

HOT48 Client / Tenant Complaints and Appeals Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all YWCA Housing clients and prospective clients are aware of their right to make a complaint about YWCA Housing's delivery of housing services, and to appeal any decisions made. YWCA Housing will meet its responsibility to address all complaints transparently and within a reasonable time frame, as set out in its contractual arrangements or the Victorian or National performance standards

Scope

This policy does not apply to:

- Complaints or grievances by employees or contractors of YWCA Housing; or
- To disputes between clients/tenants of YWCA Housing;
- Complaints which must by law be referred to a law enforcement agency

Policy Principles

YWCA Housing's complaints and appeals policy is guided by the following principles:

Accessibility

- YWCA Housing clients/tenants are encouraged to raise concerns or complaints at any time, about YWCA Housing decision-making or service delivery, that directly affects them.
- Information about the complaints process is visible and accessible,
- The information provided includes;
 - a) how to make a complaint information sheet;
 - b) the complaints and appeals process;
 - c) the right of the client/tenant to an advocate, and
 - d) options to make complaints using external agencies.

Advocacy

At any stage in the complaint process, a complainant may choose to have advocacy support and/or take up external assistance.

Responsiveness

Complaints are a source of constructive feedback and are systematically recorded in YWCA Housing's Client/Tenant Complaint Register in order to ensure that the complaint process is adhered to within the requirements of the Regulatory framework.

Fairness and Natural Justice

- YWCA Housing will operate according to the rules of natural justice, which require that an allegation against someone be put explicitly to that person, and they be provided the opportunity to respond to that allegation.
- Complainants will be assisted with their communication needs, including the provision of an interpreter, so that they can participate effectively in the resolution process.

Confidentiality

The regulatory standards of privacy and confidentiality apply. Clients/tenants are informed about confidentiality as it relates to a complaint in the written information they receive.

No disadvantage

No clients/tenants involved in the complaint will be disadvantaged or face discrimination from YWCA Housing, either at the time of making a complaint or subsequently.

Courtesy and respect

All meetings conducted to respond to the complaint will be characterized by courtesy and respect for all parties.

Timeliness of response

- YWCA Housing will respond to complaints in a timely manner from initial contact, through the resolution process to outcomes, with all complaints being investigated and finalised within 30 days where this is possible.
- An individual who is a tenant or prospective tenant of YWCA Housing and who has made a complaint to YWCA Housing may refer the complaint to the Housing Register for investigation if the complaint is not resolved within 30 days after it is made.
- YWCA Housing will acknowledge receipt of a complaint by a client/tenant, prospective tenant or advocate within 3 working days by providing them with a copy of their completed Complaint Registration Form.
- YWCA Housing will monitor the effectiveness of the complaint handling procedures and where appropriate, make changes so they best meet the needs of clients and tenants.

Definitions

Advocate – A person who may assist the client/tenant making a complaint against YWCA Housing. The advocate can be a friend, independent person, YWCA Housing employee or person from an external advocacy service.

Complaint - A registered expression of dissatisfaction by a current, or previous recipient of YWCA Housing's services:

- lodged by a complainant, or a complainant's representative (where verbal or written permission is given);
- made verbally, in writing, by social media or anonymously;
- related to a specific risk, episode, occurrence or failure in the provision of a service that has resulted in an impact on an individual.

A complaint may be made about any worker, volunteer, contractor or student at YWCA Housing.

Complainant - Client / Tenant/Agency or prospective tenant making the complaint.

Complaint Register - A document that contains the details of all complaints raised including those made anonymously. The Operations Manager or Team Leader will lodge details on the Register when they receive a new complaint and will update the entry when the matter is resolved/closed.

The Client/Tenant Complaint Register will be accessed six-monthly to review compliance

CEO, or nominee - Oversee complaints that relate to other legislative requirements such as Child Safe and Reportable Conduct.

Staff member concerned – The staff member about whom the complaint has been made.

Receiving staff member – The staff member who receives the complaint from the client/tenant or their representative.

The investigating line manager – These staff members are the line managers responsible for investigating the complaint. They may delegate or co-opt other staff members as appropriate.

DHHS – Department of Health and Human services

Appeal- When a person asks for a review of a decision made by YWCA Housing, to which this policy applies.

Responsibilities

YWCA's National Housing Operations Manager has responsibility for ensuring that:

- this policy is implemented, and its application monitored,
- the policy continues to comply with relevant legislation, and
- this policy is reviewed to evaluate its ongoing effectiveness.

Related Information

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| Legislation | Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic) |
| Legislation | Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) |
| Legislation | Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) |
| Standards | Housing Registrar (Vic): Performance Standards |
| Standards | NRSCH: Evidence Guidelines |

| Document Control Data | |
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| Privacy Policy | |
| Responsible Officer | Director, National Housing |
| Accountable Officer | National Housing Operations Manager |
| Application | Application YWCA staff involved in tenancy management |

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| Supersedes | Policy 1.2.5 Rent Management and Procedure 1.2.5 Rent Management |
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| Approval and Amendment history | | | |
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| Review period – 2 years | | | |
| Approval Date | Version | Amendments | Next review |
| | 1.0 | | [2 years] |
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