

Stakeholder Confidence Survey 2016

July 2017

Summary

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) undertook a survey of its key stakeholders and members of the community in late 2016, to gain an understanding of their views and expectations. The VBA undertook the stakeholder survey directly and engaged a commercial provider to undertake the online survey of the general Victorian population.

The aim of the survey was to gauge participants' knowledge of the role of the VBA, their trust and confidence in the Victorian regulatory environment, their reasons for dealing with the VBA, their chosen means of contact and their level of satisfaction with VBA services and staff.

Two distinct groups were surveyed, VBA and industry stakeholders (n=1434) and members of the general Victorian public (n=2002).

The survey comprised a combination of fixed-response items (e.g., *strongly agree to strongly disagree*) to rate satisfaction and confidence, and open-response items to allow free text comments and opinions. These items have produced quantitative and qualitative findings.

The method and survey questions were developed following a review of similar perception research undertaken by other regulatory bodies such as the Australian Taxation Office. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guide to measuring regulatory performance '*A practitioner's guide to perception surveys*' (2012) was also considered.

Understanding how the VBA is understood by its stakeholders is an important step to improving and prioritising its stakeholder engagement activities to build confidence in the VBA's work.

Detailed information about the sample characteristics for the survey is at Appendix A, and detailed quantitative results on service quality are at Appendix B.

The next survey is scheduled for late 2017

Qualitative Results

Respondents provided a very broad range of views about the VBA, which at times was linked to a perceived lack of effectiveness and efficiency in the broader plumbing and building regulatory landscape. These included views about matters that outside the scope of the VBA's regulatory responsibility, such as court processes for resolving disputes and broader systemic issues and role clarity between private and public surveyors and the VBA in enforcement matters.

Stakeholders hold strong opinions about the speed and efficiency of the VBA and building and plumbing regulatory system. Response times and the quality (usually around consistency) of information were common themes, with many suggestions focusing on these issues. Suggestions also centered on the importance of sufficient staffing levels. This is despite stakeholders reporting relatively high levels of satisfaction with VBA staff in the quantitative survey items.

Key observations from the results

Results were reasonably good (50% to 60%) for contact management, with room to improve. This was particularly the case for accuracy and consistency of information and outcome of complaints contact for stakeholders and complainants.

Results about satisfaction with staff were good (>60%).

The following points can be observed from the results as a basis for further action by the VBA:

- Unsatisfactory contacts are associated with less favourable opinions about the VBA's effectiveness, fairness and engagement with the community;
- People who have been involved in a complaint process tend to be dissatisfied; and
- Positive contacts may improve perceptions of fairness and community engagement.

Actions currently underway

- The VBA is reviewing the complaints process from end to end to determine what is effective, what is not and where improvements can be made to the overall system.
- Reviewing its customer service unit to identify efficiency gains and methods of improving the customer experience.
- Implementing the legislative reforms designed to enhance consumer protection and strengthening the regulatory framework.
- Releasing data related to plumbing activities in a more systematic fashion through the VBA website.
- Identifying opportunities to improve VBA interaction with industry by identifying areas of regulation requiring greater clarity for practitioners, for example, establishing working groups.

APPENDIX A – Sample characteristics

Surveying stakeholders

A total of 11,131 emails were sent to building and plumbing practitioners, industry bodies and users of VBA services.

- The overall response rate was 12.9%, providing a sample of 1434 participants (rates typically seen in the marketing industry sit around 10%).
- Approximately three-quarters of the sample were engaged in the building (n=521, 36% of participants) or the plumbing industry (n=452, 32%).
- The next largest group was of consumers—users of VBA services who had been involved in a complaint process (n=249, 18%). Most were plumbing complaints (n=203, 14%), the remainder were building complaints (n=46, 3%).
- Subscribers to the VBA email newsletter (n=212) made up about 15% of the sample and were a mix of plumbing practitioners, building practitioners, owner-builders and consumers. The ‘other’ component in this and other sub-groups consisted of architects, engineers, designers and professional or industry bodies.

