

MEDIA RELEASE

Revised Health Complaint Handling Standards coming into effect.

6 May 2024

The Health Complaints Commissioner is pleased to announce the publication of Revised Complaint Handling Standards.

The Governor in Council under section 136(2) of the Health Complaints Act 2016 orders that the Complaints Handling Standards 2020 be revoked and that the amended complaint handling standards, titled 'Revised Health Complaint Handling Standards 2023', be made.

Between July 2023 and February 2024, the Health Complaints Commissioner consulted with consumers, health services providers and key stakeholders to review the 2020 standards to ensure they are easy to use, reflect current best practice in the handling of complaints, and guide health service providers towards continuous improvement.

The Revised Health Complaint Handling Standards 2023 were made on the 30 April 2024 and published in the [Victorian Government Gazette](#). These standards come into effect on the 20 May 2024 and apply to all Victorian health care providers.

The revised standards aim to strengthen and improve complaint handling systems throughout the Victorian health sector, provide a good governance benchmark to all health service providers but also complement existing standards and good practice guides across other jurisdictions.

Each of the five (5) simplified standards (listed below) includes guiding principles that aim to support effective complaint handling processes by all health service providers.

STANDARD 1 - Policies and procedures: Health service providers have a complaints management system which enables timely acknowledgement and resolution of the complaint.

STANDARD 2 - Effective communication: Ensure clear and concise communication with complainants, actively listen to their concerns, confirm accurate understanding, and provide relevant updates throughout the resolution process.

STANDARD 3 - Fair and impartial review and response: Conduct a thorough and unbiased review of complaints and ensure all relevant information and different perspectives are considered before reaching an outcome.

STANDARD 4 - Transparent resolution: Provide complainants with a clear explanation of the findings, the reasons behind a resolution decision, and any actions taken to address the complaint.

STANDARD 5 - Continuous improvement and record keeping: Regularly review and evaluate complaint handling processes, identify areas for improvement, implement corrective actions and monitor effectiveness to enhance overall complaint management.

Some of the key revised guiding principles include:

- Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint within three (3) working days.
- Regular updates to complainants on the progress of their complaint and explanation for any delay.
- Aim to resolve complaints within 90 days.
- Seek feedback to continuously improve complaint processes.

The revised Health Complaints Handling Standards are available on the Health Complaints Commissioner's [website](#).

We invite questions and feedback via the [HCC website](#).

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About HCC

The Health Complaints Commissioner is an independent, statutory body responsible for regulating health services in Victoria and derives powers from the *Health Complaints Act 2016*. We resolve complaints about healthcare and the handling of health information in Victoria. We can also investigate matters and review complaints data to help health service providers improve the quality of their service. We act independently and impartially.

BACKGROUND FOR MEDIA: For information on the Code of Conduct for General Health Services, that applies, or interim and permanent prohibition orders, visit: <https://hcc.vic.gov.au/prohibition-orders-warnings/prohibition-orders> For more information the services offered by the HCC and how to lodge a complaint, visit: <https://hcc.vic.gov.au>

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