



MAKING

A

COMPLAINT

INFORMATION ON MAKING A COMPLAINT ABOUT A VETERINARY PRACTITIONER

The Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria provides the following information regarding the way in which complaints are handled. A person may make a complaint to the Board about the professional conduct of a person who is or was, at the time the conduct took place, a registered veterinary practitioner.

Sometimes the issues, which are important to you, are not able to be addressed by the Board - for example; the Board has ***NO power under the Act to deal with complaints relating to fees or compensation***. It is not the Board's role to achieve compensation or an apology for you; rather it is to investigate a practitioner's professional conduct in providing veterinary services to animals, in order to maintain an appropriate standard for the community and the profession. The Board investigates the complaint on your behalf and you may be asked to be a witness for the Board, if the complaint results in a Formal Hearing

Complaints that fall under the control of some other Statutory Authority or an organisation given specific powers under other legislation may not be dealt with by the Board. For example:

- a. Alleged offences against the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances legislation, which is administered by the Department of Human Services; and
- b. Alleged cruelty to animals under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals legislation, which is administered by the RSPCA and/or Police and Department of Primary Industries.

To make a complaint to the Board, you need to complete the form provided, showing:

- your name,
- address,
- telephone number,
- your signature and the
- name of veterinary practitioner

(the purpose of your signature is to authorise the release of information to a third party. The Board is subject to the provisions of the *Information Privacy Act 2000*)

and provide a signed accompanying statement, setting out the facts relating to the complaint. Any relevant background history should be included as well as the details of the complaint itself and copies of supporting documentation. It is best to state facts rather than use emotive language.

If you were not the person presenting the animal to the veterinary practitioner, please provide:

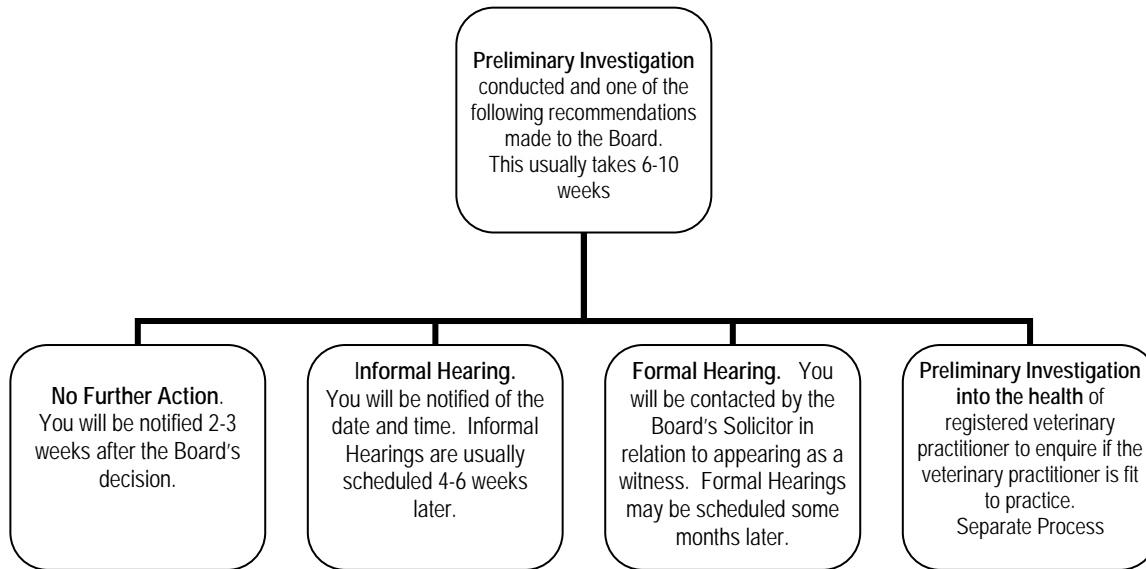
- the name and
- address under which the animal was seen by the veterinary practitioner.
- If possible, a signed statement by the person who dealt with the veterinary practitioner.

The Board may deal with anonymous enquiries. However, where all the information is not provided; it may not be possible to complete an investigation.

All statements provided by you will be sent to the veterinary practitioner so he or she is fully aware of the details of your complaint.

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLAINT FORM - COMPLETED, SIGNED AND DATED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT YOUR COMPLAINT CAN BEGIN

SUMMARY OF STEPS INVOLVED IN PROCESSING A COMPLAINT



Informal Hearing

At the conclusion of the Informal Hearing the Panel may find either the veterinary practitioner has, or has not, by act or omission engaged in unprofessional conduct which is not of a serious nature. During, or at the conclusion of an Informal Hearing, the veterinary practitioner may ask for a Formal Hearing or the Informal Hearing Panel may, before the conclusion of the Hearing, be of the opinion that a Formal Hearing should be held. If the Panel finds that the veterinary practitioner has engaged in unprofessional conduct, it may make one or more of the following determinations:-

That the veterinary practitioner:

- undergo counselling;
- undertake further education;
- be cautioned;
- be reprimanded.

If the veterinary practitioner has ceased to be registered, the Panel may make one or more of the following determinations:-

- That the person is not entitled to re-apply for registration unless the person has
 1. Undergone counselling; or
 2. Undertaken further education;
- The person be cautioned;
- That the person be reprimanded.

After an informal hearing you will be notified in writing of the Board's determination and the reasons.

Formal Hearing

If a Formal Hearing is to be held you will be notified and may be asked to attend and give evidence for the Board. The Formal Hearing is similar to a court proceeding and duly qualified legal practitioners represent the Board and the veterinary practitioner. The Complainant is not responsible for the cost of this hearing. After considering all the submissions, the Panel makes a determination that the veterinary practitioner, has or has not, by act or omission, engaged in unprofessional conduct. If the Panel finds that the veterinary practitioner has engaged in unprofessional conduct it makes one or more of the following determinations:-

- that the veterinary practitioner be required to undergo counselling;
- cautioned;
- reprimanded;
- give written undertakings;
- require further education or training;
- impose conditions, limitations or restrictions on registration;
- impose a fine;
- require costs of the hearing to be paid;
- alter or cancel endorsement as a specialist ;
- suspend registration;
- cancel registration.

Unprofessional conduct may mean all or any of the following:

- conduct of a lesser standard than that which the public or other veterinary practitioners might reasonably expect of a registered veterinary practitioner;
- professional misconduct;
- infamous conduct in a professional respect;
- providing veterinary services of a kind that are excessive, unnecessary or not reasonably required for the animal's well-being;
- a finding of guilt under an Act in law;
- influencing or attempting to influence the conduct of a veterinary practice in such a way that an animal's well-being may be compromised;
- the contravention of or failure to comply with a condition, limitation or restriction on the registration of a veterinary practitioner.

Material relating to your complaint, including correspondence with the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria, is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Information Privacy Act, 2000*. The Board will only use and disclose personal information about you for the purpose of conducting an investigation of this complaint, unless your consent has been obtained. The Board's privacy policy can be obtained from the address below or the Website at www.vetboard.vic.gov.au .

The Complaints process usually takes a minimum of three months. Resolution may take up to six months or longer depending on the level of evidence required.