

VCCH TENANCY & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Policy Name:	Complaints and Appeals
Approved by:	Policy Authorisation Committee
Date effective:	November 2022
Due to be reviewed:	November 2025

Section 1 - Introduction

PURPOSE

This policy establishes the approach of VincentCare Community Housing (VCCH) to complaints and appeals in respect of housing, social housing applications and related services.

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to articulate the processes through which renters may lodge complaints and also appeal any complaint decision. This policy also ensures that internal actions related to complaints and appeals are managed efficiently and appropriately.

For the purpose of this policy the term 'renter' is inclusive of the term resident.

VCCH operates a diverse range of accommodation services for people experiencing disadvantage, and is committed to applying an appropriate duty of care to all people in contact with VCCH services. This includes protecting people's personal and cultural safety regardless of ability, cultural background, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or religion.

SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints and appeals made to VCCH by:

- renters and prospective renters of VCCH in respect of rental housing

This policy does not apply to complaints or feedback received from people who are not renters, prospective renters or applicants for social housing. This includes:

- complaints or grievances by employees of VCCH;
- complaints by contractors of VCCH; and
- complaints or registration of concern by other member of the community (for example, neighbours).

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy will be reviewed every three years. It will be modified or replaced whenever VCCH becomes aware that this policy no longer complies with the requirements of the organisation.

Section 2 - Policy Statement

GUIDING PRINCIPLES – COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

All renters and prospective renters of VCCH and applicants have the right to:

- complain about the way that VCCH has gone about delivering housing or related services; and
- appeal a decision made by VCCH in relation to their housing, application or services.

This policy promotes adherence with the following key principles:

- A renter or prospective renter has the right to lodge a complaint about the way VCCH has gone about delivering housing services at any time;
- All renters will be apprised of their rights to lodge a complaint through being provided with a Client Complaint Form brochure upon commencement of their tenancy and through the provision of a copy of this policy;
- Complaints may be conveyed verbally by renters;
- Renters may also raise and lodge their complaint with external bodies including relevant government departments.
- Renters have the right to remain anonymous when lodging a complaint in writing;
- Complaints will be acknowledged within three working days of receipt.
- VCCH will make every effort to resolve complaints within 30 days.
- VCCH welcomes complaints as a key way by which it receives feedback, responds to the needs of renters and improves its service delivery.
- VCCH encourages all renters who are unhappy about the way that they have been treated by VCCH or decisions made by VCCH to take up the issue with the person who delivered the service or made the decision in the first instance. This can be a way of getting the matter resolved quickly.
- A renter or prospective renter has the right to lodge an appeal about a related VCCH decision at any time;

Accordingly, VCCH will:

- provide clients with clear information about how they can make a complaint or lodge an appeal with VCCH and about any external complaint-handling bodies that are relevant (such as DFFH or the Housing Registrar);
- support clients to make a complaint or appeal in a way that is accessible to them;
- respond to complaints and appeals promptly, fairly and transparently;
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of clients who make a complaint or lodge an appeal;
- not take any adverse action in respect of a client simply because the client has made a complaint or lodged an appeal;
- keep records of complaints made and appeals lodged;
- use the outcome of complaints and appeals to improve VCCH's service delivery; and
- minimise future complaints and appeals

Section 3 - Procedures

Any procedures established by VCCH in relation to complaints and appeals will ensure compliance with this policy.

Section 4 – Related Documents

DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

Appeal	When a person asks for a review of a decision of VCCH to which this policy applies
Applicant	A person who VCCH assists to apply for social housing
Client	An applicant or a renter or prospective renter of VCCH
Complaint	A complaint is a client's registered expression of dissatisfaction with any service delivered or action taken by VCCH to which this policy applies.
DFFH	The Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Social housing	Both public and community housing
VHR	The Victorian Housing Register, the state-wide common application for people seeking social housing,

Legislation and standards

This policy implements VCCH's obligations under:

- Housing Act 1983 (Vic) Part VIII Division 5 Subdivision 2 (Dispute Resolution)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- DFFH Victorian Housing Register Operational Guidelines

Section 5 - Governance

Process Owner	State Manager Housing
Content Holder/s	Housing Program Managers
Recommending body	Quality Committee
Endorsed by	Policy Authorisation Committee

Version	Effective Date	Author	Change
1	May 2019	General Manager Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is a new policy for publication on VincentCare's website• This policy is a compliance requirement for registered agency

			participation in the Victorian Housing Register (VHR)
2	September 2022	State Manager Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor amendments to reflect role and Department title changes • Removal of internal links for public-facing policy