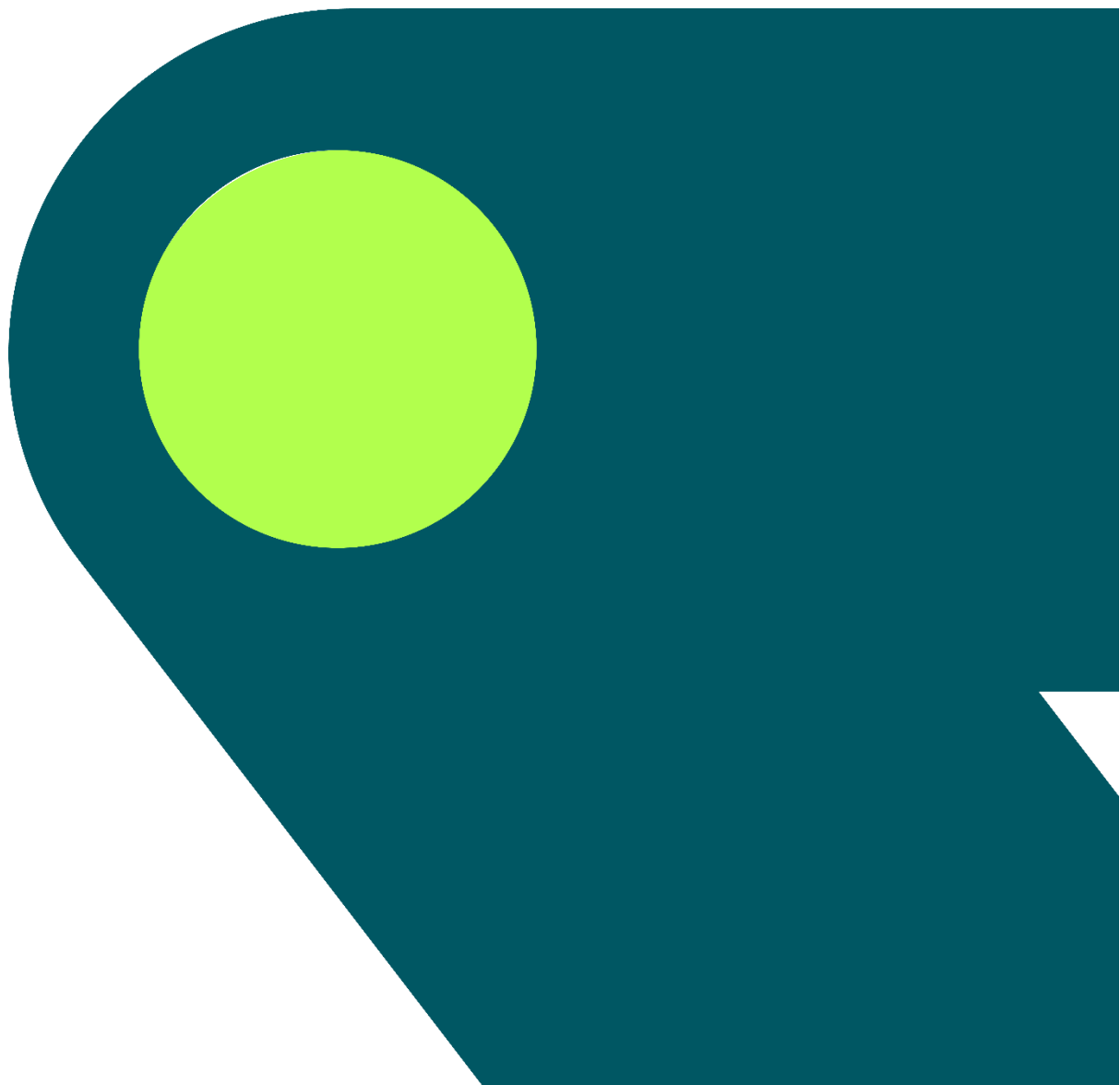




# Complaint Handling Policy

Version.1.2  
2024



# 1. Overview

## 1.1 Purpose

This Complaint Handling Policy (Policy) is intended to ensure that we, SmartestEnergy Australia Pty Ltd (SEA), handle complaints fairly, efficiently, and effectively.

Our complaint management system is intended to:

- > Enable us to respond to issues raised by people making complaints in a timely and cost-effective way
- > Ensure customer confidence in our processes, and
- > Provide information that can be used by us to deliver quality improvements in our services, staff and complaint handling.

This Policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

## 1.2 Scope

This Policy applies to all staff receiving or managing complaints from the public made to or about us, regarding our services, marketing activities, staff, and complaint handling.

