

External Complaints Policy

1 Rationale

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (**Assembly**) is committed to providing processes that are fair, consistent and transparent around how concerns and complaints about Assembly Members or employees are handled.

This policy provides the principles and procedures that apply when an external party makes a complaint (**External Complaint**) regarding the Assembly, including its employees and any Assembly Member acting in their capacity as Assembly Member.

2 Scope

This policy applies to the Assembly, including its Members and employees, and the external party making a complaint in relation to the Assembly.

3 What is an External Complaint?

An External Complaint is a concern raised or complaint made to the Assembly by a person who is not employed by, nor a Member of, the Assembly (**Complainant**).

4 Principles

The following principles apply to the handling of an External Complaint.

- (a) External Complaints may be made in writing or verbally to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

- (b) If a Member receives an External Complaint they must forward it to the CEO as soon as practicable and notify the Complainant that they have done so.
- (c) All External Complaints must be treated as confidential, unless all parties consent or there is an imperative reason for disclosure (for example, the Assembly may have legal obligations to report certain conduct).
- (d) Complainants must be treated fairly and equitably.
- (e) Communications between the Assembly and a Complainant will be guided by respect and equality.
- (f) Responses will avoid adversarial language and will be considered in line with Aboriginal cultural values and cultural practices.
- (g) External Complaints should be resolved as efficiently as possible in the circumstances.
- (h) There is no one size fits all approach to External Complaints handling.

5 Procedure

The following procedure is followed where there is an External Complaint.

- (a) If an External Complaint is made to the CEO, the Assembly must provide a response to the Complainant as soon as practicable which includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. acknowledgement of receipt of the External Complaint;
 - ii. the details of the person who will be addressing the External Complaint; and
 - iii. notification that the Assembly will treat the External Complaint as confidential, unless all parties consent or there is an imperative reason for disclosure.
- (b) The CEO must determine the appropriate process for resolving the External Complaint. Depending on the nature of the External Complaint, this may involve:
 - i. arranging discussions with the parties involved;
 - ii. referring the External Complaint to an appropriate person at the Assembly to consider the matter and provide the CEO with a recommendation;
 - iii. referring the External Complaint to an appropriate person at the Assembly to make a decision;
 - iv. determining that the subject matter of the External Complaint should be dealt with in accordance with an applicable Assembly policy, such as the Dispute Resolution Policy or the Grievance Resolution Policy (the CEO may request the External Complainant to bear their own costs in relation to facilitated discussions, yarning circles, mediation or



other such processes followed under another policy; costs may later be reimbursed if the External Complaint is substantiated or in cases of hardship);

v. determining that the External Complaint does not require any action to be taken.

(c) As soon as practicable, the CEO must inform the Complainant in writing of the outcome of the External Complaint.

About this policy

Approved by Council on 14 June 2023

Scheduled review date 14 June 2026

