

# Complaints Policy

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## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Housing Trust will manage complaints received from applicants, tenants and other external stakeholders.

## Definition

For the purpose of this policy a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction relating to the quality of Housing Trust's products, services or conduct where a response or resolution is expected.

## Scope

This policy does not apply to:

1. Decisions which may be appealed. *Refer to Housing Trust's Appeals Policy.*
2. Complaints relating to neighbour disputes, anti-social behaviour, nuisance or annoyance. *Refer to Housing Trust's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.*

## Policy

- All applicants, tenants and external stakeholders have a right to lodge a complaint and will not be disadvantaged or penalised for doing so.
- Housing Trust will adopt a transparent and objective approach in receiving, investigating and responding to complaints.
- Housing Trust will use the outcomes and learning from complaints in our continuous improvement approach to service delivery.
- Housing Trust welcomes the involvement of a tenant advocate or support person at any point in the complaints process.
- Any service complaints received by the Board will be redirected to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for action in terms of this policy.

## Lodging a Complaint

A complaint may be lodged verbally to a staff member, by email, by letter, by telephone, in person at the Housing Trust office or by completing the Housing Trust's complaint form.

The complaint form is available by visiting <http://www.housingtrust.org.au> or by contacting our office.

Complaints received in writing will be formally acknowledged by the Housing Trust in writing within three (3) working days of receipt.

## **Recording of Complaints**

All complaints will be recorded in Housing Trust's electronic Complaints Register.

Complaints will be treated as confidential, unless information is required or authorised to be disclosed by law or unless the complainant consents to the disclosure. Complaints will only be discussed with employees as required for the purpose of investigating the complaint.

Serious complaints about Housing Trust employees will be treated as confidential, referred to management for investigation, and records kept in the employee's personnel file

## **Investigating Complaints**

All complaints will be investigated by a Team Leader, Manager, Executive Manager or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as appropriate.

Any complaints received about the CEO or a Director will be referred to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors. The Chairperson will determine the most appropriate course of action, including whether referral to the Registrar of Community Housing is warranted.

The process of investigating and reviewing a complaint may take up to twenty-eight (28) working days from the date of receipt. If a delay is likely to occur, Housing Trust will notify the complainant of the expected timeframe and reasons for this.

Any investigation undertaken by Housing Trust will be conducted in a transparent and objective manner. All available facts, data and information will be considered to ensure our complaint resolution or response is based on sound evidence

## **Corruption**

If a complaint involves allegations of corrupt conduct, the matter will be referred to the CEO. All such information will be treated in a confidential manner.

## **Responding to Complaints**

Upon completion of the investigation Housing Trust will notify the complainant in writing. This correspondence will include the reason(s) for any decision made.

If the matter falls within the jurisdiction of the NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), the complainant will be informed immediately of any time limits that apply to making an application to have the matter heard and where they can seek advice or assistance.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response provided the complainant will be advised that they are able to seek an external review and will be referred to relevant services for this purpose.

## Other Avenues

Lodging a formal complaint with the Housing Trust does not deny a person their right to follow any other avenues for complaint. The National Regulatory System for Community Housing fact sheet gives details on how to make a complaint about a Community Housing Provider. [http://www.nrsch.gov.au/news\\_and\\_events/complaints-handling-fact-sheets](http://www.nrsch.gov.au/news_and_events/complaints-handling-fact-sheets)

## Feedback

Housing Trust may seek feedback from complainants on their experience of the complaints process. Any feedback received will be used to guide service improvement

## Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Housing Trust may modify or limit contact with a complainant where the complainant's behaviour has been identified as unreasonable. Modified or limited communication with a complainant will be implemented to protect the health and safety of workers and to ensure that Housing Trust resources are distributed fairly among tenants, applicants and other stakeholders.

The decision to reinstate full communication will be reviewed at the request of the complainant.

## Reference or Related Documents

### Internal Documents

1. Form 106002 Complainant/Witness Incident Report
2. Complaints Register
3. Appeals Policy
4. Antisocial Behaviour Policy
5. Privacy Policy

### External Documents

1. Housing Act 2010

## Policy Version Control

Version	Details of Improvements	Release Date	Approval/Release Details
V 1.0	Original policy in Housing Trust's Policy Manual 2009	2009	
V 2.0	Reviewed Policy	07.09.2017	Approved for release by GM:C&C
V 3.0	Reviewed and updated in line with the current Housing Act 2001 dated 01.07.18 and HT current business practices.	22.08.2018	Approved for release by Amanda Winks Chief Housing Officer