

## 1. Introduction

This is our complaint handling process for customers and former customers who are covered by the *Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code (TCP Code)*. It outlines how we handle complaints and is intended especially for our past, current and prospective customers, our own staff and other interested parties.

## 2. Our complaints goal

As our customer or former customer, you have the right to make a complaint. Our goal is to keep our customers satisfied, and that means as few complaints as possible, and that any complaints that do arise are dealt with openly, fairly and promptly. To support that goal, our complaints process is approved by our Managing Director, who is responsible for ensuring its implementation, operation and compliance in accordance with Chapter 8 of the TCP Code. In dealing with you about complaints, we will use everyday language.

## 3. Contact details

A complete list of contact details referenced in this summary appears at the end of it, in the 'Details Table'.

## 4. Resolving complaints

A complaint is resolved when it is brought to a conclusion in accordance with the TCP Code (whether or not in your favour). When we propose a 'resolution' to you, we are suggesting how to solve your complaint. We aren't required to action that proposed resolution unless and until you accept it. If you do accept our proposed resolution, we are allowed a period of time to action it – see below. When your complaint is resolved, we must advise you accordingly.

## 5. Actioning a resolution

We will action an agreed resolution within ten working days unless:

- (a) we agree otherwise with you; or
- (b) you have not done something that is necessary for us to do our part.

## 6. Accessing our complaints process

### 6.1 Customer Care

You can call our Customer Care number – see below. This is a low cost number if you call it using a service we provide to you.

### 6.2 Making a complaint

You can make a complaint by letter, telephone, fax, online or email. The numbers and addresses are in the Details Table. You can also make a complaint in person at our office.

### **6.3 If you need assistance**

We will assist you to formulate, lodge and progress a complaint if you need help, especially including because of disability, hardship and difficulties with English. Just let our Customer Care staff know you want help and, if you can't tell us in that way:

- write or email your request to an address in the Details Table; or
- contact us through your Authorised Representative or Advocate; or
- contact us via the National Relay Service on 133 677; or
- contact us via the Translating & Interpreting Service on 131 450.

### **6.4 Authorised Representatives and Advocates**

An 'Authorised Representative' is a person you have appointed and delegated to deal with us, on your behalf, with some authority over your account. An 'Advocate' is a person you have appointed to deal with us, on your behalf, but without any authority over your account. You can make a complaint through an Authorised Representative or an Advocate.

## **7. Response times**

While we will strive to solve your complaint as soon as practicable, we are committed to certain maximum response times.

### **7.1 Acknowledgment**

(a) If you make a complaint in person or by telephone to a 'live' staff member, we will acknowledge it immediately.

(b) If you make a complaint by email, or through our website or another customer service website we approve, or by paper post, or by a telephone message recording system, we will acknowledge it within two working days.

(c) When we acknowledge your complaint, we will give you:

- a unique Case Reference that you can use to identify the complaint in later contacts with us;
- an indicative timeframe to resolve the complaint; and
- information on how to obtain this Complaint Handling Process Summary.

### **7.2 First contact resolution**

Whenever possible, we will strive to resolve your complaint on first contact.

### **7.3 Proposing a resolution**

If we do not believe we can resolve your complaint within 15 working days (or two working days for an urgent complaint) we will advise you within those periods:

(a) why there is a delay;

(b) the timeframe that will apply; and

(c) if we expect resolution to require more than 9 more working days, of your options for external dispute resolution (except if the delay is because of a declared mass service disruption). Otherwise, we will propose a resolution within 15 working days (or two working days for an urgent complaint).

## **8. Dealing with you and your complaint**

### **8.1 Standards**

(a) Your complaint must be resolved objectively, efficiently and fairly and our staff must treat you courteously.

(b) Clauses 8.2 to 8.5 of the TCP Code contain minimum performance standards of complaint management, complaint analysis, resourcing and record keeping, and we will comply with those standards.

### **8.2 Internal investigations**

(a) We may resolve a complaint on goodwill or commercial grounds, without a detailed investigation.

(b) Otherwise, we will investigate your complaint in a way that is proportionate to its seriousness.

### **8.3 Internal prioritisation**

We are flexible in the way we prioritise complaint processing, because special circumstances can apply. But in normal circumstances:

(a) Urgent complaints have highest priority.

(b) Complaints involving services to customers with significant health problems, or the care of young children or who are in remote locations or who are aged are prioritised next.

(c) Complaints that are approaching, or have exceeded maximum response times are prioritised next.

We can often only know about these, or other important factors, if you tell us. You can alert us by any of the contact channels through which you can lodge a complaint.

### **8.4 Internal escalation**

(a) We have an internal escalation process, and your complaint will be escalated and managed accordingly if you request it.

(b) For your information, internal escalation and management may not accelerate resolution if the complaint is not urgent and its processing already meets the applicable standards and is within the permitted maximum response time/s.

