

## 1.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the way a renter, applicant or stakeholder can make a complaint, appeal a decision, or provide feedback on EACH Housing's services or decisions.

EACH Housing (EHL) welcomes complaints from renters as a keyway by which EHL receives feedback, responds to the needs of renters, and improves its service delivery.

All renters and prospective renters of EHL, have the right to:

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

The aim of this policy is to ensure that we handle complaints and appeals fairly, efficiently, and effectively so that EACH Housing:

- responds to complaints in a timely, fair, equitable and cost-effective way;
- use information provided through complaints to deliver quality improvements;
- have an accessible complaint handling and resolution procedure that is applied consistently throughout the organisation;
- maintain a register of complaints and appeals; and
- takes all reasonable steps to investigate and resolve complaints within 30 days.

Accordingly, EHL will:

- provide renters with clear information about how they can make a complaint or lodge an appeal with EHL and about any external complaint-handling bodies that are relevant (such as The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or the Housing Registrar);
- support renters 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 renters who make a complaint or lodge an appeal;
- not take any adverse action in respect of a renter simply because the renter has made a complaint or lodged an appeal;
- keep records of complaints made and appeals lodged; and
- use the outcome of complaints and appeals to improve EHL's service delivery and minimise future complaints and appeals.

EACH Housing has regulatory and legislative responsibility to ensure we are delivering safe and quality services.

This policy applies to all EHL current and prospective renters and is administered by EHL tenancy staff. It covers all EHL sites, operations and functions including those situations where employees, volunteers and contractors are required to work off-site acting as agents of EHL.

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

- renters and prospective renters of EHL in respect of rental housing; and
- individual(s) whom EHL has assisted to make an application for social housing under the Victorian Housing Register (VHR).

Disputes between neighbours are handled within EHL's Good Neighbour Policy and Procedures.

## 2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

EACH Housing is committed to:

- meeting our legal, contractual, and regulatory duties;
- handling complaints and appeals in a timely, fair, efficient and effective way;
- welcoming all feedback and making it easy for renters, applicants and stakeholders to exercise their right to make a complaint or appeal a decision; and
- continuous quality improvement.

### How to Appeal a Decision or Make a Complaint

EACH Housing encourages renters, applicants, and stakeholders to raise any concerns or issues as they arise with an EACH Housing employee who will work to resolve the matters raised.

If a renter, applicant, or stakeholder has raised an issue or concern with EACH Housing and they are not satisfied with the response they have received, and/ or wishes to formally register their dissatisfaction, they may escalate the issue by lodging a formal complaint or appeal.

A formal complaint or appeal can be made by email, letter, telephone, in person or by completing the Complaints and Feedback Form (available on the EACH Housing website).

The complaint or appeal should detail the following;

- Any action taken to resolve the issue.
- Any responses or communication received.
- The action or outcome that is sought.

Renters and applicants can get help from an advocate or support person, if required, when making a complaint, or appealing a decision (for information on advocacy services, see the section below titled **Further Information**).

### Responding to Complaints and Appeals

Complaints and appeals provide valuable opinions about the level of satisfaction with our services. We aim to manage them effectively and promptly, and always maintain accurate records for coordination, analysis, and reporting.

EACH Housing will keep renters, applicants and stakeholders informed throughout the process. We will acknowledge the receipt of an appeal or complaint within 2 business days and respond to all formal complaints and appeals in writing within 30 business days.

### Feedback

EACH Housing supports renters, applicants, and stakeholders to express how they feel about our services and products.

Feedback can include the following:

- Compliments such as positive feedback about EHL's employees, services, or products.
- General feedback on our services or ways that we can improve.

EACH Housing may request feedback from renters or applicants. Feedback can also be provided at any time by email, letter, telephone, the EACH Housing website (Complaints and Feedback Form) or in person. Not all feedback requires a response, however we will respond to feedback if the renter, applicant, or stakeholder expects us to do so.

## Privacy and Confidentiality

EACH Housing respects the right to privacy and confidentiality of the person making the complaint or appeal. The file record of the complaint will be confidential. No identifying information will be communicated to renters, applicants, stakeholders, or employees who are not directly involved with resolving the complaint or appeal without permission.

## Further Information

Avenues for complaints and appeals are as follows:

- [The Victorian Registrar of Housing](#) Agencies may be contacted where a formal complaint with EHL remains unresolved after 30 days.
- [The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing](#) investigates complaints or requests for review about applications for housing under the Victorian Housing Register.
- [Consumer Affairs Victoria](#) provides information and advice about renter's rights and obligations; how to seek solutions to disputes.
- [The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria](#) has a free telephone service (1300 372 888) and will work with you to try to resolve your dispute with your neighbour. The centre can discuss the dispute with you, identify potential options, suggest negotiation strategies, and organise mediation, if required,
- [Victorian Ombudsman](#) receives and investigates complaints about the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) or concerns about how the Housing Registrar has responded to a complaint,
- [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission \(VEOHRC\)](#) will help resolve complaints for people who have been discriminated against, sexually harassed, victimised, or vilified. Advocates
- [Victoria Legal Aid](#) provides information, legal advice, and education with a focus on the prevention and early resolution of legal problems,
- [Justice Connect](#) provide pro bono legal services to people experiencing disadvantage by connecting to lawyers and barristers willing to act on a pro bono basis,
- [Tenants Victoria](#) provides information, advice, and legal representation to promote and protect the rights of Victorians who rent their homes.

## 2.1 DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

<b>Appeal</b>	When a person asks for a review of a decision of EHL to which this policy applies.
<b>Applicant</b>	A person who EHL assists to apply for social housing.
<b>Renter</b>	A person who occupies land or property rented from a Residential Rental Provider.
<b>Complaint</b>	A complaint is a renter's registered expression of dissatisfaction with any service delivered or action taken by EHL to which this policy applies.

<b>DHHS</b>	The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.
<b>VHR</b>	The Victorian Housing Register, the state-wide common application for people seeking social housing, which can be accessed via EHL, DHHS, the <a href="#">mygov</a> portal or designated support providers.
<b>Social housing</b>	Both public housing (housing owned and managed by DHHS) and housing owned, controlled or managed by participating registered agencies (that is, registered housing agencies that participate in the VHR)

## 3.0 DOCUMENT OWNER

The Operations Manager, EHL is the subject matter expert and person responsible for this document review.

## 4.0 REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Guidelines for Registered Housing Agencies published by DHHS
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- Good Neighbours Policy and Procedure
- Eligibility Policy
- Tenant Damage and Recharge Policy
- Assessing Requests and matching housing policy
- Rental Bond Policy