SAMPLE	STAKEHOLDER GROUP	EMAILS SENT	RESPONSES	RESPONSE RATE
Practitioners	Building	4,180	521	12.5%
	Plumbing	4,365	452	10.4%
Consumers	Building complaints	251	46	18.3%
	Plumbing complaints	732	203	27.7%
Stakeholders	VBA Mail subscribers	1,603	212	13.2%

Sampling the Victorian public

A commercial provider hosted an online survey of the general Victorian population. The largest group in the sample of 2002 participants was aged between 30 and 49 years (38%) and two-thirds of the sample (67%) were aged between 30 and 64 years. Other characteristics included:

- Slightly more than half lived in Melbourne (51%) with the remainder in regional (30%) or rural Victoria (18%).
- More than half (53%) had within the past 10 years built, renovated or extended a house, flat or unit (46%) and/or a shed or garage (12%) or other structure (2%).
- The great majority of the sample who had contact with the VBA were consumers (86%); only 1% were builders or plumbers, although 8% described themselves as owner-builders.
- Five per cent of participants had contact with the VBA at some time (n=99), most within the previous 12 months (57%). The main reason for contact was seeking information or technical advice on building or plumbing regulations (39%) or as part of an audit or inspection (21%).

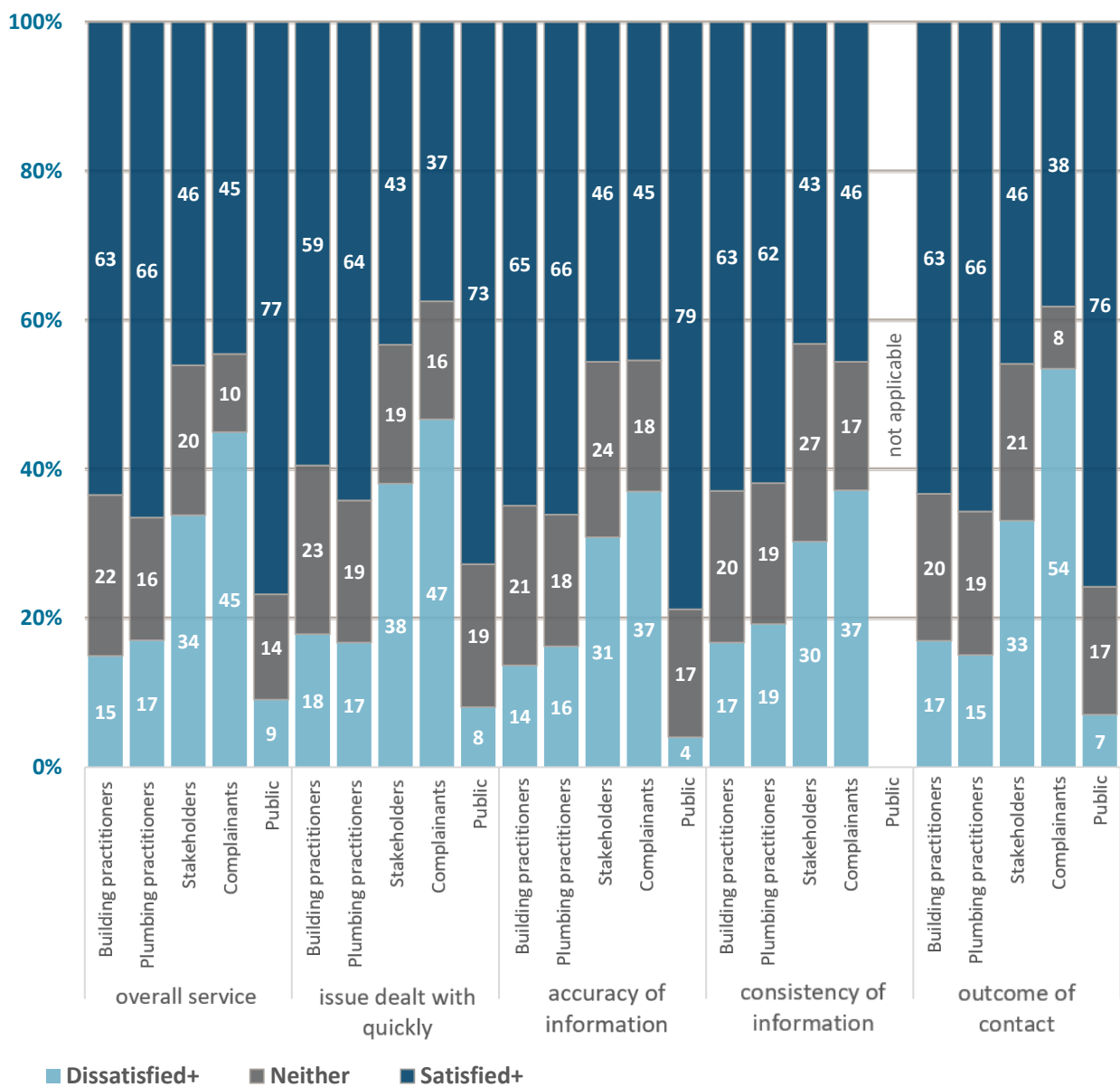
- One in eight (13%) had contact with the VBA as part of a complaint process. The small size of this sample warrants caution in interpreting results about satisfaction with VBA service and participants' experience of VBA staff.

