



**Victorian  
Small Business  
Commission**

# **AVOID, DE-ESCALATE AND RESOLVE DISPUTES**

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# Resolving disputes since 2003

The Victorian Small Business Commission delivers impartial low-cost dispute resolution services for small business.

During FY2023-24:

1,795 applications for assistance

34% were resolved prior to mediation

408 mediations held

75% were successful



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# Most common dispute causes

During Financial Year 2023-24 the most common causes of business disputes included:

- Unpaid money – 41%
- Contractual rights – 12%
- Commercial (non-retail) leases – 9%
- Quality of goods or services – 8%
- Undelivered goods or services – 6%



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# Tips to avoid disputes

- Know who you are doing business with
- Adopt e-invoicing systems
- Written agreements/quotes
- Seek legal advice on contracts
- Document any concerns about goods and services and communicate them promptly



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# HOW YOU CAN DE-ESCALATE OR RESOLVE A DISPUTE YOURSELF

# Focus upon the facts of the matter

- **Collect all relevant documents and details** of the dispute – dates, photos, written agreements, the lease etc.
- Highlight **what's most relevant**
- Think about the **outcome you want** and the **compromises you're prepared to make**



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# Set yourself up to communicate clearly

- Pick the right time and place – for you and the other party
- Contact the other party, explain the problem, **suggest ways to solve it.**
- Listen and **try to see things from their perspective**, even if it's difficult to do so
- **Keep all communication in writing**
- Issue a **formal letter** if discussion doesn't work
- If you can't reach an agreement, consider seeking assistance from the VSBC.



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# WHERE TO SEEK ASSISTANCE



# Assistance is available

Small business owners can apply for the VSBC's assistance at [vsbc.vic.gov.au](https://vsbc.vic.gov.au)

1. Our Dispute Resolution Officers initially contact both parties and attempt to resolve the matter. This is a free service.
2. If mediation is necessary, the VSBC appoints an impartial mediator who brings the parties together online to seek an agreement. This costs each party \$300 for a half day.



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