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allegations of criminal abuse by department staff</li> <li>• Systemic failures involving multiple agencies beyond DFFH</li> <li>• Complaint about decisions or matters currently before a court</li> <li>• Requests to change or challenge child protection legislation or policy</li> </ul>  |

| Out-of-Home Care (Foster, Kinship, Residential) Complaints |   |
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| Sub-category   | Example   |
| Abuse or harm in care                                      | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a child or young person in out-of-home care (foster care, kinship care, or residential care) is being abused, harmed, or placed in danger by their caregiver or in their placement.</b> Children in care have the right to feel safe and protected at all times.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A foster child confides to a teacher that her foster parent has been hitting her as punishment. The teacher contacts authorities and also lodges a complaint to ensure the department addresses this abuse immediately.</i></li> <li><i>A 10-year-old boy in a residential care home was assaulted by an older teen in the house, and staff did not intervene. A volunteer mentor files a complaint that the placement is unsafe for younger children.</i></li> </ul> |
| Neglect or poor-quality care                               | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a child in out-of-home care is not having their basic needs met or is living in unacceptable conditions.</b> This might include lack of proper food, clothing, hygiene, medical care, or supervision in the foster home or facility.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A caseworker visiting a kinship placement finds the home in filthy condition and the child frequently left alone.</i></li> <li><i>A 7-year-old in foster care has severe tooth pain for weeks, but the carer hasn't taken him to a dentist. The child's advocate believes that the foster carer is neglecting the child's health needs.</i></li> </ul>  |
| Cultural or identity needs not respected                   | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a child in care is not being supported to maintain their culture, religion, language, or identity, especially if they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and cultural plans aren't being followed.</b> Children have a right to their identity and culture, and carers/agency must respect that.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <p><i>An Aboriginal child in foster care is being raised with no connection to her culture. Her carers don't let her attend community events or see extended family.</i></p> <p><i>A teenager of a non-English speaking background was placed in a home where no one speaks his first language, and he's not supported to celebrate his cultural holidays. A social worker thinks that the agency failed to consider the teen's cultural needs in care.</i></p>           |
| Unreasonable contact or                                    | <p><b>You should make a complaint if there are problems with the child's contact with their family or community, such as contact being unfairly limited, too frequent, or unsafe.</b> Staying connected to family should be</p>   |



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| access arrangements  | <p>handled in the child's best interests, with neither too many nor too few visits and proper supervision if needed.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p><i>A grandmother caring for her granddaughter complains that the agency is forcing excessively frequent visits with the child's mother, even though the visits upset the child (the child returns distressed each time). She feels the contact plan is not appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>A parent hasn't seen her son in care for six months because the foster agency keeps cancelling visits without explanation. She believes that her contact with her child has been unreasonably cut off.</i></p>   |
| Not being heard (child's voice ignored)                                | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a child in care feels that no one is listening to their feelings or wishes about their life, or if decisions are made without considering what the child wants (when age-appropriate).</b> Even young people in care have the right to have a say and be taken seriously in matters affecting them.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A 14-year-old in a residential unit keeps telling his worker he wants to stay at the same school to be with his friends, but finds out he's being moved far away. He feels his opinions were completely ignored and thinks he has no say in decisions.</i></li> <li><i>A 12-year-old girl in foster care writes a letter complaining that her foster carers and case manager never ask her what she wants. For instance, they decided she can't play soccer even though she loves it. She feels voiceless and wants someone to listen to her wishes.</i></li> </ul> |
| Carer or staff misconduct (non-compliance or unprofessional behaviour) | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a foster/kinship carer or residential care staff member is behaving inappropriately, violating care standards or house rules, or otherwise acting unprofessionally in their role.</b> This could include things like using harsh language, not following the child's case plan or the care agreement, or having unauthorised people in the home.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A residential care worker was found to be frequently asleep during night shifts, leaving the teenagers in the unit unsupervised.</i></li> <li><i>A foster carer allows her new partner (who hasn't been screened) to spend the night in the home with the children.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Lack of support or resources for carers/children                       | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the department or agency is not providing promised support services, resources or financial assistance to support a child in care or their caregiver.</b> Carers and children should receive the allowances, services, and help they are entitled to, on time and in full.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A kinship carer of two siblings struggles because she hasn't received the foster care allowance for three months due to administrative delays.</i></li> </ul>  |



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|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A foster child was supposed to get counselling and tutoring as part of his care plan, but after six months nothing has been arranged.</i></li> </ul>  |
| Exclusions | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation or licensing of care agencies</li> <li>• Reportable conduct or serious incidents involving harm to a child</li> <li>• Misconduct complaints about staff in services not directly overseen by DFFH</li> <li>• Complaints involving services funded through the NDIS</li> </ul> |

### Disability Services Complaints (Services under the Disability Act 2006)

**Note:** Complaints about NDIS services must go to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, not DFFH.

| Sub-category  | Example  |
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| Abuse, assault or serious neglect in a disability service | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you or someone with a disability has been physically or sexually abused, assaulted, or severely neglected by staff or other people in a disability service setting.</b> Everyone has the right to be free from abuse or neglect when receiving services, and such incidents are very serious.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A young man with a disability in a group home tells his sister that a staff member hit him when he didn't follow an instruction.</i></li> <li>• <i>A non-verbal woman in a day program shows signs of neglect (she's often unwashed and hungry when she returns home).</i></li> </ul>   |
| Improper use of restraint or seclusion                    | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a disability service provider uses restraints, medication or seclusion on a person with disability without authorisation or in an excessive/unnecessary way.</b> The Disability Act sets strict rules for restraining or isolating people; using these practices unjustly is a serious breach of rights.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A father learns that his adult son, who lives in a disability residential service, has been locked alone in his room for hours as "time-out" whenever he gets upset, but this was never approved in any behaviour support plan.</i></li> <li>• <i>Staff at a group home have been routinely giving a resident a sedative every evening to keep him quiet, without a doctor's review or consent.</i></li> </ul> |
| Disrespectful or demeaning treatment by staff             | <p><b>You should make a complaint if disability support staff are treating the person with disability without respect, dignity or kindness.</b> For example, yelling at them, mocking them, or ignoring their preferences.</p>   |