APPENDIX B – Detailed results on service quality

Satisfaction with service

Stakeholders were asked to rate their satisfaction with the service they received in their most recent contact with the VBA. On a five-point scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). This figure illustrates the breakdown by group. Note that the public were asked to rate the quality of information, rather than accuracy and consistency separately.

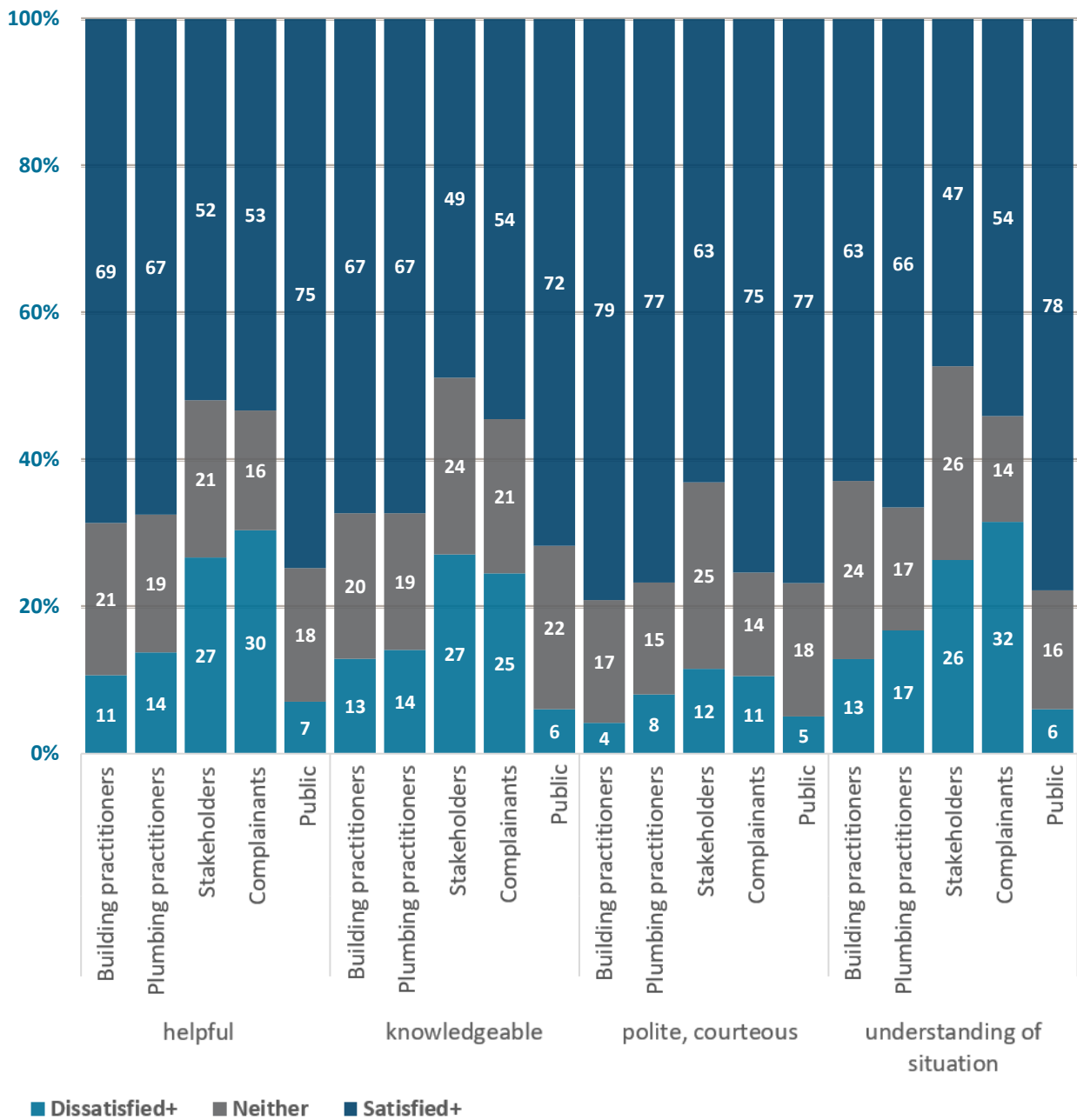
Graph 1 Satisfaction with Recent Contact with the VBA



Satisfaction with staff

Stakeholders were asked to rate their satisfaction with the staff during their most recent contact with the VBA. On a five-point scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). This figure illustrates the breakdown by group.

