

Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey 2017

Survey context

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) conducted a survey of its key stakeholders in late 2017. The purpose of the survey was to test stakeholder perceptions of the Victorian regulatory environment, reasons for dealing with the VBA and levels of satisfaction with VBA services.

The survey sought responses from samples of registered building practitioners, licensed and registered plumbing practitioners and consumers who had lodged a written complaint with the VBA in the 2016–2017 financial year. A total of 2,868 responses were received.

Qualitative results

The 2017 survey reveals that stakeholders hold varying views of the VBA. There are groups of stakeholders who are satisfied with VBA services, while others are less satisfied. Effectiveness and efficiency were identified as common themes.

Stakeholders made several suggestions beyond VBA control, such as resolving disputes through VCAT and handling insurance matters. Changing building laws and regulations were also recommended by stakeholders.

There were concerns about non-registered practitioners performing illegal building work, with stakeholders urging the VBA to audit and inspect such work. Suggestions such as “registration of all trades” and “have two or three years of probationary periods for new practitioners” were also made.

Stakeholders have emphasised the need to improve processing times for licensing, registration or renewal applications. Other suggestions, such as improving consistency of information and increasing skills, were also proposed.

Key observations from the results

Satisfaction with the VBA and its staff members

1. Around two thirds of practitioners were **satisfied with their contact with the VBA** (57% to 69% satisfaction, depending on the measure). This result is in line with the 2016 survey results.
2. Consumers who were involved in a complaints process seemed **less satisfied with their contact with the VBA** (29% to 64% dissatisfaction, depending on the measure).
3. Over two thirds of plumbing and building practitioners were **satisfied with the staff they had contact with** (66% to 79%, depending on the measure). Consumers were less satisfied than practitioners (9% to 42% dissatisfaction, depending on the measure).
4. Almost half of the consumers surveyed **understood the outcome of the complaints process and its reasons** (54% plumbing consumers and 48% building consumers), regardless of their satisfaction level about the results.
5. On average, about one third of practitioners surveyed lacked confidence in the VBA across various measures. This result is driven, in part, by concerns that there was a lack of support and information to help practitioners with compliance matters, as well as a lack of enforcement of building and plumbing regulations.
6. One third of building practitioners (35%) **were aware of recent changes to the *Building Act 1993* and the Building Regulations**, with 59% partially aware and 7% unaware. Only 11% of building practitioners were not confident these recent changes would minimise non-compliance.

7. The VBA **Technical Advice Line** (TAL) was used by more than half of plumbing practitioners (56%), but less than half of building practitioners (40%) in the 12 months prior to the survey. Two thirds of those who used the TAL were satisfied with the service (68% of plumbing practitioners and 66% of building practitioners). The TAL is seen as valuable by 88% of plumbing practitioners and 84% of building practitioners. A small proportion of plumbing and building practitioners were not confident with the accuracy of information provided (10% and 7% respectively).
8. **Less than half of consumers were aware they could use the VBA website to check the registration of a builder or the licence/registration of a plumber** (52% of building consumers and 44% of plumbing consumers). Around 35% of building consumers were aware they could use the VBA website to check the disciplinary record of a building practitioner.

Survey recommendations

1. Continue to engage with, and communicate the VBA's role to, stakeholders and the community.
2. Engage practitioners by using more appropriate communications channels and seeking input into the redesign of processes.
3. Establish better pathways within the VBA to reduce barriers and improve both timeliness and the simplicity of processes.
4. Continue to run a redesigned modular survey to collect core satisfaction data (for long-term trends) and test optional modules on aspects of the VBA's work that have improved.
5. Improve information on the consumer complaints process, including the number of contacts, reasons for contact and outcomes.

Actions underway

The results of this survey have informed the VBA Corporate Plan for 2018–22, which maps out the steps the VBA will take in the next four years. Strengthening our relationship with stakeholders is a key focus, while a redesign of processes is already underway.

In addition to maintaining a central focus on the safety of the community we serve, the VBA will continue to improve upon how we deliver our regulatory objectives and provide services to our stakeholders. Some initiatives currently underway include:

- enhancing the customer experience with the VBA and enshrining our commitment in a new Customer Service Charter;
- implementing legislative reforms designed to enhance consumer protection and strengthen the regulatory framework for both the plumbing and building industries;
- redesigning our end-to-end processes for the registration and licensing of practitioners and the management of complaints and practitioner discipline;
- working closely with co-regulators and industry partners to enhance our intelligence-led, risk-based regulatory approach, while reducing the administration burden across building regulators; and
- enhancing the VBA's outcomes framework to improve the measurement and visibility of the VBA's performance.