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|  | <p>People with disabilities have the right to be treated with respect and equality, and no one should be demeaned by those providing care.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A support worker at a day centre was overheard calling an adult client hurtful names and shouting at him when he struggled with an activity.</i></li> <li>• <i>A young woman with an intellectual disability feels that her support worker talks down to her and refuses to let her make simple choices (like what to wear or eat).</i></li> </ul>  |
| Breach of privacy or confidentiality (Disability Services) | <p><b>You should make a complaint if someone at a disability service shared your personal information or records without permission, or failed to keep your private matters confidential.</b> Under the Disability Act, service providers must respect your privacy and only share info when allowed - your personal details should not be gossip.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A disability support worker casually told other clients' parents about one client's medical condition and behavioural issues.</i></li> <li>• <i>A resident's personal care notes were left out in a common area of the group home, and visitors read sensitive details about his health.</i></li> </ul>                             |
| Lack of choice or involvement in service planning          | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you were not given enough information or say in decisions about your disability services or support plans.</b> You have the right to request and direct your services as far as possible, and to be informed about what is happening. Being excluded from your own support planning is not okay.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A man with a disability was assigned to a new group activity without anyone asking if he was interested. He only found out when a bus arrived to take him there.</i></li> <li>• <i>A mother of a young adult with disability discovers the service changed her son's care schedule and provider without informing either of them.</i></li> </ul> |
| Poor quality service or unmet needs                        | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the disability service is consistently not meeting the person's needs or providing substandard care.</b> Examples include chronic understaffing, unsafe or unclean facilities, lack of required equipment, or support workers not doing their jobs properly.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A wheelchair user living in a supported accommodation facility often can't get out of bed in the morning because no staff member is available to assist at the agreed time.</i></li> <li>• <i>The group home where several adults live has broken heaters and poor hygiene standards. The house is freezing and dirty, but the provider isn't fixing these issues.</i></li> </ul>    |

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| Financial exploitation or mismanagement | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a service provider or worker is misusing a person's money or belongings, or not following rules about managing client funds.</b> In Victoria, disability services generally shouldn't manage clients' money beyond small amounts – any theft or exploitation is illegal.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A support worker was observed taking cash out of a client's wallet when doing the shopping.</li> <li>• The administrator of a residential service was supposed to use residents' pension contributions to pay for their groceries and utilities, but families discover bills unpaid and food missing.</li> </ul>  |
| Retaliation or threats for complaining  | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you feel scared to speak up or if a worker threatens you for making (or considering making) a complaint.</b> Under the Disability Act, you have the right to make a complaint without retribution. It's illegal and unacceptable for anyone to punish or intimidate you for complaining.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A woman in a disability support program wants to complain about a rude staff member, but he told her if she "causes trouble" she might lose her spot in the program.</li> <li>• A parent complains about her son's therapy sessions being missed. Afterwards, the therapist hints that complaining will make the service "look bad" and her son might not get future services.</li> </ul> |
| Unfair denial or reduction of service   | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you were refused a disability service, cut off from support, or deemed ineligible in a way you believe is unfair or discriminatory.</b> If you request a service and are told "no" but you think the decision was wrong, you can challenge it. The department's Secretary can be asked to review certain eligibility decisions under the law.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A young man with an obvious developmental disability was told by a service provider that they don't think he "qualifies" for their program, without any assessment.</li> <li>• A woman who has been receiving in-home support suddenly has her hours cut in half with no explanation.</li> </ul>                                     |
| Exclusions                              | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services delivered under the NDIS</li> <li>• Allegations of discrimination based on disability</li> <li>• Incidents that have already been investigated by another oversight body</li> <li>• Requests to review or amend the Disability Act</li> </ul>  |

### Supported Accommodation Services Complaints

“Supported accommodation” includes places like group homes, supported residential services, transitional housing with support, and other housing arrangements where care or support is provided along with accommodation

| Sub-category   | Example   |
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| Poor treatment or abuse in a supported accommodation | <p><b>You should make a complaint if staff or carers at a supported accommodation are mistreating residents or allowing them to be mistreated.</b> No matter the setting, whether it’s a group home for people with disabilities, a mental health community care unit, or a supported residential service for seniors, residents must be treated with care and respect, and protected from abuse.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A resident in a privately-run supported residential service (SRS) for elderly people reports that a staff member has been verbally abusive and rough when helping him shower.</i></li> </ul>  |
| Unsafe or substandard living conditions              | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the accommodation provided is unsafe, unclean, or not maintained properly, and the provider isn’t fixing it.</b> Even in supported housing, tenants have the right to reasonably maintained, clean, and safe premises. Issues like pests, broken facilities, or security concerns should be addressed promptly.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The shared home for adults with disabilities has faulty wiring that causes frequent power outages and even small electrical shocks. The residents’ families have reported it to the provider multiple times with no action.</i></li> <li>• <i>A young mother in a family refuge finds the unit she’s given is mouldy and the front door doesn’t lock properly. She has been asking for repairs for weeks with no improvement.</i></li> </ul> |
| Lack of adequate support or care                     | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the support services that are supposed to accompany the housing are not being provided or are seriously lacking.</b> Supported accommodation isn’t just a roof over your head – if staff supervision, personal care, or other help was promised and isn’t happening, that’s a problem.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A mental health step-up step-down facility is supposed to have staff on-site 24/7 to support residents. However, on weekends there are often no staff present, leaving residents unsupervised.</i></li> <li>• <i>An individual living in a disability support unit isn’t receiving help with cooking or medication management as outlined in his plan. Staff often “forget” to assist.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Violation of resident rights                         | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the accommodation provider violates your rights as a resident.</b> For example, entering your room without notice, imposing unfair rules, or evicting you without due process.</p>   |

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| or tenancy rights | <p>Even in supported settings, residents have rights. They should receive proper notice of any eviction, fair house rules, and respect for their personal space and property.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A resident in a group home notices that staff come into her room at any time, even when she's not there, and sometimes her personal items have been moved or go missing. She feels her privacy is not respected.</i></li> <li>• <i>A young man in a foyer housing program was told to leave immediately after a minor rule infraction, without any meeting or warnings.</i></li> </ul> |
| Exclusions        | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental disputes governed by the Residential Tenancies Act</li> <li>• Building safety issues that fall under local council or building authorities</li> <li>• Disputes involving privately funded accommodation providers not linked to DFFH</li> <li>• Complaints related to rooming houses not receiving DFFH funding</li> </ul>  |

