



## 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

**Complaint** - an 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.

**Grievance** - another term sometimes used to describe 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.

## **Policy**

Servants Community Housing acknowledges that errors, misunderstandings, client dissatisfaction and unexpected problems occur in all systems and services. Effective 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 simple complaints***

The staff member who received the complaint is encouraged to resolve it, and record so in the log, where the issue can easily be resolved.

### ***Addressing more complex complaints***

Where resolving a complaint may cause inequity between residents, break our policies or is outside of budget, it will be discussed at the weekly management meeting. The staff member(s) will attempt to find a solution within these constraints, 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@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:housingregistrar@dhs.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](#).

## **Related policies**

[Allocation Policy](#)

[Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

[Eligibility Policy](#)

[Inspections 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 DHHS](#)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies

## **Transparency and accessibility**

This policy will be available on the Servants Community Housing website [www.servants.org.au/policy](http://www.servants.org.au/policy).

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## **Review**

This policy was written in April, 2019. It is rescheduled for review in April, 2021.