## 1.3 How to make a complaint

To make a complaint, please contact SEA using one of the below options:

**Email:** help-aus@smartestenergy.com.au  
**Phone:** 1300 176 031  
**Website:** [www.smartestenergy.com](http://www.smartestenergy.com)  
**Post:** Level 4, 36 Carrington St, Sydney, NSW, 2000

## 1.4 Organisational commitment

SEA expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective, and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
CEO	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints.</li><li>• Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.</li><li>• Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints resolve them promptly.</li><li>• Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.</li> <li>• Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.</li> </ul>
Manager responsible for complaint handling	Establish and manage our complaint management system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide regular reports to the CEO on issues arising from complaint handling work.</li> <li>• Ensure recommendations arising out of complaint data analysis are canvassed with the CEO and implemented where appropriate.</li> <li>• Recruit, train and empower staff to resolve complaints promptly and in accordance with SEA's policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Encourage staff managing complaints to provide suggestions on ways to improve the organisation's complaint management system.</li> <li>• Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints resolve them promptly.</li> <li>• Recognise and reward good complaint handling by staff.</li> </ul>
Staff whose duties include complaint handling	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</li> <li>• Assist people make a complaint, if needed.</li> <li>• Comply with this Policy and its associated procedures.</li> <li>• Keep informed about best practice in complaint handling.</li> <li>• Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</li> <li>• Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve the organisation's complaints management system.</li> <li>• Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.</li> </ul>
All staff	Understand and comply with SEA's complaint handling practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints.</li> <li>• Be aware of SEA's complaint handling policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Assist people who wish to make complaints access the SEA complaints process.</li> <li>• Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.</li> <li>• Provide feedback to management on issues arising from complaints.</li> <li>• Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis and evaluation of complaint data as directed by management.</li> </ul>

## 2. Terms and definitions

**Complaint** – Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

A complaint covered by this Policy can be distinguished from:

- > Staff grievances
- > Code of conduct complaints
- > Responses to requests for feedback about the standard of our service provision
- > Reports of problems or wrongdoing merely intended to bring a problem to our notice with no expectation of a response
- > Service requests, and
- > Requests for information.

**Complaint management system** - All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

**Dispute** – An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

**Feedback** – Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly, or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

**Service request** – Requests for the provision of services and assistance, requests for action, and requests for explanation of policies, procedures, and decisions.

**Grievance** – A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

**Policy** – A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission, and goals.

**Procedure** – A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

## 3. Guiding principles



### 3.1 Facilitate complaints

#### People focus

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with promptly within a reasonable time frame.

People making complaints will be:

- > Provided with information about our complaint handling process at no cost
- > Provided with multiples and accessible ways to make complaints
- > Listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- > Provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

### **No detriment to people making complaints**

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

### **Anonymous complaints**

We accept anonymous complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

### **Accessibility**

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is easily available. We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If you prefer or need another person or organisation to assist or represent you in the making and/ or resolution of your complaint, we will communicate with you through your authorised representative.

Anyone may represent you with your consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

### **No Charge**

Complaining to us is free.

## **3.2 Respond to complaints**

### **Early resolution**

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with SEA.

### **Responsiveness**

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform you as soon as possible, of the following:

- > The complaints process

- > The expected time frames for our actions
- > The progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- > Their likely involvement in the process, and
- > The possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

We will advise you as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

We will also advise you as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to your complaint and the reason for our delay.

### **Objectivity and fairness**

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. Internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

### **Responding flexibility**

Our staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for you and/or your representative.

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve you and/or your representative in the process as far as possible.

### **Confidentiality**

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by SEA as permitted under the relevant privacy laws and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

## **3.3. Managing the parties to a complaint**

### **Complaints involving multiple organisations**

Where a complaint involves multiple organisations, we will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure that communication with you and/or your representative is clear and coordinated.

Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between the parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response to the complaint.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas within our organisation, responsibility for communicating with you and your representative will also be coordinated.

Where our services are contracted out, we expect contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. We take complaints not only about the actions of our staff but also the actions of service providers.

### Complaints involving multiple parties

When similar complaints are made by related parties we will try to arrange to communicate with a single representative of the group.

### Empowerment of staff

All staff managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

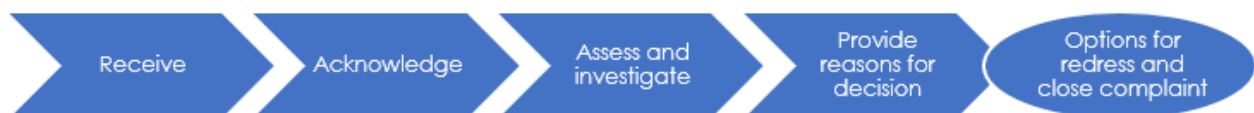
### Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

- > Our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- > The health, safety and security of our staff, and
- > Our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this Policy.

## 4 Complaint Management System – Complaint Procedures



### 4.1 Introduction

When responding to complaints, staff will act in accordance with our complaint handling procedures as well as any other internal documents providing guidance on the management of complaints. Staff will also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below.

#### Receipt of complaints

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information. We will also assign a unique identifier to the complaint file.