### Family Services Complaints

“Family services” refers to support programs for families, such as parenting support services, family counselling, early parenting centres, Child FIRST/Orange Door referrals, etc., often delivered by community agencies funded by DFFH

| Sub-category                               | Example   |
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| Inadequate or no help provided             | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a family service you were referred to did not provide the help it was supposed to, or the support was so minimal that it didn't address your family's needs.</b> Families seek these services for assistance, if you feel you got “nothing” or the service was pointless, speak up.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A parent of two young children was referred to a family support agency for help with managing the children's behavioural issues. After three months, the worker only visited twice and offered no strategies or resources.</i></li> <li>• <i>A father attended a parenting program that was meant to run for 8 weeks, but the sessions were often cancelled and the promised in-home coaching never happened.</i></li> </ul> |
| Feeling judged or disrespected by a worker | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a family services worker was rude, judgmental, or culturally insensitive toward you or your family.</b> All clients should be treated with respect and without discrimination. You can</p>   |

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|   | <p>complain if you were shamed or treated unfairly because of your background, parenting style, or personal situation.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A young single mother seeking help felt that the family service worker spoke to her in a condescending tone and implied she was to blame for her situation.</li> <li>• A refugee family was assigned a caseworker who made negative remarks about their culture's parenting practices and suggested they "assimilate".</li> </ul>   |
| Not being informed or involved in support plans | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the service made decisions or created a family plan without properly consulting you, or if they failed to explain what they were doing in a way you understood.</b> You have a right to be involved in planning how to support your family. Plans shouldn't be drawn up behind closed doors or in technical jargon you can't follow.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After a series of meetings, a family service drew up a plan for a mother of a child with disabilities, but they never actually asked the mother what help she wanted. She only learned what was in the "family plan" when she got a copy in the mail.</li> <li>• English is not Samir's first language, and when a family service created a support plan for his family, he didn't understand the document they gave him. They never provided an interpreter or translated materials.</li> </ul> |
| Breach of confidentiality by a family service   | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a family service provider shared your personal family information without consent or inappropriately.</b> Information about your family situation is private. It should not be discussed with others who aren't involved or passed around casually.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A family services worker mentioned details of one client family's financial struggles to another client during a group session, essentially "gossiping" about them.</li> <li>• A copy of a family's case notes (containing sensitive information about domestic violence they experienced) was faxed to the wrong number by the agency.</li> </ul>  |
| Unfair denial of service or exclusion           | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you were refused a family service, taken off a program, or made ineligible in a way that felt unfair or based on improper reasons.</b> No one should be denied help they need without a clear and fair reason, and discrimination (for example, due to disability, income, or background) is not a valid reason.)</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A father asked for in-home family coaching, but the local service told him they "don't work with single fathers," directing him elsewhere without helping. He feels discriminated against.</li> </ul>   |



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|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A family was removed from a support program because they missed one workshop (due to a medical emergency). The service did not listen to their explanation.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Exclusions | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal disputes between staff and clients not affecting service delivery</li> <li>• Complaints about family court decisions or parenting orders</li> <li>• Issues arising in private counselling services not funded by DFFH</li> <li>• Concerns about general parenting style unless tied to service performance</li> </ul> |

### Youth Services Complaints

“Youth services” covers programs for young people funded or provided by DFFH, such as youth mentoring programs, drop-in centres, youth homelessness services, and other youth support initiatives.

| Sub-category                                      | Example   |
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| Poor treatment or discrimination by youth workers | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a staff member at a youth service treated a young person unprofessionally.</b> For instance, being disrespectful, using excessive discipline, or showing prejudice against them. Youth should be in a safe, supportive environment, no worker should bully or single out a young person because of who they are.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A 16-year-old girl attending a youth drop-in centre, who is gay, felt the staff there made homophobic jokes and did not intervene when other youths teased her.</i></li> <li>• <i>A youth housing program staffer publicly scolded a teenager for minor rule-breaking in front of all other residents and called him “lazy”. The teen felt humiliated and targeted.</i></li> </ul>  |
| Unsafe environment or bullying in a youth program | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the environment at a youth service is unsafe.</b> For example, if there is bullying, violence, or harassment that staff are not addressing. All young people have the right to feel safe in services meant to help them. If the program isn’t protecting participants from harm, that’s a serious issue.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At a community youth centre, a group of older teens routinely bully younger attendees, but the staff dismiss it as “kids being kids,” leading to a 14-year-old being actually hurt during one of these incidents.</i></li> <li>• <i>A youth refuge has frequent fights breaking out among residents, and one boy was assaulted in the hallway. He reports that staff often aren’t around or don’t break up fights.</i></li> </ul> |



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| Services not meeting a young person's needs             | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a youth service isn't delivering what was promised or needed.</b> For example, if a case manager is not providing guidance, or if programs (education, training, counselling) that a young person depends on are not actually being provided. (Youth services should be responsive and helpful; if a teen or young adult feels like they are no better off despite engaging with the service, something may be wrong.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 17-year-old in a leaving care program was supposed to get help finding a job and learning life skills. Three months in, he has met his worker only once and no workshops or training have occurred.</li> <li>• A job-readiness program for youth with disabilities promised tailored support, but one participant, Malik, finds that he's mostly left sitting idle during program hours with little coaching.</li> </ul> |
| Not being heard or involved (youth perspective ignored) | <p><b>You should make a complaint if youth service staff make decisions about a young person's participation or goals without listening to what the young person wants or taking their views into account.</b> Youth services work best when young people have a voice. If a teenager feels they have no input in a program meant for them, that's a valid reason to speak up.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 15-year-old in a youth mentoring program is assigned to activities she has no interest in (like public speaking), even after she expressed that she'd rather focus on music or art. She feels her interests are ignored.</li> <li>• A group of youths in a community program wanted to organise a culturally diverse event, but staff dismissed the idea without discussion.</li> </ul>  |
| Breach of confidentiality in a youth service            | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a youth service worker shared a young person's private information (such as mental health status, sexuality, or personal history) with others without consent.</b> Trust is critical in youth services. Breaching confidentiality can put a young person at risk or make them lose trust in getting help.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A counsellor at a youth drop-in centre told a volunteer about a 16-year-old's self-harm history, which then became gossip among other teens. The teen finds out and is devastated.</li> <li>• A youth housing case manager sent an email to all residents including details about one resident's behaviour and mental health issues.</li> </ul>  |
| Exclusions  | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allegations of criminal behaviour by youth workers</li> <li>• Issues arising in youth justice detention settings</li> <li>• Disputes over educational placements or school exclusions</li> </ul>   |

- Complaints about private youth programs not receiving DFFH support

### Family Violence Services Complaints

This includes services for people affected by family violence (for example, victim support services, women's refuges, The Orange Door hubs, and men's behaviour change programs funded by DFFH's Family Safety Victoria).