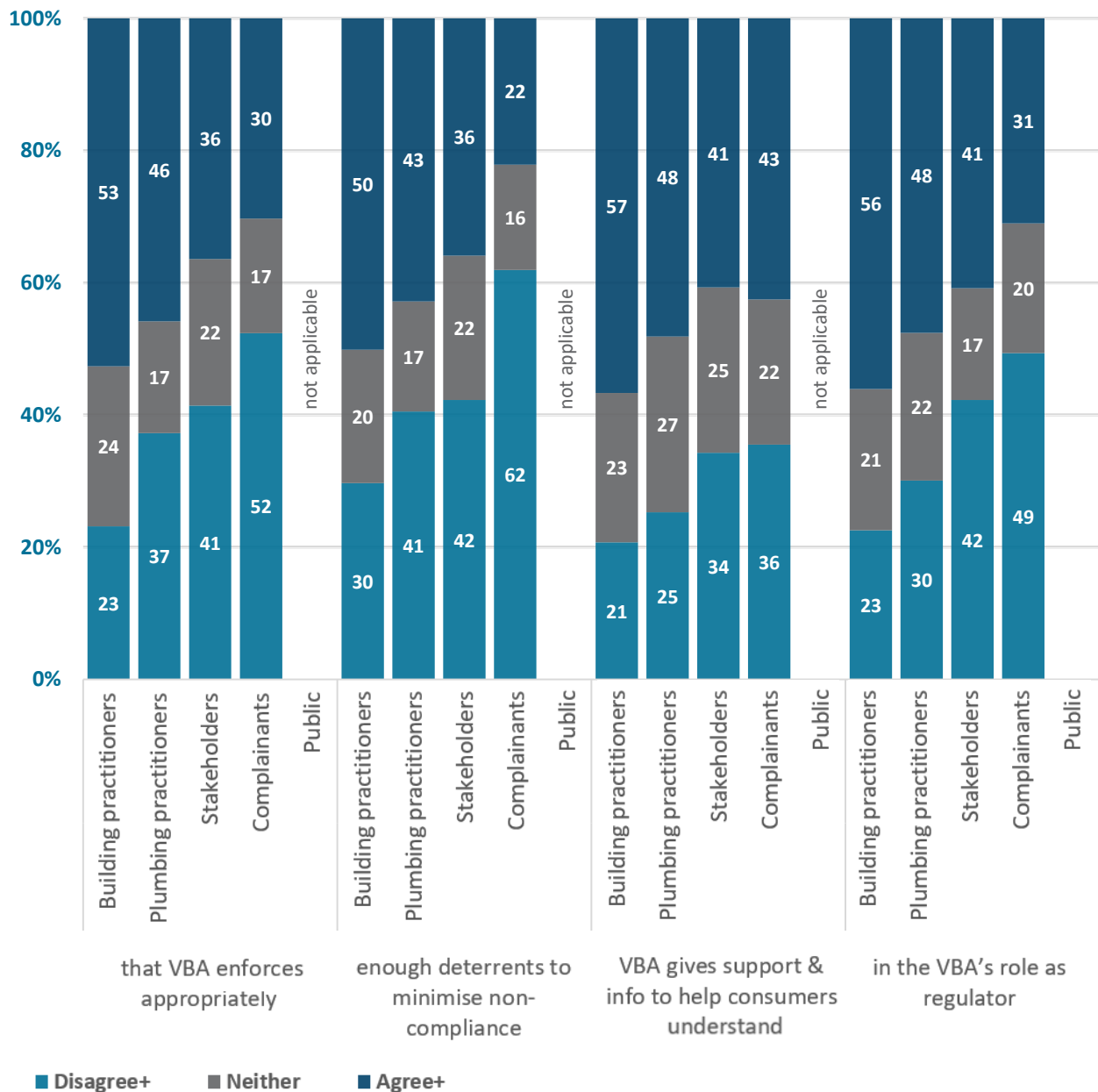
Graph 2 Satisfaction with Staff



Confidence in the VBA

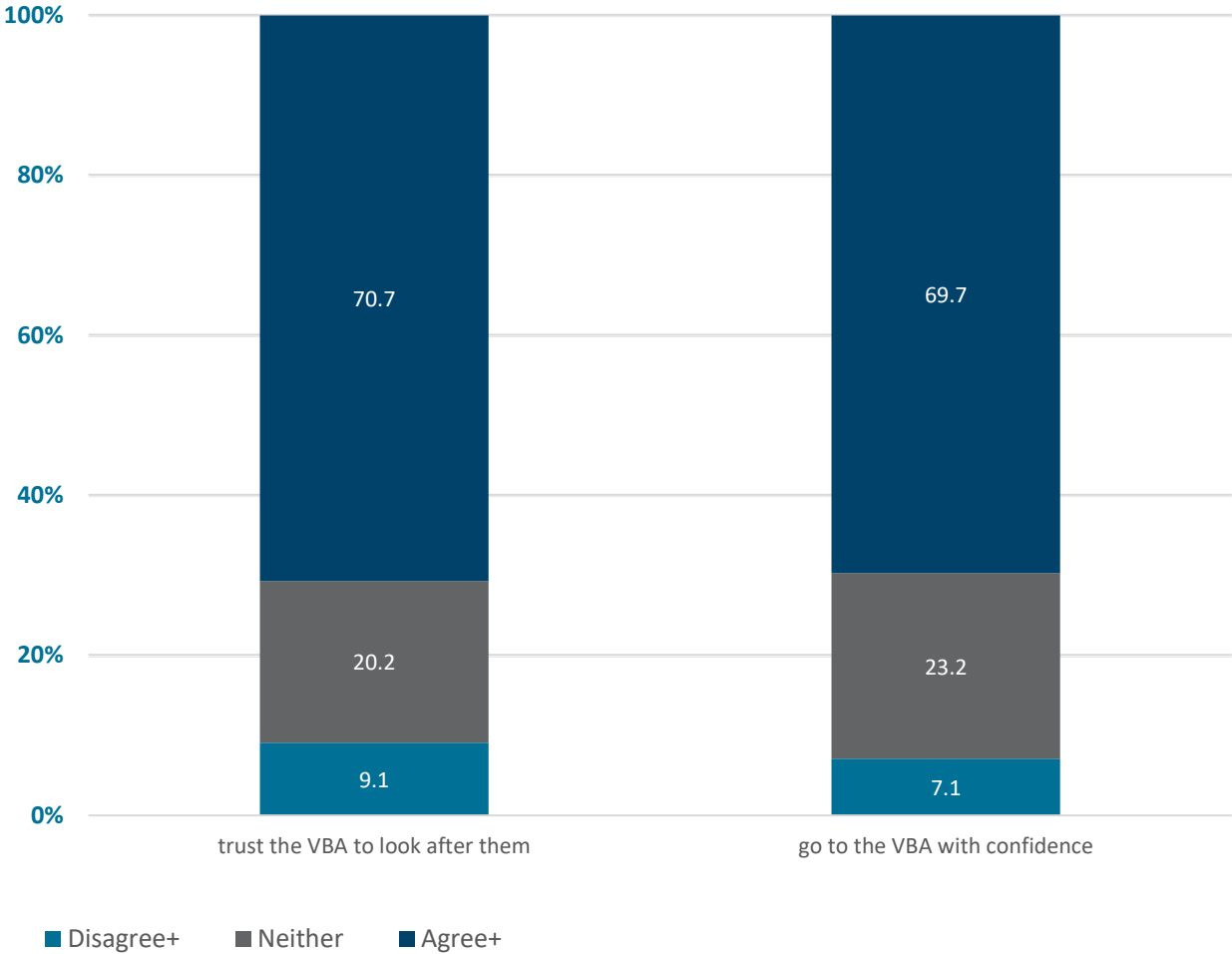
Stakeholders were asked to rate their confidence with the VBA and the Regulations on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree¹. This figure illustrates the breakdown by group.

Graph 3 Confidence in the VBA



¹ Note that the public were asked to rate their confidence with the VBA in a more general sense

Graph 4 Experience of public who have had contact with the VBA



Victorian Building Authority

Online

vba.vic.gov.au

Email

customerservice@vba.vic.gov.au

Postal Address

PO Box 536 Melbourne, Victoria 3001

Telephone 1300 815 127

Monday to Friday

from 8.30am to 5.00pm