

Feedback: Complaints, compliments and reviews policy

Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS)



To receive this publication in an accessible format please phone the VPTAS Office on 1300 737 073, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email vptas@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Feedback: Complaints, compliments and reviews policy

The Department of Health & Human Services is committed to maintaining a high standard and continuously improving the VPTAS processes including providing a respectful and responsive complaints and review handling system for patients, consumers, carers, health professionals and the VPTAS Office staff.

The department wants to know how we can best manage the VPTAS to help rural Victorians to access the specialist medical services they need. By listening to you and learning about any concerns you may have about the VPTAS, this will help us to improve the process for all Victorians who need to use the scheme.

You can either request a review or provide feedback by making a complaint or giving a compliment about the VPTAS.

What is a complaint, compliment or review request?

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

A **compliment** is providing appreciation and positive feedback about any of the services undertaken by the VPTAS Office.

A **review request** is in relation to a specific claim you submitted to the VPTAS Office for travel and/or an accommodation subsidy for you or an escort(s).

If you are not happy with the outcome you receive from the VPTAS Office you can ask for this decision to be reviewed.

How to provide feedback or request a review

Anyone wishing to provide feedback (a complaint or compliment), ask about the outcome of a VPTAS claim or request a review is encouraged to contact the VPTAS Office:

Free call: 1300 737 073

If your issue or query cannot be resolved at this point you can lodge a written request for a review or lodge a complaint by following the process outlined below.

Lodging a complaint or request for review

All patients or their parent/legal guardian have a right to request a review of a claim decision made by the VPTAS Office or to make a complaint.

There is no charge or fee for lodging a review request or for making a complaint.

You need to lodge your feedback (complaint or compliment) or request for review:

1. **in writing**
2. **by post or email** to the **VPTAS Manager**
Posted to: **VPTAS Office**
PO Box 712
Ballarat VIC 3380
Emailed to: **vptas@dhhs.vic.gov.au**
3. **within three months** of receiving notification from the VPTAS Office that part or all of the claim has been declined, and
4. **with any additional information that will substantiate your request.**
You **do not** need to include your original claim, travel diary or receipts, which you have previously sent to the VPTAS Office.

Need assistance?

If you need help to make your review request or to provide feedback please telephone the:

VPTAS Office on: Free call 1300 737 073

If you need help in a language other than English please telephone via the national Telephone Interpreter Service on:

Immediate phone interpreting: 131 450

Pre-booked phone interpreter booking: 1300 655 081

Your complaint or request for review

A two-stage complaints and review process has been established to provide a fair and transparent process.

Stage 1

1. The VPTAS Manager will consider your complaint or review request against the VPTAS guidelines in operation at the time you put in your original claim. The VPTAS guidelines are available from <http://go.vic.gov.au/1epXMN>.
2. All complaints and/or requests for review will be acknowledged by mail within one week of receipt.

3. The VPTAS Manager will write to you about the outcome of your review or feedback within one month (30 days) of the request for review being received by the VPTAS Office.
4. Your privacy and confidentiality will be respected at all times in accordance with the Privacy Principles set out in the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*, the *Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)* and the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*.

Stage 2

1. If you have raised your concerns with the VPTAS Manager and are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you can send your feedback to the Department of Health & Human Services' Complaints Integrity and Privacy Unit. For more information refer to the department's complaints information website at <www.health.vic.gov.au/complaints>.
2. The Complaints Integrity and Privacy Unit is the department's central unit for managing complaints.
3. The Complaints Integrity and Privacy Unit will advise the VPTAS Office that your complaint has been received and will be investigated. A senior manager will review and investigate your concerns and the VPTAS Office's response.

You can submit your complaint to the Complaints Integrity and Privacy Unit by post, email or telephone.

Post to:	Email to:	Telephone free call:
Department of Health & Human Services Manager, Complaints, Integrity and Privacy Unit GPO Box 4057 Melbourne VIC 3000	complaints.reception@dhhs.vic.gov.au	1300 884 706

Going to the Victorian Ombudsman

1. If you are still unsatisfied with the outcome (both from the VPTAS Manager and the Complaints Integrity and Privacy Unit) you can lodge a complaint with the Victorian Ombudsman.
2. The Victorian Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament. The Ombudsman's office investigates complaints about administrative actions taken by Victorian government agencies, including departments such as the Department of Health & Human Services and its VPTAS Office.
3. The Ombudsman will generally only accept a complaint after the department has responded to your complaint or review request (Stage 1 and 2).