(c) A complaint will be automatically escalated if:

- a maximum response time has been exceeded;
- it becomes urgent (see paragraph 9);
- you notify us of another factor that increases the seriousness of your complaint or the need for expedited resolution.

(d) You can request escalation through any of the contact channels through which you can lodge a complaint.

## **8.5 Appropriate resolution**

We will resolve your complaint appropriately and:

- (a) we ensure that our Customer Care staff are trained to understand the potential remedies available to resolve complaints;
- (b) any remedy we offer will be tailored to the root cause of the complaint, and to your circumstances (if you have told us about them);
- (c) our Customer Care staff and management will monitor complaints to assess if they indicate wider issues, and, if so, address the root cause;
- (d) we will resolve billing errors in current bills.

## **8.6 Advising you of resolution**

As soon as practicable after we finish investigating your complaint, we will advise you of the resolution.

## **8.7 Credit management action suspended**

We will not take credit management action over a disputed amount if you have made a complaint and we know:

- (a) it has not been resolved to your satisfaction; and
- (b) it is being investigated by us or the TIO or some other recognised third party.

## **8.8 Legal action delayed**

We will not start legal proceedings over a matter that has been subject to a complaint:

- (a) while we are handling the complaint internally; or
- (b) within seven working days after we advise you of the outcome of the complaint.

# **9. Urgent complaints**

## **9.1 When we treat a complaint as urgent**

A complaint you make is treated as urgent if:

- you have applied for or have been accepted as being in financial hardship under our Financial Hardship Policy and the subject matter of your complaint can reasonably be presumed to directly contribute to or aggravate your financial hardship; or
- disconnection of a service is imminent or has occurred and where due process has not been followed; or
- you are a Priority Assistance Customer (under the *Priority Assistance for Life Threatening Medical Conditions Code*) and the complaint relates to the service for which you receive Priority Assistance. Our Customer Care staff are trained to watch for these factors and must flag a complaint as urgent if any of them are seen to apply. After that, the complaint will be managed under paragraph 9.2.

## **9.2 How urgent complaints are treated differently**

Within two working days of acknowledging your urgent complaint, we will either propose a resolution or advise you why there will be a delay and how long it is likely to be. If you accept a resolution that we propose, we will action the urgent aspects of it within those two working days if possible.

## **10. Delays**

We will advise you of any delays to promised timeframes.

## **11. Monitoring the progress of your complaint**

You can monitor the progress of your complaint by calling Customer Care and quoting your Case Reference.

## **12. Closing your complaint**

We only close a complaint if you agree, or if the TCP Code otherwise allows us to.

## **13. Consumer focus**

We strive to keep our Complaints process easy to use and focused on you. Please let us know how we're doing. You can leave feedback:

- with the Customer Care staff who assist you; or
- with their supervisor – just ask to be transferred; or
- by any of the contact numbers and addresses in the Details Table.

## **14. Charges for using our complaints process**

Mainly, our complaints process is free. The only charges may be:

- There may be a low cost for calls to our customer care number. But please note that if you call our number from a service provided by another provider (eg a mobile service that we do not provide to you) the other provider may charge you at its normal rates for calling our number.
- There may be a costs recovery charge for providing information that we collected about you more than two years earlier.
- There may be a costs recovery charge for providing information in a form or quantity that our Standard Customer Terms or our Critical Information Summary state will not be provided at no charge.

Before we charge any fees, we will tell you about it and give you the option of continuing the complaint (and paying the charge) or discontinuing the complaint, and we will tell you about options for external resolution of your complaint.

Copies of this policy are available free of charge by download from our website and if you do not have easy internet access, we will give you one hard copy, also free.

## 15. External dispute resolution

### 15.1 Options

The following external dispute resolution bodies may be able to assist with your complaint, but may require that you first attempt to resolve it directly with us:

- the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (**TIO**) – [www.tio.com.au](http://www.tio.com.au);
- the Office of Fair Trading in Your State or Territory – visit your State or Territory consumer website;
- for Australian Consumer Law matters, the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (**ACCC**) – [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au);
- for Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code matters, the Australian Communications & Media Authority (**ACMA**) – [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au);
- for privacy issues, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (**OAIC**) – [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au).

### 15.2 Limit on cancelling service

If:

- you make a complaint; and
- it hasn't been resolved with us; and
- you pursue external dispute resolution – we must not cancel your service for those reasons alone.

| Details Table        |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Contact Hours        | 8am – 9pm Mon –Fri (CST)<br>10am – 4pm Sat (CST)                               |
| Customer Care Phone  | 1300 135 235   |
| Customer Care Email  | <a href="mailto:complaints@esc.net.au">complaints@esc.net.au</a>               |
| Customer Care Fax    | 1300 136 296   |
| Customer Care Online | <a href="http://www.esc.net.au/aout/feedback">www.esc.net.au/aout/feedback</a> |
| Customer Care Postal | 465 South Rd KESWICK SA 5035   |