The record of the complaint will document:

- > Your contact information
- > Issues raised in the complaint and the outcome/s requested
- > Any other relevant information, and
- > Any additional support you require.

### **Acknowledgement of complaints**

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within five (5) of working days.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with you.

### **Initial assessment and addressing of complaints**

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- > How serious, complicated, or urgent the complaint is
- > Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- > How you are being affected
- > The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- > Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. To manage a complaint, we may:

- > Give you information or an explanation
- > Gather information from the product, person, or area that the complaint is about, or
- > Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

We will keep you up to date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and consider any statutory requirements.

### **Providing reasons for decisions**

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact you and advise you:

- > The outcome of the complaint and any action we took
- > The reason/s for our decision
- > The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- > Any options for review that may be available to you, such as an internal review, external review, or appeal.

If during investigation, we make any adverse findings about a particular individual, we will consider any applicable privacy obligations under the Privacy Act 1988 and any applicable exemptions in or made pursuant to that Act, before sharing our findings with you.

### **Closing the complaint, record keeping, redress and review**

We will keep comprehensive records about:

- > How we managed the complaint



- > The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- > Any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the complaint handling manager and/or senior management.

## 4.2 Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

At any time during the complaint process, you can ask for it to be escalated to a manager internally, or to escalate to the relevant third-party dispute resolution scheme.

Contact details for the relevant schemes can be found below.

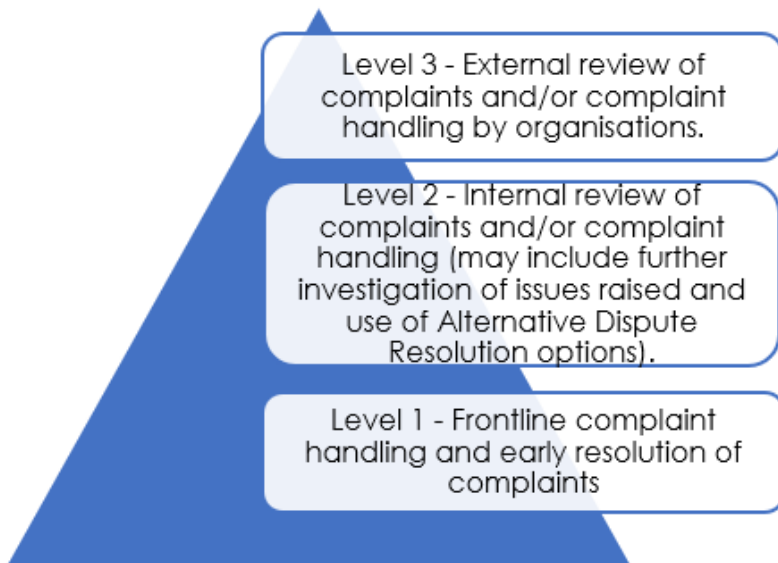
### **ACT - ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal (ACAT)**

**Email:** ewcomplaints@act.gov.au  
**Phone:** 02 6207 1740  
**Website:** www.acat.act.gov.au  
**Fax:** 02 6205 4855  
**Post:** GPO Box 370, Canberra, ACT 2601

### **Victoria - Energy & Water Ombudsman VIC (EWOV)**

**Email:** ewovinfo@ewov.com.au  
**Phone:** 1800 500 509  
**Website:** www.ewov.com.au  
**Fax:** 1800 500 549  
**Post:** Reply Paid 469, Melbourne, VIC 8060

## 4.3 The three levels of complaint handling



We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training, and supervision.

Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint to a more senior officer within SEA. This second level of complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:

- > Assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or
- > Facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).

Where you are dissatisfied with the outcome of review of your complaint, you may seek an external review of our decision by the relevant Ombudsman or Tribunal in your state.

## 5 Self-meter reads

If we have used an estimated read to issue a bill, you can provide a self-meter read to receive an adjusted invoice. We will provide information on how to do this.

We will review the self-meter read and notify you if it has been accepted and the reasons for our decision.

If your read is not accepted, you can provide a photo of your meter to substantiate the self-meter read, or any other information that may be relevant.

If you remain unsatisfied with our decision or process, you can request a bill review in line with Rule 29 of the National Energy Retail Rules or lodge a dispute the appropriate external dispute resolution service for your state or territory.

## 6 Accountability and learning

### 6.1 Analysis and evaluation of complaints

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.

Regular reports will be run on:

- > The number of complaints received
- > The outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
- > Issues arising from complaints
- > Systemic issues identified, and
- > The number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided to SEA's CEO and senior management for review.

### 6.2 Monitoring of the complaint management system

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to:

- > Ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints, and
- > Identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

Monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

### 6.3 Continuous improvement

We are committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:

- > Support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- > Implement best practices in complaint handling
- > Recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff
- > Regularly review the complaints management system and complaint data, and
- > Implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.