

Complaints Handling Policy

While we continually aim to provide you with high levels of customer service, we recognise and respect the right that consumers or former customers may wish to express dissatisfaction with our products, services, staff or procedures. Our complaints handling process is designed to encourage the efficient resolution of your issue at the first point of contact.

Our complaints handling process complies with the requirements of the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code C628:2015 and the Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints Handling) Industry Standard 2018 and responsibility for compliance with the process lies with our Managing Directors.

Free of Charge

In most instances, we will not charge you for dealing with your complaint. We may charge you to recover our costs in very specific circumstances only, such as:

- We may charge you where you request information that was collected more than two years ago
- Where you request information that is not free of charge as per our Standard Form Customer Contract or our Critical Information Summary.

If cost recovery charges apply, we will tell you before charging you. You may of course choose not to pay and discontinue your complaint. We will inform you about your options for external dispute resolution.

How to make a Complaint

Contacting us to request technical support or to report a service issue is not necessarily a complaint. Where it's not clear to us, we'll ask you to confirm that you wish to make a complaint. We can also assist to formulate, lodge and progress a complaint for you. Alternatively, you can nominate an Authorised Representative or Advocate to do so on your behalf. If you would like to nominate an Authorised Representative and/or Advocate to make a complaint on your behalf, please authorise them during your first contact with us.

An Authorised Representative can:

- Access billing/account related information such as passwords
- Lodge faults
- Make changes to the account in any way, shape or form
- Cancel or remove any services.

An Advocate can:

- Deal with us on your behalf, but unlike an Authorised Representative, does not act as your agent nor has the authority to access any of your account information from us unless you are present to agree to such actions.

If you wish to make a complaint, please contact a Customer Service Representative via any of the following methods:

- Write to 6a Seymour St, Traralgon VIC 3844
- Email support@smartel.com.au
- In Store at 6a Seymour St, Traralgon VIC 3844
- Call us on (03) 41202000

If you are calling us from a landline, your call is charged at the local rate. Note that calling us from a mobile may be more expensive.

Acknowledgement

A Customer Service Representative will acknowledge your complaint immediately if you complained in person or over the phone, and within 2 Working Days if you lodged your complaint via email, online ticket, post or by leaving a telephone message. Once your complaint is acknowledged, we will give you a unique reference number to enable you to easily follow up on your complaint, as well as an approximate time frame for a resolution. Although our goal is to resolve your complaint during your first contact with us, unfortunately this is not always possible as we may need to investigate the matter further.

Investigation

It may take longer than 15 Working Days to investigate your complaint and, in this case, (prior to Working Day 15) we will provide you with an explanation and a new approximate timeframe. If the delay is more than 10 Working Days (and is not the result of a Mass Service Disruption) we will also inform you about your options for external dispute resolution.

Resolution

After investigation of your complaint is complete, we will advise you of the resolution as soon as practicable. Once a resolution is agreed on, we will implement all actions required to resolve the issue within 10 Working Days, unless you agree otherwise or unless you have not done something which we required you to do in order to proceed further. If requested to do so, we will also provide written confirmation of the resolution within 5 Working Days.

Monitoring Complaints

We will keep you updated with the progress of your complaint, and you may contact us by phone or email with your reference number, account name or account number.

Urgent complaints

Your complaint will be treated as urgent if:

- You have applied for being in financial hardship under our Financial Hardship Policy and the issue you are complaining about directly contributes to the Financial Hardship you are experiencing
- Your service has been disconnected or is about to be disconnected and due process has not been followed
- You are receiving Priority Assistance (e.g. because of a severe medical condition) for the service you are complaining about.

In this case, we will agree with you on how to address the issue and implement all required actions to resolve the urgent aspects within 2 Working Days. If there is a delay, we will provide you with an explanation why as well as a new approximate timeframe. If it is a longer delay, we will inform you of your options for external dispute resolution.

Closing complaints

We will only close your complaint in the following situations:

- You have consented us to do so
- You have been dissatisfied with progress or resolution or asked about your options to pursue further and have been informed of our internal escalation process and the options for external dispute resolution.
- If after careful consideration and appropriate internal escalation, we conclude that your complaint is frivolous or vexatious and that we can do nothing more to assist you, or in view of your behaviour we choose not to deal with you any further and we have informed you of the reasons and provided information on external dispute resolution. We reserve the right to then refuse any further complaints from you regarding the same or similar issues other than during an external dispute resolution process. If we have been unable to contact you to discuss your complaint, or advise of the proposed resolution, and have written to you with details of our contact attempts and invited you to contact us within 10 Working days.

Escalation

If a Customer Service Representative is unable to resolve a complaint it will be escalated to a Customer Service Manager or an appropriate alternative senior member of staff. The Customer Service Manager will review the complaint and respond within 2 Working Days to attempt to resolve the complaint.

If you inform us you are dissatisfied with the timeframes that apply to the management of your complaint, or if you request the complaint be treated as an Urgent Complaint, we will inform you of our internal prioritisation and internal escalation processes. If, after internal prioritisation and internal escalation you remain dissatisfied, we will inform you of the options for external dispute resolution.

Further options for external dispute resolution

If a Customer Service Manager is unable to resolve a complaint to your satisfaction, as a last resort we may recommend you contact the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) for independent advice. The TIO is an office of last resort and deals with complaints that consumers have not been able to resolve with their telephone or internet company after exhausting all possible avenues directly with the company.

NCTS asks that if you do have a complaint, you allow us the opportunity to resolve the issue through all possible internal resources before contacting the TIO as we have found complaints dealt with internally are resolved in a timelier manner than those mediated via the TIO. The services of the TIO are free of charge.

The TIO can be contacted via the following means:

- Telephone: 1800 062 058
- National relay service: 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 062 058
- Fax: 1800 630 614
- Write: PO Box 276 Collins Street West VIC 8007
- Online: www.tio.com.au

Alternatively, you can contact the Office of Fair Trading in your state or territory.

Please note, we will never cancel a service only because of being unable to resolve your complaint, or because you have pursued your options for external dispute resolution.

Contacting us

Please contact us as soon as possible if you are experiencing any difficulties paying for your services. You can call 03 4120 2000 between 8.30am and 5.30pm Monday to Friday if you would like to discuss any Financial Hardship matters with us.