

Introduction

The Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) seeks to provide financial assistance to people who have no option but to travel long distances to access specialist medical services in Victoria. The scheme is open to all Victorians who meet the eligibility criteria.

In order to enhance its responsiveness to clients, and ensure a common approach to managing complaints and requests for review, the VPTAS office has prepared its complaint and review policy to complement broader Department of Health complaint-handling processes.

Aim of the complaints and review process

The aim of the VPTAS complaints and review process is to provide VPTAS clients with an accessible and responsive complaint and review handling system that is easy to use.

Purpose and scope of this document

This document outlines the processes by which the VPTAS office within the department manages complaints and requests for claim reviews, and aims to ensure that it administers its policy fairly and consistently for all claimants.

The complaints and review policy applies to all clients who claim for reimbursement under the VPTAS scheme, including individuals, accommodation providers, travel providers and other third parties.

Principles

The complaints and review-handling process is based on the following corporate complaints management principles.

Commitment

All claimants have a right to lodge a complaint with either the VPTAS office or an alternative complaint-handling body, such as the ombudsman or the Privacy Commissioner, free from any threat of retribution or adverse consequences because they have lodged a complaint.

Fairness

The complaint and review process will be fair to all parties and due process will be followed.

Adequate resources

The VPTAS office and the department will provide adequate resources to facilitate fair and efficient complaint handling and claim reviews.

Visibility

Clients of the VPTAS office will be provided with information about the right to make a complaint or request a review, and the process that will be followed.

Accessibility

The complaint-handling and review process will be readily accessible and information will be clear and concise. Information will be made available in other languages as required.

Assistance provided

The VPTAS office staff will provide advice to and assist claimants with lodging a complaint or a request for review.

Responsiveness

All complaints and requests for review will be dealt with promptly and claimants will be treated courteously.

No-cost service

There will be no charge to lodge a complaint or request for review.

Appropriate remedies

If requests for review are substantiated, claims will be paid in accordance with VPTAS methodologies. No additional financial compensation will be available to claimants.

Data collection

Non-identifying data shall be collected on complaints and reviews.

Systemic and recurrent problems

Complaint and review data will be analysed to allow the identification of recurrent problems in the claim process and information provided about the VPTAS scheme.

Periodic reviews

The complaint and review process shall be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is delivering effective outcomes efficiently and equitably.

Privacy

Staff of the VPTAS office, and other staff who handle complaints or reviews, will handle all documentation in accordance with the Privacy Principles set out in the Information Privacy Act 2009 and the Health Records Act 2001.

The complaint and review handling process

What is a complaint or request for review?

A complaint is a registered expression of dissatisfaction with any of the services undertaken by the VPTAS office.

A request for review of a claim relates to a specific claim made for assistance under the VPTAS scheme.

A two-tiered complaint and review process

The VPTAS office has established a two-tiered complaints and review process to manage all complaints and requests for review.

Complaints and reviews by the VPTAS manager

As a principle, the VPTAS office will make every effort to resolve the complaint and consider a request for review within the office.

As part of this, the VPTAS manager will review the matters raised by the claimant to determine the grounds of the complaint and/or request for review.

All complaints and requests for review will be undertaken within 30 days of the complaint or request being received by the VPTAS office.

Claimants will be notified of the outcome of the complaint and/or review in writing.

Complaint or review by the Complaints and Review Committee

Should a claimant be dissatisfied with the outcome of the review by the VPTAS office, a further request for review of the decision can be requested and will be undertaken by the Executive Director, Hospital and Health Service Performance Division, Department of Health.

To consider these requests for review, the Executive Director, Hospital and Health Service Performance will convene the Complaints and Review Committee (CRC).

The CRC comprises relevant senior managers across the department, who come together on an as-needs basis to consider complaints and reviews that have not been resolved in the first stage process.

In these situations, the CRC will undertake analysis of the complaint and any additional information that may be relevant. The CRC can also request further information from the VPTAS office to inform its decision making. Relevant documents that assist with the analysis may include policies and procedures, guidelines and legislation.

The CRC will make a recommendation to the Executive Director. Claimants will be advised in writing of the outcome of this process within 30 days of the Executive Director receiving the request.

The decision made by the Executive Director will be the final decision from the department on the matter of an individual claim.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the review by the CRC, they will be advised of external redress options such as the Ombudsman, the Equal Opportunity Commission or the Privacy Commissioner.

Lodging a complaint or request for review

Complaints or requests for review must be lodged by the complainant or their representative in writing.

All written requests for review must be sent to:

**VPTAS Manager
VPTAS Office
PO Box 712
Ballarat VIC 3353**

Claimants have three months from the date that they have been notified of the outcome of a claim or an initial review of a claim to lodge a request for review.

Full details of the matter, and the reason for which the complaint or request for review is being lodged, must be set out clearly.

In the case of reviews, any information that will substantiate the request for review can be included with the request.

All complaints and requests for review will be acknowledged by mail within one week of receipt.

The VPTAS office can provide information and advice to claimants regarding the complaint and review process, and options for further action as necessary.

Other avenues of request for review

VPTAS claimants have the right to pursue other avenues of review if they are dissatisfied with the VPTAS office complaints or review process, or if they believe that the VPTAS policy has not been applied fairly or equitably. The Ombudsman is available to claimants who are aggrieved about an administrative decision. The Equal Opportunity Commission considers potential instances of discrimination or harassment, and the Privacy Commissioner examines potential breaches of privacy.

Collection, monitoring and reporting of information

Ongoing analysis of complaints and requests for review data will provide useful information about key issues of concern to VPTAS claimants, highlighting areas where policy and/or procedural changes could facilitate a reduction of the number of complaints over time.

Information regarding complaints and requests for review will be collected in the Complaints and Review Register. This information will be provided to the Executive Director and Minister on request.

The VPTAS manager will analyse complaints and requests for review and provide recommendations for action and improvement should trends emerge that indicate possible issues with the VPTAS program and policy.

Complaints handling and request for review policy review

The complaints handling and request for review policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure relevance and that it continues to meet its overall objectives of providing a fair and efficient complaints and requests for review process for VPTAS claimants.

Contacting the VPTAS Office

The VPTAS office can assist you with further information about making a complaint or lodging a request for a review.

VPTAS office
PO Box 712,
Ballarat 3353

Freecall: 1300 737 073
Phone: 5333 6040

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, please phone 5333 6040 using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required.

This document is also available in PDF format at www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth

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