You can contact the Victorian Ombudsman's office to discuss your issues or to submit a complaint at:

Post to:	Online at:	Telephone:
Victorian Ombudsman Level 1 North Tower 459 Collins Street Melbourne VIC 3000	www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/ Complaints/Make-a-Complaint	9613 6222 or free call 1800 806 314 (regional and rural areas only)

Please note that generally complaints have to be submitted in writing to the Victorian Ombudsman.

Brochures to assist non-English speaking people who want to access the office of the Victorian Ombudsman are available in the 19 most common languages spoken in Victoria on the Translations page, which can be accessed at www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/translations.

What happens to the information collected about complaints and reviews?

Investigating your complaint or request for review may involve sharing your personal information with other relevant areas within the Department of Health & Human Services to get to a resolution. Statistical information regarding complaints and suggestions is also used to improve the way the VPTAS Office processes travel and accommodation claims and to better understand rural Victorians' needs when travelling for medical specialist services.

Using your information for these purposes is carefully controlled to ensure it is done in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Health Records Act 2001*. You can find more information about the department's obligations and requirements for managing health records at <www.health.vic.gov.au/healthrecords> and about managing your personal information at <www.dataprotection.vic.gov.au>.

For information about contacting the Health Services Commissioner and the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection please go to the **'Privacy'** section (next).

Privacy

The VPTAS Office is committed to protecting your privacy.

Providing reimbursement to patients involves gathering and storing a large amount of personal and often highly sensitive information. Personal information refers to information that allows a person to be identified. It can appear in any form and be recorded in any way. Personal information may either be immediately identifiable (a patient's name) or potentially identifiable (a surname and suburb).

We collect and handle this personal information only for the purposes of administering and processing payments for VPTAS claims.

The VPTAS Office has a responsibility to protect personal information and ensure it is handled appropriately and only used for the purpose for which it was intended when collected.

The Information Privacy Principles set out statutory obligations for handling personal information. These apply to all public sector organisations and cover all stages of the information cycle, from collection to use, release and disposal of personal information. These principles ensure privacy is protected in a consistent way across the Department of Health & Human Services.

The Information Privacy Principles are reflected in the department's privacy policy statement, which adopts the legislative principles as minimum standards.

To administer and process payments and reimbursements, we may disclose your personal information to external parties such as accommodation and transport providers.

If you have a grievance about information being released without your consent (or any other privacy complaint) you may take your concerns to the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection or you may complain to the Health Services Commissioner in relation to your personal health information.

If other legislation contradicts privacy law, the other legislation will win out. For example, if it was proposed to withhold information about a patient in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, this information could not be withheld from the Victorian Ombudsman, where it is required by the *Ombudsman Act 1973*.

If you choose not to provide your personal information or only provide part of the information requested, we may not be able to process your claim.

You have a right to access your personal information through the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.*

Auditing

The Department of Health & Human Services reserves the right to conduct regular audits on all VPTAS claims. This includes, but is not limited to, accessing information from patients, escorts and approved medical specialists in relation to details provided on the VPTAS claim form.

For further information on the department's privacy policy, visit the privacy website at <www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/privacy>.

Health Services Commissioner

The Health Services Commissioner is contactable at:

Complaints and information	or write to:
Telephone: 1300 582 113	Health Services Commissioner
Fax: (03) 9032 3111	Level 26, 570 Bourke Street
E-mail: hsc@dhhs.vic.gov.au	Melbourne VIC 3000

Office of the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection

The Office of the Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection (Privacy and Data Protection Victoria) is contactable at:

Telephone: 1300 666 444

Fax: 1300 666 445

Email: enquiries@privacy.vic.gov.au

Website: www.dataprotection.vic.gov.au

Located at:

Level 6, 121 Exhibition Street

Melbourne

or write to:

GPO Box 24014

Melbourne VIC 3001

- * For information about freedom of information (Fol) requests, visit the Department of Health & Human Services' website at <www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/privacy>.