**Note:** Complaints about The Orange Door and other family violence services are handled by DFFH (Family Safety Victoria), not the local site itself.

| Sub-category   | Example  |
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| Not feeling safe or supported by a family violence service     | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you sought help because of family violence and the service did not make you feel safe, believed, or adequately supported.</b> These services should empower and protect victims of violence. If you feel dismissed or in danger due to how they handled your case, that's unacceptable.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A woman fleeing domestic violence went to a local Orange Door site but felt the worker didn't take her situation seriously. They didn't offer her a safe place to stay or a safety plan, and she left feeling just as unsafe as before.</li> <li>• A victim of family violence calls a hotline for help, but the staff member just told her to "calm down and come back tomorrow" instead of helping immediately while she was in crisis.</li> </ul> |
| Breach of confidentiality or privacy (family violence context) | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a family violence service breached your privacy.</b> For example, revealing your address or details to someone who shouldn't have it, potentially putting you at risk. Confidentiality can be a matter of life and death in family violence cases. Services must handle information with extreme care.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A caseworker at a refuge accidentally disclosed the location of a survivor and her children to the abusive ex-partner (perhaps by contacting him or a relative inappropriately).</li> <li>• A support service included a client's full name and situation in a group email CC'd to multiple agencies without her consent.</li> </ul>  |
| Being turned away or not provided help                         | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you reached out to a family violence service and were unjustifiably turned away, put on an excessively long wait, or otherwise did not receive the help that should be available.</b> While demand can be high, you still have the right to complain if you feel you were unfairly denied service or left without support.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p>  |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mother with two children sought space at a women's refuge but was told there was no room and given no further help or referrals. Later she found out others with similar situations were accommodated.</li> <li>• A man seeking a men's behaviour change program (after being urged by authorities) was told to wait over a year with no interim support. He believes his willingness to get help was met with indifference.</li> </ul>  |
| Insensitive or unprofessional staff conduct | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a worker in a family violence service was insensitive, blaming, or otherwise unprofessional toward clients.</b> Survivors and people using these services are often in trauma. Staff should be empathetic and professional. Blame or judgment is not okay.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During a counselling session, a support worker asked a victim of abuse questions that felt blaming ("What did you do to make him angry?"). The client felt re-traumatised.</li> <li>• A facilitator in a mandated men's program mocked a participant in front of the group rather than guiding him constructively.</li> </ul>  |
| Lack of coordination or follow-through      | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the family violence service failed to follow through on a plan or coordinate crucial services (like legal aid, housing, counselling) that they said they would arrange.</b> Integrated support is key in family violence cases. If a service drops the ball, you have the right to voice that.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A case manager at an Orange Door promised to arrange emergency financial aid and legal assistance for a victim of violence, but weeks passed with nothing done.</li> <li>• After a family violence incident, a support agency was supposed to organise trauma counselling for the children, which was never arranged.</li> </ul> |
| Exclusions                                  | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family violence incidents requiring police response</li> <li>• Complaints about court-issued intervention orders</li> <li>• Criticism of government family violence policy or funding decisions</li> <li>• Disputes involving family law proceedings or custody</li> </ul>  |

| Public Housing Complaints |  |
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| Sub-category              | Example  |
| Unfair or incorrect       | <p><b>You should make a complaint if Homes Victoria (the public housing authority under DFFH) made a decision about your housing that you believe is wrong, unfair or not in line with policy.</b> This could be being</p> |

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| housing decision                                  | <p>denied a public housing application without a good reason, an incorrect rental charge, or an unfair transfer or eviction decision.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A woman who applied for public housing was told she didn't meet the criteria, but she is homeless with young children. She suspects an error was made or her application wasn't assessed properly.</i></li> <li>• <i>A public housing tenant received an eviction notice for damage to the unit that he didn't cause.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Public housing in Victoria is managed by Homes Victoria, which is part of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH).</p>   |
| Rude or discriminatory treatment by housing staff | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a housing officer or staff member at the housing office treated you disrespectfully, used rude language, or discriminated against you (for example, due to your race, disability, or personal circumstances).</b> All clients have the right to courteous service, poor treatment can discourage people from seeking the housing help they need.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A person with a disability went to discuss a maintenance issue at the housing office and felt the officer was very dismissive and wouldn't take the time to understand (possibly due to the person's speech impairment).</i></li> <li>• <i>An older immigrant couple report that when they visited the housing office, the front desk worker made fun of their limited English and raised his voice at them.</i></li> </ul> |
| Maintenance or repair issues not addressed        | <p><b>You should make a complaint if your public housing property has serious maintenance problems or safety hazards that you have reported, but the department has not fixed them in a reasonable time.</b> While day-to-day repairs should be logged via the maintenance line (not the complaints line), if essential repairs are ignored or delayed excessively, you can and should complain through the formal process.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A public housing tenant has been living with a leaking roof and mould for months. Despite calling the maintenance hotline multiple times, nothing has been done and her children are getting sick.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Neighbour disputes or safety concerns not handled | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you have reported serious problems with neighbours or safety issues in your public housing building (such as violence, harassment, or illegal activity) and the housing office did not take appropriate action.</b> The department should address tenant disputes and anti-social behaviour; if they ignore it, other tenants have the right to escalate the issue.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A tenant has repeatedly complained to the housing office that her next-door neighbour threatens her and plays extremely loud music every night, making her feel unsafe. She feels the housing office isn't doing anything to enforce the tenancy rules.</i></li> </ul>   |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several residents of a public housing complex reported drug dealing and vandalism occurring on their floor. Months later, nothing has changed and no security improvements were made.</li> </ul>   |
| Breach of privacy or tenancy rights by housing staff | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a housing official or contractor violated your rights as a tenant (for example, by entering your home without proper notice/permission, or by sharing your personal information inappropriately.</b> Public housing tenants have rights and expectations of privacy just like any renter. The department must respect those rights.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A maintenance contractor showed up and entered a tenant's unit with a master key while she was sleeping, without any prior notice. The tenant was startled and upset.</li> <li>A housing office employee accidentally sent an email intended for an internal department list to multiple tenants, and it contained personal details about those tenants' rent arrears.</li> </ul> |
| Exclusions   | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tribunal decisions (e.g. VCAT rulings on eviction or rent arrears)</li> <li>Complaints about neighbourhood disputes not involving housing breaches</li> <li>Requests to change eligibility rules for housing allocation</li> <li>Development or construction issues unrelated to tenancy</li> </ul>   |

### Homelessness Services Complaints

Homelessness services include crisis accommodation shelters, outreach support services, and transitional housing support funded by DFFH to help people who are homeless or at risk.

