

Professional Standard 10

Australian Valuation & Auction Standard:
Customer Complaints Handling

Version 1.0 – July 2026

Auctioneers & Valuers Association of Australia
Reference: 4.27.10

Introduction

The Auctioneers and Valuers Association of Australia (AVAA) is committed to strengthening professionalism, integrity, and public confidence across the valuation and auction sectors. This *AVAA Professional Standard* forms part of a broader framework designed to support consistent practice, ethical conduct, and accountability across the diverse services provided by members.

Professional standards play an important role in defining expectations for those who hold themselves out as skilled practitioners. They establish clear principles for conduct, competence, and responsibility, helping practitioners, clients, and regulators understand the level of professionalism that should reasonably be expected in the marketplace.

Complaints, disputes, and allegations concerning professional services can have significant implications for valuers, auctioneers, clients, consumers, insurers, regulators, financiers, courts, and the broader reputation of the valuation and auction sectors. Professional valuation and auction practice therefore requires appropriate processes for the fair, transparent, and timely handling of complaints arising in connection with professional services.

This Professional Standard establishes principles governing the receipt, assessment, management, and resolution of complaints involving valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members. The Standard is intended to support professional accountability, procedural fairness, consumer confidence, and appropriate complaints management while recognising that the existence of a complaint does not, of itself, establish misconduct, negligence, liability, or breach of professional standards.

This standard has been developed through consultation with practitioners and informed by regulatory frameworks, industry experience, and evolving client and government expectations. It is intended to provide practical guidance while reinforcing the importance of transparency, diligence, and professional judgement in everyday practice.

Those holding the AVAA Certified Valuer (CVAU) and the AVAA Certified Auctioneer (CAAU) credentials, plus AVAA Corporate Members, apply this Professional Standard to demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and professional accountability. In doing so, they contribute to a stronger and trusted sector where valuers are recognised not only for their expertise but also for the integrity and reliability of their work.

Troy R Williams FAIM MAICD
AVAA Chief Executive

July 2026



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PS10 Customer Complaints Handling

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Australian Valuation & Auction Standard PS10 Customer Complaints Handling

Title —

AVAA Professional Standard 10 – Customer Complaints Handling

Purpose —

The purpose of this Professional Standard is to establish principles for the fair, transparent, timely, and professional handling of complaints arising in connection with valuation and auction services.

This Professional Standard promotes accountability, procedural fairness, professional communication, consumer confidence, and appropriate record keeping while recognising the importance of protecting both client interests and the legitimate interests of valuers, auctioneers, and businesses providing professional service.

Scope —

This Professional Standard applies to the handling, assessment, management, and resolution of complaints relating to valuation and auction services.

Application —

This Professional Standard applies to all individuals holding the AVAA Certified Valuer (CVAU) credential, the AVAA Certified Auctioneer (CAAU) credential, and AVAA Corporate Members providing valuation and / or auction services.

Standard —

1. Principles Of Professional Conduct

- 1.1 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members must conduct themselves professionally, courteously, honestly, and respectfully when responding to client concerns or complaints.
- 1.2 Complaints should be considered fairly, objectively, and in good faith, having regard to the information reasonably available.
- 1.3 The existence of a complaint does not, of itself, establish negligence, misconduct, wrongdoing, liability, or breach of a Professional Standard, the *AVAA Code of Ethics for Individual Members*, or the *AVAA Code of Practice for Corporate Members*.
- 1.4 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members are entitled to procedural fairness when responding to complaints concerning their professional services.
- 1.5 Complaints handling processes should support transparency, reasonable communication, professional accountability, and efficient resolution of disputes where reasonably practicable.

2. Complaints Must Be In Writing

- 2.1 Complaints should be made in writing by the complainant.
- 2.2 Written complaints should clearly identify:
 - a. the name and contact details of the complainant.
 - b. the relevant valuation, auction, transaction, or engagement.

- c. the nature of the complaint.
 - d. the outcome sought by the complainant where applicable.
 - e. relevant documents or supporting information relied upon.
- 2.3 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members may request that verbal complaints be provided in writing before a formal complaints handling process is commenced.
- 2.4 A valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member is not required to treat abusive, threatening, vexatious, anonymous, or frivolous communications as a formal complaint.

3. Acknowledgement And Initial Assessment

- 3.1 Receipt of a written complaint should be acknowledged within a reasonable period.
- 3.2 Following receipt of a complaint, the valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member should undertake a preliminary assessment of:
 - a. the issues raised.
 - b. whether further information is required.
 - c. whether the complaint relates to the professional services provided.
 - d. whether legal, regulatory, insurance, or professional conduct issues may arise.
- 3.3 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members may seek independent legal, insurance, technical, or professional advice before responding substantively to a complaint.

4. Complaints Handling Process

- 4.1 Complaints should be assessed having regard to:
 - a. the engagement terms and instructions.
 - b. the information available at the time the services were provided.
 - c. applicable professional standards.
 - d. supporting records and documentation.
 - e. relevant legislative and regulatory obligations.
 - f. the circumstances surrounding the engagement.
- 4.2 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members should maintain reasonable communication with the complainant during the complaints handling process where reasonably practicable.
- 4.3 A valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member may decline to continue dealing with a complainant where:
 - a. the complainant engages in abusive, threatening, or unreasonable conduct.
 - b. the complaint is frivolous, vexatious, or lacking substantive basis.
 - c. the matter becomes the subject of legal proceedings or regulatory investigation.
 - d. legal or insurance advisers recommend that communications be limited or managed differently.
- 4.4 Nothing in this Professional Standard prevents a valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member from denying allegations, disputing claims, or defending their professional work where appropriate.
- 4.5 Where a complaint has been referred to a court, tribunal, fair trading authority, consumer affairs body, ombudsman, regulator, or other competent jurisdiction,

the valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member may elect to suspend or limit its internal complaints handling process pending the determination or progression of that external process.

