COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Building surveying services and statutory non-compliance concerns

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out how iPermit Building Approvals receives, assesses and resolves complaints. It also explains how applicants, clients, adjoining owners and other relevant parties may raise concerns about possible non-compliant building work.

The policy has been prepared to support compliance with Principle 8 of the Code of Conduct for Building Surveyors made under section 177A(1)(a) of the Building Act 1993 (VIC).

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints about iPermit Building Approvals building surveying services, conduct, communication, fees, administrative processes, delay or failure to act. It also applies to non-compliance concerns raised in connection with statutory functions performed by the Company.

An initial request for information or service is not ordinarily a complaint. It will be treated as a complaint where the communication expresses dissatisfaction and a response or resolution is reasonably expected.

3. Definitions

Complaint: an express or implied statement of dissatisfaction about the Company, its services, conduct, decisions, actions or inaction where a response is sought, reasonably expected or required.

Complainant: any person or organisation making a complaint, including an applicant, client, owner, adjoining owner or other relevant party.

Complaints Officer: the Director or another person nominated by the Director to receive, record and manage complaints.

Non-compliance concern: information suggesting that building work, protection work, documentation or conduct may not comply with applicable legislation, the National Construction Code, an approved building permit, or a statutory direction, notice or order.

4. Policy principles

- **Accessibility.** A complaint may be made verbally or in writing, directly or through an authorised representative, and without charge.
- **Fairness.** Complaints will be assessed on their merits by a person who is impartial and appropriately authorised.

- **Responsiveness.** Complaints will be acknowledged and progressed within the service standards set out in this policy.
- **Confidentiality.** Information will be disclosed only where reasonably necessary or required by law.
- **Accountability.** The Company will provide reasons for outcomes, maintain records and review complaint information for recurring or systemic issues.
- **Statutory independence.** The complaint process will not influence an independent statutory decision or require the Company to act contrary to law.

5. Making a complaint

Complaints should be directed to the Complaints Officer using the email, online form, telephone, postal or in-person contact details published on the Contact Us page of the Company's website.

A complainant should provide the following information where it is reasonably available:

- name and preferred contact details
- property address, building permit number or project reference
- a clear description of the complaint, including relevant dates and persons
- supporting correspondence, photographs, plans, reports or other documents, and
- the outcome sought.

Anonymous complaints will be accepted where sufficient information is provided. Anonymity may limit the Company's ability to investigate, obtain further information or advise the complainant of the outcome.

> **Immediate safety risk.** Where there is an immediate threat to life or property, contact emergency services on 000. The relevant local council or municipal building surveyor and the Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC) should also be contacted where appropriate. This policy is not an emergency response service.

6. Complaint management procedure

Stage	Action	Service standard
Receipt and acknowledgement	The complaint is recorded, allocated a reference and assigned to a suitable complaint handler.	Acknowledgement within 5 business days.
Preliminary assessment	The Company considers urgency, jurisdiction, conflicts of interest, the issues to be addressed and any further information required.	Usually within 10 business days.
Investigation and outcome	Relevant records and evidence are reviewed. Affected persons may be asked for information and given a reasonable opportunity to respond. A written outcome and reasons are provided.	Target response within 30 business days after sufficient information is received.
Complex complaint	Additional time may be required for technical, legal, insurance, regulatory, site-access or multi-party issues.	Up to 45 business days, or longer where reasonably necessary. Progress update every 15 business days.
Internal review	Where practicable, a senior person not materially involved in the original handling reviews the process and outcome.	Request within 15 business days. Target review response within a further 30 business days.

Timeframes may be suspended while the Company reasonably awaits material information, site access, expert advice, an insurer or regulator, or the outcome of a related statutory or legal process. A material extension will be notified where appropriate. Urgent safety or compliance action will not be delayed.

7. Investigation and outcomes

The scope of an investigation will be proportionate to the nature, seriousness and complexity of the complaint. The Company may review the engagement and permit file, obtain information from relevant persons, arrange a lawful inspection, and seek technical, legal, insurance or regulatory advice.

