

**SUNSHINE/ST. ALBANS RENTAL
HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LTD**

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY (VHR)

Purpose

This policy establishes the approach of Sunshine/St. Albans Rental Housing Co-operative Ltd (SUNRHC) to complaints and appeals in respect of housing, social housing applications and related services.

Scope

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

- Renters and prospective renters of SUNRHC 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 SUNRHC;
- complaints by contactors of SUNRHC; and
- complaints or registration of concern by other member of the community (for example, neighbours)

POLICY STATEMENT

Guiding principles

All renter-co-operative members and prospective renter-members of SUNRHC have the right to:

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

SUNRHC welcomes feedback from clients as a way by which SUNRHC can review and respond to the needs of clients and can improve its service delivery where applicable.

Accordingly, SUNRHC will:

- provide clients with clear information about how they can make a complaint or lodge an appeal with SUNRHC and about any external

complaint-handling bodies that are relevant (such as Homes Victoria 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; and
- keep records of complaints made and appeals lodged; and
- use the outcome of complaints and appeals to improve SUNRHC's service delivery and minimise future complaints and appeals

Complaints by renters or prospective renters about rental housing

Renters and prospective renters of SUNRHC who are affected by decisions of SUNRHC on matters relating to rental housing may ask for their complaint to be dealt with under the complaints and appeals procedure.

Under this procedure, SUNRHC must take all reasonable steps to resolve such complaints within 30 days after the complaint is made to SUNRHC.

An individual who is a renter or prospective renter of SUNRHC and who has made a complaint to SUNRHC may refer the complaint to the Housing Registrar for investigation if the complaint is not resolved within 30 days after it is made.

Complaints or appeals about applications for social housing under the Victorian Housing Register

SUNRHC participates in the VHR by:

- providing applicants with information about applying for social housing under the VHR

Where an applicant wishes to:

- make a complaint about the way in which SUNRHC has provided service to them in making an application for social housing; or
- appeal a decision made by SUNRHC in relation to the person's application for social housing to:
 - recommend or not recommend an application for approval;
 - approve or not approve an application;
 - determine if an offer of social housing is a reasonable offer, then such applicants should first ask that the complaint be reviewed or decision be reconsidered by SUNRHC under the complaints and appeals procedure.

Applicants for social housing who are unhappy with the resolution of a complaint under the complaints appeals procedure may refer the complaint to the DHHS Housing Appeals Office.

Procedures

Complaints Co-ordination

SUNRHC will appoint a person to coordinate complaints, which will include to:

- act as the point of contact with the Housing Registrar and Homes Vic Housing Appeals Office;
- monitor compliance with the policy and this procedure (for example to resolve complaints within 30 days); and
- maintain the register of complaints and appeals

Informal resolution

SUNRHC encourages all clients who are unhappy with the way they have been treated by SUNRHC or decisions made by SUNRHC to take up the issue with the person who delivered the service or made the decision. This can be a way of getting the matter resolved quickly.

However, if a client does not wish to do this then it is their right to have the matter dealt with under the complaints and appeals policy and this procedure.

How clients can complain or appeal

Clients may make complaints or lodge appeals:

- in person;
- via a representative or advocate;
- in writing (hard copy or electronic);
- by telephone

SUNRHC encourages clients to make complaints in writing as a way by which the issues can be effectively identified and then resolved. However, SUNRHC recognises that some clients face barriers to do so and will therefore:

- accept complaints and appeals in a variety of means; and
- take reasonable actions to assist that client to clarify the issue in their complaint or appeal.

Acknowledgement of complaint

SUNRHC will acknowledge receipt of all complaints and appeals within 2 working days. This acknowledgement should advise the client of the process that SUNRHC will follow.

Investigation of complaint or consideration of the appeal

The procedure should assign a manager responsible for ensuring that SUNRHC responds appropriately to the complaint or appeal; by investigating the matter and/or reconsidering any decision made.

This person should not be directly involved with the complaint or appeal – i.e. be the original decision-maker or the person whose conduct has given rise to the complaint.

Outcome of complaint or appeal

Responses to complaints and appeals must:

- be in writing;
- explain the outcome of the complaint or appeal and the reason for SUNRHC decision; and
- advise the client of their right to refer the matter to the Housing Registrar or Homes Victoria Housing Appeals Office (as appropriate).

Investigation by the Housing Registrar

SUNRHC staff must co-operate with any such investigation by the Housing Registrar.

Privacy and confidentiality

SUNRHC must comply with the (Privacy and Confidentiality Policy) when undertaking this process.

Register of complaints

SUNRHC will maintain a register of complaints made and appeals lodged that complies with the requirements of the Housing Registrar.

Review

SUNRHC will use the outcome of the complaints and appeals to improve SUNRHC's service delivery and minimise future complaints and appeals by the following:

- reporting of complaints data to the Committee of Management

Definitions

In this policy:

Appeal	When a person asks for a review of a decision of SUNRHC to which this policy replies
Applicant	A person who SUNRHC assists to apply for social housing
Client	An applicant or renter or prospective renter of SUNRHC
Complaint	A complaint is a client's registered expression of dissatisfaction with any service delivered or action taken by SUNRHC to which this policy applies
DHHS	The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
Social Housing	Both public housing (housing owned and managed by the Director of Housing) and housing owned, controlled or managed by participating registered agencies (that is, registered housing agencies that participate in the VHR)
VHR	The Victorian Housing Register, the statewide common application register for people seeking social housing, which can be accessed via SUNRHC, Homes Victoria, the mygov portal or designated support providers

RELATED POLICIES

- Privacy & Information Sharing Policy (VHR)
- Allocations Policy (VHR)
- Rent Setting Policy (VHR)

Legislation and standards

This policy implements SUNRHC obligations under:

- Housing Act 1983 (Vic) Part VIII Division 5 Subvision 2 (Dispute Resolution)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- DHHS Victorian Housing Register Operational Guidelines
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018 and Residential Tenancy Regulations 2021