- 4.6 During any suspension period referred to in clause 4.5, the valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member should retain appropriate records relating to the complaint and may continue communications where reasonably necessary for legal, insurance, regulatory, or procedural purposes.
- 4.7 Suspension of an internal complaints handling process under clause 4.5 does not constitute an admission of liability, wrongdoing, or acceptance of the allegations raised by the complainant.

5. Resolution Of Complaints

- 5.1 Where a complaint is substantiated or partially substantiated, the valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member should consider reasonable steps to address the issue.
- 5.2 Resolution measures may include:
 - a. providing additional information or clarification.
 - b. correcting factual errors.
 - c. reviewing procedures or practices.
 - d. undertaking further professional review.
 - e. offering reasonable remedial action where appropriate.
- 5.3 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members are not required to agree to unreasonable demands, admissions of liability, or outcomes unsupported by the available evidence.
- 5.4 Complaints should be finalised within a reasonable timeframe having regard to the complexity of the issues involved.

6. Record Keeping

- 6.1 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members should maintain reasonable records relating to complaints received and their resolution.
- 6.2 Records may include:
 - a. the written complaint.
 - b. correspondence and communications.
 - c. file notes and internal records.
 - d. documents reviewed during the assessment process.
 - e. actions taken in response to the complaint.
 - f. the outcome of the complaints handling process.
- 6.3 Complaints records should be retained for a reasonable period consistent with legal obligations, insurance requirements, and professional practice needs.

7. Relationship With AVAA Complaints Processes

- 7.1 This Professional Standard is intended to support the fair and efficient resolution of complaints directly between the complainant and the valuer, auctioneer, or corporate member in the first instance.
- 7.2 Except where exceptional circumstances exist, customer complaints should first be raised directly with the relevant member and a reasonable opportunity provided for the complaint to be considered and addressed under the complaints handling process established by this Professional Standard.

- 7.3 Except where exceptional circumstances exist, AVAA may decline to consider or progress a complaint under the *AVAA Code of Ethics for Individual Members*, the *AVAA Code of Practice for Corporate Members*, or a Professional Standard until the member's complaints handling process established under this Professional Standard has been reasonably followed and exhausted.
- 7.4 In determining whether to accept, investigate, defer, or otherwise deal with a complaint, AVAA may take into consideration whether:
- the complaint was first raised directly with the relevant member or corporate member.
 - the member or corporate member was provided with a reasonable opportunity to respond.
 - reasonable efforts were made to resolve the matter directly.
 - the complaints handling process established under this Professional Standard was reasonably followed.
- 7.5 Nothing in this Professional Standard prevents:
- a person exercising legal rights.
 - the making of reports to regulatory authorities.
 - notification of insurers.
 - the obtaining of independent legal advice.
 - AVAA considering matters involving serious allegations of misconduct, consumer harm, dishonesty, or conduct capable of adversely affecting public confidence in the profession.
- 7.6 AVAA retains discretion regarding whether a complaint will be accepted, investigated, referred, deferred, or otherwise dealt with under the *AVAA Code of Ethics for Individual Members* or the *AVAA Code of Practice for Corporate Members*.

8. Professional Standards And Consumer Confidence

- 8.1 Proper complaints handling forms part of professional and ethical practice.
- 8.2 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members should seek to maintain public confidence in the professionalism, integrity, accountability, and transparency of the valuation and auction sectors.
- 8.3 Complaints handling processes should appropriately balance:
- the interests of consumers in having complaints properly considered.
 - the rights of valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members to fair treatment.
 - the importance of maintaining confidence in professional services and professional standards.

9. Prohibited Conduct

- 9.1 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members must not knowingly provide false, misleading, or deceptive information when responding to a complaint.
- 9.2 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members must not improperly destroy, conceal, alter, or withhold relevant records relating to a complaint.
- 9.3 Valuers, auctioneers, and corporate members must not improperly intimidate, victimise, or threaten a complainant in connection with the making of a complaint.

10. Failure To Comply

- 10.1 Failure to comply with this Professional Standard itself constitutes conduct capable of consideration under the *AVAA Code of Ethics for Individual Members*, the *AVAA Code of Practice for Corporate Members*.

Status & Review —

AVAA Board Approval:	30 July 2026
Periodic Review Due:	5 Years after approval





The **Auctioneers and Valuers Association of Australia (AVAA)** is the leading national body representing professional auctioneers and valuers across a diverse range of specialties, including fine art and antiques, rare coins and books, motor vehicles, aviation and marine, household items and office machinery, plant and equipment, to memorabilia and collectables.

Our Vision

As the peak body for auctioneers and valuers in Australia, AVAA upholds the highest professional and ethical standards through education, advocacy, and leadership.

Our Mission

To support and represent Australia's auctioneers and valuers through rigorous standards, ethical leadership, quality education, and credible advocacy, ensuring trust, professionalism, and future-readiness in a changing world.

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