| Sub-category                              | Example   |
|---|---|
| Being unfairly turned away or denied help | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you sought help because you are homeless (or at risk of homelessness) and the service refused to assist you or turned you away in a manner that felt unfair or discriminatory.</b> No one should be denied at least advice or referral. If you believe you were refused shelter or support due to bias or without a valid reason, you can complain.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A young LGBTQ+ person went to an emergency housing service and was told "we don't have anything for someone like you" without further explanation. He suspects discrimination.</li> <li>A woman fleeing violence with her child was told by a crisis accommodation service that they have no space and was not</li> </ul> |



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|  | <i>offered any referral or alternative (later she learned there were options available).</i>   |
| Poor or unprofessional treatment by shelter staff          | <p><b>You should make a complaint if staff at a homeless shelter or outreach program treated you rudely, without empathy, or were unprofessional while you were seeking help.</b> People in crisis should be treated with care. Unprofessional behaviour (like yelling at clients, ignoring them, or making disrespectful comments) is not acceptable.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A man staying at a crisis shelter reports that one of the staff members often yells at the residents and speaks to them “like they’re garbage.” He felt degraded when asking for basic things like a blanket.</i></li> <li><i>A family who approached a homelessness service for assistance felt the worker was very dismissive. She kept saying “it’s your fault you’re in this situation” rather than helping.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Unsafe or unsanitary conditions in emergency accommodation | <p><b>You should make a complaint if the temporary accommodation provided to you (like a shelter, motel, or rooming house arranged by the service) was dangerously unsafe, dirty, or not suitable for habitation, and the service did not address the issues.</b> While emergency housing may be basic, it must still be safe and meet a minimum standard of habitability.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A mother with two children was placed in an emergency motel where the room had no lock on the door and there were used needles in the hallway and fears for her children’s safety.</i></li> <li><i>An older man in a shelter found the bathrooms were filthy and there was no heating in the middle of winter. He raised it with staff but nothing changed.</i></li> </ul>  |
| Lack of follow-up or support plan                          | <p><b>You should make a complaint if after the initial crisis is addressed, the service did not follow through with any support or case management they promised (for example, no one helped develop a housing plan or connect you to long-term resources).</b> Homelessness services should ideally provide more than just a bed for one night; if they promise follow-up support or case planning, they should deliver it.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A young woman was given a short-term accommodation voucher and told a caseworker would contact her to work on longer-term housing, but no one ever followed up. She ends up back on the street after the voucher ends.</i></li> <li><i>A man exiting homelessness was enrolled in a program that was supposed to help with job training and finding permanent housing. After an initial meeting, weeks passed with no action or communication.</i></li> </ul> |
| Failure to accommodate special needs                       | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a homelessness service did not take into account your specific needs or circumstances, resulting in inappropriate service.</b> For instance, not providing an interpreter for</p>   |

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| or circumstances | <p>someone who doesn't speak English, not accommodating a disability, or placing someone in an area that's not suitable given their situation.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A client with a visual impairment was placed in a shelter on an upper floor with no working elevator, effectively trapping him. He had informed the service of his disability.</i></li> <li>• <i>A survivor of trauma requested a women-only shelter, but the service placed her in a mixed dorm without consideration of her mental health triggers and feels unsafe.</i></li> </ul> |
| Exclusions       | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disputes about eligibility for private housing or bond schemes</li> <li>• Complaints about commercial accommodation services not funded by DFFH</li> <li>• Allegations relating to police interactions during street homelessness</li> <li>• Broader concerns about homelessness policy or social housing supply</li> </ul>  |

### Other Services Funded or Provided by DFFH

DFFH's remit is broad. It funds and delivers many programs not detailed above, such as community inclusion programs, multicultural community support, veterans support programs, carer support services, and more. In general, if you have an issue with any DFFH-related service, you can complain.

| Sub-category   | Example   |
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| General service dissatisfaction or misconduct        | <p><b>You should make a complaint if any other DFFH-funded program or service, not already covered above, provided poor service or a staff member engaged in misconduct.</b> This could include programs for seniors, initiatives for multicultural communities, carer support services, etc. The same principles apply: you can complain about lack of service, disrespect, discrimination, privacy breaches, or any unfair treatment.</p> <p><i>Example: A senior citizen attending a DFFH-funded community centre for older people finds that one staff member has been ridiculing participants who have dementia.</i></p> |
| Denial of access or discrimination in a DFFH program | <p><b>You should make a complaint if you feel you were unfairly excluded from or denied access to a government-funded program because of who you are (e.g., your age, gender, ethnicity, disability) or for arbitrary reasons.</b> All Victorians should have equal opportunity to benefit from support programs, if you suspect bias or unfair barriers, raise it.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A multicultural community group applied for a small grant (through a DFFH initiative) and felt they were passed over in favour of other</i></li> </ul>                            |



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|  | <p><i>groups without a clear explanation. They suspect it might be due to bias against their community.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A veteran trying to access a state-funded veterans' support service was told he's not eligible due to his discharge status, even though others in similar situations were helped.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Breach of guidelines or policy in program delivery       | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a funded agency or office did not follow the official guidelines, law or policy for the service, resulting in disadvantage to you.</b> For instance, if a program is supposed to provide a certain benefit or follow certain steps and they didn't, you can call that out.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A disability advocacy program funded by the department is supposed to respond to enquiries within a set timeframe and prioritise urgent cases. However, a client in urgent need got no response for months.</i></li> <li><i>A community housing project (run by a funded provider) was meant to allocate units via a transparent waiting list. One family believes their application was skipped over contrary to the policy.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Lack of information about your rights or how to complain | <p><b>You should make a complaint if a service or program did not inform you of your rights, including your right to complain, or if they did not have an accessible complaints process.</b> Under Victorian standards, for example, in disability services, you must be told you can complain and not be punished for it. If services hide this or make it hard to complain, that itself is an issue.)</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A participant in a community support program for youth had no idea she could give feedback or complain. The service never mentioned it and there were no brochures or forms available.</i></li> <li><i>The parent of a child in a state-funded early intervention service tried to complain about a therapist, but the agency had no clear process and kept redirecting him without action.</i></li> </ul> |
| Exclusions   | <p>DFFH does not consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services not funded or contracted by DFFH</li> <li>General advocacy for policy reform rather than service-specific issues</li> <li>Employment disputes between staff and third-party agencies</li> <li>Complaints already fully addressed through other statutory review processes</li> </ul>   |