Available outcomes may include:

- an explanation, written reasons or further information
- correction of an administrative error or inaccurate record
- an apology, staff training or an improvement to a process
- a fee adjustment, refund or other commercial resolution where appropriate and authorised
- a request for information, inspection, statutory action or referral, or
- closure of the complaint where it is not substantiated, has already been addressed, is outside the Company's role or requires no further action.

The Company will not approve non-compliant work, disregard relevant evidence or compromise a statutory duty to resolve a complaint.

8. Statutory non-compliance concerns

A non-compliance concern relating to a project for which the Company performs statutory functions will be referred to the relevant building surveyor or an authorised delegate. The matter will be assessed independently of any commercial relationship.

The assessment may include review of approved documents and inspection records, a request for further information, a lawful inspection, procedural fairness, and consideration of whether a direction, notice, order, referral or other action is appropriate.

Raising a concern does not establish that non-compliance has occurred or guarantee a particular enforcement outcome. Matters outside the Company's appointment or powers may be referred to the municipal building surveyor, local council, BPC, emergency services or another appropriate authority.

9. Protection work

An adjoining owner or other relevant party may raise concerns about protection work, including an apparent failure to identify, notify, assess or carry out required protection work.

A relevant building surveyor may perform the functions conferred by the Building Act 1993 in relation to protection work but must not act as an arbiter of a dispute between the owner and adjoining owner. Relevant appeals and disputes may be referred to the Building Appeals Board under Part 10 of the Act.

Statutory time limits may apply. A complaint or internal review under this policy does not suspend or extend an appeal, referral or other legal time limit.

10. Privacy and records

Complaint information will be handled in accordance with applicable privacy law and the Company's privacy policy. Information may be provided to staff, affected persons, advisers, experts, insurers, auditors, regulators or authorities where reasonably necessary for investigation, procedural fairness, safety, professional advice or compliance with law.

The Company will maintain a complaint register recording the complaint, evidence, communications, assessment, outcome, reasons, actions and closure. Records will be retained in accordance with applicable law and the Company's records policy. Complaint material forming part of a relevant building surveyor's project file will be retained for at least 10 years after issue of the occupancy permit or certificate of final inspection, or longer where required.

11. Conduct and access to the process

The Company will make reasonable adjustments for disability, language, literacy, cultural or communication needs. A complainant may use a support person or authorised representative. A complaint made genuinely and in good faith will not, by itself, disadvantage the complainant.

The Company may apply proportionate communication arrangements where conduct is threatening, abusive, discriminatory, excessive or repeatedly duplicative. A repeated complaint may be closed where it presents no material new information. This does not prevent new safety information being reported or an external or statutory right being exercised.

12. External assistance

Building and Plumbing Commission: complaints or concerns involving registered practitioners or building work. Telephone 1300 067 088 or visit BPC issues, complaints and disputes.

Building Appeals Board: relevant appeals and referrals under Part 10 of the Building Act 1993, including protection-work matters. Telephone 1300 421 082, email registry@buildingappeals.vic.gov.au or visit Building Appeals Board.

The relevant municipal building surveyor or local council may assist with dangerous buildings, illegal work or municipal enforcement matters. A complainant may also obtain independent professional or legal advice.

13. Monitoring and review

The Complaints Officer is responsible for maintaining the complaint register, monitoring open complaints and reporting significant or recurring issues to the Director. The Director is responsible for approving material remedial action and conducting or appointing internal reviews.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and following a material legislative or regulatory change, a significant complaint, an identified control failure or a recurring complaint trend.

This policy describes an administrative process. It does not create a guarantee of a particular outcome, alter a statutory appointment, extend a legal time limit, restrict a legal right or duty, or prevent urgent compliance or enforcement action. Legislation and approved codes prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.

Related legislation and guidance

- Building Act 1993 (Vic)
- BPC Code of Conduct for Building Surveyors
- AS 10002:2022 - Guidelines for complaint management in organizations