



Servants Community Housing Limited

ABN: 86 623 370 034

Complaints and Appeals Policy

Purpose

Servants Community Housing is committed to having a consistent, systematic approach to managing and monitoring feedback on its services and its decisions. This policy outlines the way in which Servants manages complaints and appeals about the decisions we have made.

We aim to provide an excellent standard of service in all areas of our operations. We recognise however that there will be occasions when prospective residents, current residents, and others significantly affected by Servants' operations may wish to comment on or complain about an aspect of our service. As per the Victorian Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities, we want to promote and protect the values of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. We appreciate any feedback that people choose to provide and aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner.

The purpose of the Servants Complaints and Appeals policy is to:

- Give prospective and current residents the right to complain and appeal
- Make it easy for prospective and current residents to exercise that right
- Ensure that all complaints and appeals are logged
- Ensure that prospective and current residents are given timely feedback on their complaint and/or appeal
- Help us review what is and is not working well in our organisation

Definitions

Grievance – a term used before an issue becomes a complaint. This term may be applied where a broader policy issue is the subject of the complaint. These issues are not dealt with within a complaints management context but are still noted and addressed by staff members as deemed most appropriate.

For example, not enjoying a particular dinner dish.

Complaint – a written expression of dissatisfaction with a specific aspect of services where the complainant is unhappy with the standard or type of service and requests a changed outcome.

For the purposes of this policy, complaints will cover rental housing issues including matters related to the application for housing, tenancy agreement, rent, tenure, repairs, the condition of the property and disturbances about peaceful enjoyment of the house.

Appeal - an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision that has been made.

For example, being ineligible for housing.

Policy

Servants Community Housing acknowledges that errors, misunderstandings, client dissatisfaction and unexpected problems occur in all systems and services. Effective grievance, complaint and appeal handling enable us to intervene before a problem becomes worse, provide a review process for complaints and appeals by residents who have been disadvantaged by a Servants action or decision and maintain positive relationships between Servants and our residents.

Any resident or someone acting on their behalf has the right to lodge a complaint or appeal about services or how they are delivered. We are committed to managing complaints and appeals fairly, consistently and efficiently. We will also monitor specific areas of our service delivery by providing opportunities for residents to provide feedback.

Sources of complaints

According to the Housing Registrar:

Complaints to registered housing agencies and to the Housing Registrar can come from a number of sources, for instance:

- A prospective or current resident.
- A neighbour of a property managed by a registered agency.
- Members of parliament.
- A member of the public who has been involved in some way with Servants Community Housing.
- A housing advocate authorised to act on behalf of a prospective or current resident.

Addressing grievances

The staff member who received the grievance is encouraged to resolve it where the issue can easily be resolved.

Addressing complaints

All complaints will be raised and discussed at the weekly management meeting with staff members and where the Tenancy Manager and CEO will provide their insight. The staff member(s) and senior SCH staff will attempt to find a suitable and fair solution, with an aim to achieving tenant satisfaction within 14 days. The CEO may approve policy changes to address complaints.

Giving feedback

Within 14 days of a complaint being logged, the staff member(s) will follow up the complaint with complainant. If the complainant is not satisfied at this time, the staff member will explain any limitations that prevented a solution being found. If the complaint is likely to turn into a dispute, a minuted meeting may be called with a resident's support worker or advocate and other staff members to help reach a resolution. The CEO may also elect to use the services of the Disputes Settlement Centre of Victoria.

Appeals process

Residents have access to and are made aware of 'Rooming Houses: A guide for residents, owners and managers' which provides options for taking a complaint to VCAT or other bodies in order for it to be resolved. Servants is committed to ensuring this happens rarely.

Role of the Housing Registrar

In accordance with the Housing Act 1983, if a complaint referred to Servants by prospective or current resident is not resolved within 30 days, or if the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome, the complainant may refer the complaint to the Housing Registrar for investigation. The Registrar may issue directions to Servants to take specific actions to resolve the issue, or to minimise the chance of the complaint occurring again. The Registrar can be contacted directly on 9096 9835 or housingregistrar@dtf.vic.gov.au

Neighbours

If you are a neighbour of a house operated by Servants Community Housing and would like to make a complaint, please view our Neighbour Policy.

How to lodge a complaint to Servants?

A complaint may be made to any of the following:

- A phone call to the Servants Main Office 03 9819 6073
- A letter to Servants Main Office, 36 Barton St, Hawthorn, Vic 3122
- An email to the Servants Board via the secretary at secretary@servants.org.au.
- An email to the CEO at ceo@servants.org.au.

Related policies

Allocation Policy

Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy

Eligibility Policy

Inspection Policy

Maintenance and Repairs Policy

Neighbour Policy

Resident Transfer Policy

Legislation and standards

This policy implements the obligations of Servants under:

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Guidelines for Registered Housing Agencies published by DFFH
<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/guidelines-registered-housing-agencies>
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on the Servants Community Housing website

<https://www.servants.org.au/policies-procedures/>

Review

This policy was written in April 2019. It was reviewed in July 2022. It is rescheduled for review in July 2023.