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

| Jurisdiction | Description |
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| State                  | DFFH is a Victorian government department. It can handle complaints about services provided directly by the department or funded by the department under Victorian law, including the <i>Disability Act 2006 (Vic)</i> and other legislation and standards relating to child protection, housing, and social services.   |
| Geographical Scope     | DFFH can only handle complaints about services provided in Victoria. The conduct must have occurred in Victoria, or the person or service provider involved must be located, registered, or operating in Victoria under a DFFH-funded program or initiative.   |
| Time Limitations       | DFFH does not have a fixed statutory time limit for lodging complaints. However, it is best to complain as soon as possible after the issue occurs.<br><br>If there has been a long delay, DFFH may still consider the complaint, especially if there's a good reason for the delay or the issue is serious or ongoing.  |
| Exclusions             | DFFH cannot consider a complaint if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The matter is currently before a court or tribunal (e.g. Family Court, VCAT).</li> <li>• The complaint has been fully investigated or resolved by another complaints body (e.g. Victorian Ombudsman, Commission for Children and Young People, NDIS Commission).</li> <li>• The service is not delivered or funded by DFFH (e.g. a private provider with no connection to DFFH).</li> <li>• The issue is about changing government policy or legislation, not about the performance of a specific service.</li> <li>• The complaint concerns criminal conduct, employment disputes, or reportable conduct (e.g. serious abuse by a staff member) that falls outside DFFH's complaint handling function.</li> </ul> |
| Exercise of discretion | DFFH can choose not to investigate or act on a complaint in some situations, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complaint is vexatious, trivial or not made in good faith.</li> <li>• The complaint is about a historical issue where records no longer exist or the service has since closed.</li> <li>• The person complaining is not directly affected and the issue does not involve a clear breach of standards or duty.</li> <li>• The matter is already being handled in a more appropriate forum, such as a statutory body with oversight powers.</li> </ul>  |
| Additional information | If DFFH is not the right place to handle your complaint, they may refer you to a more appropriate body.<br><br>You can still provide feedback to DFFH even if the complaint is not formally investigated.  |

**Step 3: Who can you make a complaint against?**

| Respondent             | Description   |
|------------------------|---|
| Individuals            | <p>You can make a complaint about individual staff members or carers who are delivering services that are funded or directly provided by DFFH. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child protection practitioners</li> <li>• Foster or kinship carers</li> <li>• Residential care workers</li> <li>• Disability support workers in DFFH-funded services</li> <li>• Housing officers or program caseworkers</li> </ul> <p>The person must be working in a role or service funded by or contracted to DFFH within Victoria.</p>   |
| Body/Organisation      | <p>You can complain about organisations, agencies or service providers that are funded, regulated, or directly run by DFFH. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out-of-home care providers (e.g. foster care agencies, residential care providers)</li> <li>• Disability service providers operating under the Disability Act 2006 (Vic) (excluding NDIS-only providers)</li> <li>• Family violence and youth support services funded through DFFH or Family Safety Victoria</li> <li>• Community organisations delivering homelessness, housing, or family services with DFFH funding</li> <li>• Public housing and accommodation services managed or overseen by Homes Victoria (a division of DFFH)</li> </ul> |
| Facilities or Programs | <p>You can also complain about particular facilities or programs that fall under DFFH's scope, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group homes and supported accommodation services</li> <li>• Family support programs (e.g. early parenting centres, Orange Door)</li> <li>• Public housing tenancies or transitional housing managed under DFFH agreements</li> </ul>   |
| Exclusions             | <p>DFFH cannot investigate complaints against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NDIS-funded providers or workers where the service is not under Victorian government regulation.</li> <li>• Private landlords, real estate agents or accommodation providers that are not part of DFFH-funded programs.</li> <li>• Police, courts, schools, or health services unless the complaint is about a DFFH co-delivered program.</li> </ul>  |

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|                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees of other Victorian government departments (e.g. Department of Education) not working under DFFH's scope.</li> <li>Commonwealth government agencies or staff (e.g. Centrelink).</li> </ul>  |
| Additional information | <p>If you are unsure whether a provider or worker is connected to DFFH, you can still submit your complaint and DFFH may advise or redirect you appropriately.</p> <p>Even if DFFH cannot act on your complaint, they may pass on the information to the relevant oversight body (e.g. Commission for Children and Young People, Disability Services Commissioner).</p> |

**Step 4: Are you eligible to make a complaint?**

| Eligibility                                  | Description   |
|--|---|
| Who can make a complaint?                    | <p>Anyone in Victoria can make a complaint if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have received a service delivered or funded by DFFH</li> <li>are directly affected by the service or decision</li> <li>are acting in support of someone who has been affected (e.g. a family member, carer, or advocate)</li> </ul> <p>There are no age or citizenship restrictions, and children and young people can also make complaints in their own right.</p>                            |
| Pre-requisite steps                          | <p>DFFH generally encourages you to try resolving the issue with the relevant service provider first. For example, the organisation running the care home or the housing office involved.</p> <p>However, this is not mandatory, and DFFH may accept complaints directly, especially if the issue is serious or the person feels unsafe raising it with the service.</p>  |
| Can complaints be made on behalf of someone? | <p>Yes. Complaints can be made on behalf of another person, including a child, an adult with disability, or someone in care.</p> <p>If the complaint includes private or sensitive information, DFFH may request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>written or verbal authority from the person concerned, or</li> <li>confirmation of your relationship to them (e.g. parent, guardian, carer, advocate).</li> </ul> <p>In some cases, complaints can also be made anonymously.</p> |
| Exclusions                                   | <p>You generally cannot make a complaint if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you are not directly affected and the issue does not involve a serious breach or risk</li> <li>the issue is too old and records no longer exist, or</li> <li>someone else has already made a complaint and the matter has been finalised.</li> </ul>  |

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|   | DFFH may also decline to investigate if the complaint is considered vexatious, trivial, or made in bad faith.  |
| Additional information you need to know | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no cost to make a complaint.</li> <li>• You have the right to be treated respectfully and without discrimination when making a complaint.</li> <li>• Your complaint will not affect your access to services – it is against the rules for staff to treat you differently because you spoke up.</li> <li>• You can request assistance from an advocate, interpreter, or support person to help you make a complaint.</li> </ul> |

**Step 5:** What remedies are available at this body?

| Power                             | Description   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Apology                           | <p>DFFH may offer a formal or informal apology if the department or a funded service has acted unfairly, disrespectfully, or failed to meet expected standards.</p> <p>Apologies may be verbal or written and are usually considered where the harm caused was emotional, relational, or procedural.</p>  |
| Service improvement or correction | <p>DFFH can require the service provider to fix the issue, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing the service that was denied or delayed</li> <li>• correcting records</li> <li>• making a late payment or backpay</li> <li>• addressing gaps in a support plan or care arrangement</li> </ul> <p>This is one of the most common outcomes.</p> |
| Review or change of decision      | <p>If the complaint is about a decision made by DFFH or a funded provider, DFFH may review it and overturn or change the decision where appropriate.</p> <p>This might include decisions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• placement in care</li> <li>• support plans</li> <li>• contact arrangements</li> <li>• access to services.</li> </ul>       |
| Internal review or investigation  | DFFH may launch an internal review or investigation into the matter if it relates to serious allegations (e.g. abuse, neglect, discrimination, systemic failures).  |

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|   | <p>This may result in changes to processes, staff training, or disciplinary action.</p> <p>It will not usually result in punishment of individuals (unless referred to a separate body).</p>  |
| Service provider feedback               | <p>Even if DFFH doesn't formally investigate, your complaint may be used to give feedback to the service to help them improve.</p> <p>This is common when the issue isn't serious or doesn't breach rules but still reflects poor service or communication.</p>   |
| Referral to oversight body or authority | <p>In some cases, DFFH may refer your complaint to a more appropriate authority (e.g. if it concerns criminal conduct, professional misconduct, or serious reportable incidents).</p> <p>They will let you know if this happens and may assist with the referral.</p>   |
| No action                               | <p>If the complaint is outside DFFH's jurisdiction, made in bad faith, or not supported by sufficient information, they may decide not to take action.</p> <p>They may still explain why or offer a pathway to a more suitable complaints body.</p>   |
| Additional information you need to know | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFFH does not provide financial compensation or enforce court-like remedies such as fines or damages.</li> <li>• The focus is on resolving complaints informally, improving services, and ensuring fairness.</li> <li>• If your complaint involves a serious or criminal matter, DFFH may not be able to resolve it directly but may refer or escalate it.</li> <li>• You will usually receive a response in writing explaining the outcome and next steps.</li> </ul> |

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

| Requirement      | Description  |
|------------------|--|
| Format           | <p>Complaints can be made in writing (email, online form, letter) or by phone.</p> <p>There is no strict format, but written complaints are best for more complex or less urgent matters.</p> <p>If you need help to prepare your complaint, DFFH can arrange an interpreter, translator, or advocate, or accept your complaint through a support person.</p> <p>You can also submit complaints anonymously, although this may limit how DFFH can respond.</p> |
| Personal Details | <p>You should include your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full name</li> <li>• Contact details (phone/email)</li> </ul>   |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship to the person affected (if making a complaint on someone else's behalf)</li> <li>You can make a complaint without giving your name, but if you remain anonymous:</li> <li>DFFH may not be able to investigate your complaint fully</li> <li>They won't be able to contact you for updates or clarification</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Respondent's Details</b>                    | <p>You should include as much detail as possible about who or what the complaint is about. This could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A person (e.g. a caseworker, carer, housing officer)</li> <li>A service (e.g. a youth support program, residential care home, housing office)</li> </ul> <p>Include the name, location, and any other identifying details (e.g. program name, team, shift time) if known.</p>  |
| <b>Relevant Facts</b>                          | <p>Include the key facts of what happened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What happened</li> <li>When and where (specific dates, locations, and times if possible)</li> <li>Who was involved (include witnesses or others affected)</li> <li>What impact it had on you or the person affected</li> <li>What steps you've already taken to resolve it</li> <li>What outcome you are hoping for (e.g. apology, change in service, review of a decision)</li> </ul> <p>You can attach supporting documents (e.g. emails, reports, photos), but try to keep it clear and relevant. There is no set limit, but excessive or disorganised documentation may delay assessment.</p> |
| <b>What NOT to include</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not include false, misleading, or exaggerated claims</li> <li>Avoid aggressive or threatening language</li> <li>Do not include personal medical or legal documents unless they are directly relevant to your complaint</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Additional information you need to know</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In most cases, the person or service you're complaining about will be told about the complaint, and may be given a chance to respond.</li> <li>You can ask DFFH not to share your name, but this may limit how they can follow up.</li> <li>Children and young people can complain themselves. They do not need permission from a parent or guardian.</li> <li>If you're making a complaint on someone else's behalf, DFFH may ask for their verbal or written permission, unless the person is a child or lacks capacity.</li> </ul>  |



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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there's been a delay in making your complaint, it's helpful to briefly explain why.</li> <li>• If you need help preparing a complaint, you can contact DFFH or a relevant advocacy service for support.</li> </ul> |
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**Step 7:** Lodging your complaint and next steps.

| Step   | Description   |
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| Where to lodge your complaint                          | <p><b>Online form:</b> <a href="https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-complaint">https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/making-complaint</a></p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:complaints.reception@dffh.vic.gov.au">complaints.reception@dffh.vic.gov.au</a></p> <p><b>Post:</b> Complaints Unit, GPO Box 4057, Melbourne VIC 3001</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 1300 884 706 (Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm)</p> <p><b>In person:</b> Level 20, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 (call ahead to confirm access)</p> |
| Acknowledgement of complaint                           | <p>You will usually receive confirmation that your complaint has been received within 5 business days.</p> <p>This may include a reference number and a summary of the issue you raised.</p>  |
| Assessment and triage                                  | <p>DFFH will assess whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the issue falls within their jurisdiction</li> <li>• further information is needed</li> <li>• immediate action is required (e.g. safety concerns)</li> <li>• You may be contacted for clarification or more details.</li> </ul> <p>Most complaints are triaged within 10–20 business days.</p>  |
| Investigation or local resolution                      | <p>If DFFH decides to proceed, they may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contact the service provider for a response</li> <li>• review relevant records</li> <li>• speak to you and others involved</li> </ul> <p>Some complaints may be resolved quickly (within a few weeks), while others (e.g. more complex or serious issues) may take up to 60 business days or more.</p> <p>You will be kept informed of the progress and expected timeframes.</p>  |
| Conciliation or facilitated resolution (if applicable) | <p>DFFH may offer to facilitate a resolution between you and the service provider, especially where communication has broken down or an apology or service fix is likely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation is voluntary, and support is available to help you take part (e.g. interpreter, advocate).</li> <li>• You do not need a lawyer to participate.</li> </ul>  |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conciliation may take place by phone, in writing, or in person, and usually occurs within a few weeks if agreed to by both parties.</li> </ul>   |
| Outcome and closure                     | <p>You will be advised of the outcome in writing. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A summary of findings</li> <li>Any actions taken or recommended</li> <li>Reasons if the complaint is not upheld or further action won't be taken</li> </ul> <p>You will also be told what options you have if you're not satisfied with the outcome, including escalating the matter to the Victorian Ombudsman or other oversight bodies (covered in Step 9).</p>   |
| Additional information you need to know | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep a copy of your complaint, any documents you send, and all communication with DFFH.</li> <li>Let DFFH know if your contact details change or if something affects your complaint (e.g. safety concerns, resolution elsewhere).</li> <li>Try to include all relevant information at the start – giving key facts early will help the complaint move faster.</li> <li>If you're supporting someone else, make sure to clarify your relationship and (if required) supply authority to act on their behalf.</li> <li>You can ask for support to make or manage your complaint, including help from an interpreter, carer, or advocate.</li> </ul> |

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

| Avenue                        | Description   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Internal review opportunities | <p>If you are not satisfied with how your complaint was handled or with the outcome, you can request an internal review by DFFH.</p> <p>You should make this request in writing, ideally within 30 days of receiving the decision.</p> <p>The review will be handled by a senior officer not involved in the original complaint.</p> <p>The internal review process is administrative and based on principles of procedural fairness. It is not legislated, but available as part of DFFH's complaints management approach.</p> <p>Timeframes vary, but you should receive an outcome within 30 business days where possible.</p> |
| External review/ remedies     | <p>You may also take your complaint to an external oversight body if you're unsatisfied with DFFH's response or handling.</p>   |

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|   | <p>The most common option is the Victorian Ombudsman, which can review complaints about how DFFH handled your matter (including delays, unfair decisions, or lack of action).</p> <p>You can also seek review through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) (for systemic issues in child protection or out-of-home care)</li> <li>the Disability Services Commissioner (for unresolved complaints about Victorian disability services under the Disability Act)</li> <li>Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) or a court, if your complaint relates to a decision that has formal appeal rights (e.g. tenancy or guardianship matters)</li> </ul> <p>You may wish to seek legal advice before escalating complaints through these channels.</p> <p>Some external review bodies require you to lodge within a set timeframe (e.g. 30–60 days from the original decision).</p> |
| Other option                            | <p>If your complaint involves a criminal offence, discrimination, or serious misconduct, you may also report the matter to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victoria Police (criminal conduct)</li> <li>IBAC (corruption or misconduct in public service)</li> <li>Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) (discrimination or breaches of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities)</li> </ul> <p>These are not reviews of the complaint outcome, but separate avenues for addressing the underlying issue.</p>   |
| Additional information you need to know | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can ask for feedback or clarification about the decision before requesting review.</li> <li>Keep a copy of the original complaint and outcome if seeking an external review.</li> <li>You can also speak to a legal service or community advocate before deciding what to do next.</li> <li>There is no cost for internal reviews or complaints to most external oversight bodies.</li> </ul>  |

**Step 9:** Other bodies that handle complaints about social services-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. |

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|  | There are also State Government discrimination complaint bodies who may also be able to assist.  |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner                | <p>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.</p> <p>There are also State Government privacy and information complaint bodies who may also be able to assist.</p> |
| National Anti-Corruption Commission                              | <p>The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) handles complaints about serious or systemic corruption in the Australian Government public sector.</p> <p>There are also a State Government corruption complaint bodies who may also be able to assist.</p>   |
| Victorian Ombudsman  | The Victorian Ombudsman can review how the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing has handled a complaint or made a decision. They can investigate issues such as unfair treatment, poor communication, delays, or failure to follow proper process. This is a useful option if you're unhappy with the way DFFH handled your complaint or believe they acted unreasonably.  |
| Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP)                  | The Commission for Children and Young People promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Victoria. It can investigate systemic issues in child protection and out-of-home care, but does not take individual complaints from the public. However, information provided through complaints may contribute to broader inquiries.   |
| Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) – Victoria                | The Disability Services Commissioner handles complaints about disability services provided under the Disability Act 2006 (Vic). If your issue relates to a Victorian-registered provider (not an NDIS-only provider), the DSC may be the best option. The DSC can also investigate allegations of abuse and neglect in disability services.  |
| NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission                           | If the service is funded through the NDIS, complaints must go to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. DFFH cannot investigate complaints about NDIS-funded services unless they are jointly regulated under Victorian law.  |
| Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) | VEOHRC handles complaints about discrimination, sexual harassment, racial or religious vilification, and breaches of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities by public authorities in Victoria. This may be appropriate if your complaint relates to unequal treatment in a DFFH-funded service.  |
| Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)               | VCAT handles tenancy disputes, guardianship issues, and some appeals of administrative decisions. It is a legal body, not a complaint resolution body, so legal advice may be required. You cannot appeal a  |

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|   | DFFH complaint outcome to VCAT unless your issue falls under one of VCAT's legislated areas.  |
| IBAC<br>(Independent<br>Broad-based<br>Anti-corruption<br>Commission) | IBAC can investigate allegations of corruption, police misconduct, and serious public sector misconduct. If your complaint involves allegations of abuse of power or corruption within DFFH or a contracted agency, IBAC may be the appropriate body.   |
| Victoria Police   | If your complaint involves assault, theft, stalking, threats, or any other criminal offence, contact Victoria Police. DFFH cannot investigate criminal allegations.   |
| Additional<br>information you<br>need to know                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These bodies often have specific timeframes for lodging complaints or appeals. If you're unsure, seek legal advice or contact the body directly.</li> <li>• Some complaint bodies may not handle individual disputes but still use complaint data to inform inquiries and reforms.</li> <li>• If you are unsure where to go, DFFH or the Victorian Ombudsman can often help redirect you to the correct body.</li> </ul> |

### 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: <a href="https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/">https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/</a><br>Email: <a href="mailto:complaints@ombudsman.vic.gov.au">complaints@ombudsman.vic.gov.au</a><br>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: <a href="http://www.tisnational.gov.au">www.tisnational.gov.au</a><br>Telephone: 131 450  | Provide support to people if English is not their first language.  |
| National Relay Service              | Website: <a href="http://www.accesshub.gov.au">www.accesshub.gov.au</a>  | 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 <a href="#">preferred NRS channel</a> 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   |
|---|--|
| <a href="#">Where to Make a Complaint</a>     | A list of complaint services depending on your complaint type from the VO.   |
| <a href="#">How to Make a Complaint</a>       | Guidance from the VO on how to make a complaint.   |
| <a href="#">Call It Out</a>                   | Online register for racism/discrimination experienced or witnessed towards First Nations Australians. Not an official complaints body. |
| <a href="#">Law Society: Know Your Rights</a> | Guidance for individuals who are uncertain about where to start when seeking legal advice.   |