

Overview

Complaints from community housing renters are welcomed, as a means of addressing concerns and as a key source of information in driving continual service improvements.

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide definitions and illustrative examples for key terminology used in relation to community housing feedback, complaints and appeals.

Defining key terms

When discussing policies, procedures and practice related to the handling of feedback, complaints and appeals in community housing, it is useful to distinguish between key terms, to ensure a shared understanding on what constitutes as a 'service request', 'feedback', a 'complaint', an 'appeal', and a 'neighbourhood dispute'.

General enquiries and service requests

A general enquiry or service request is a request for information or a service, for example, a maintenance request or an enquiry on the timeline for completing that request.

Feedback

Feedback refers to opinions or comments, positive or negative, given to an organisation about its services. Feedback may be useful to inform policy or process improvements but will not always require a response.

Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a housing service which requires resolution or response. The Standard (AS/NZS10002:2014) defines complaints as "expressions of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation related to its products, services, staff, or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required."

Appeals

An appeal is a request for a review of a decision. This could include, amongst other things, a decision relating to eligibility, offers, rent assessments, transfers or maintenance charges. It can also include a decision related to the outcome of a complaint.

Management of an appeal requires a person conducting the review to put themselves in the position of the original decision maker and consider all the relevant circumstances alongside any new information provided. The person conducting the review will then decide whether the original decision should stand, whether an alternative decision should be made, and if there are any other options to reach a suitable outcome.

Neighbourhood disputes

Neighbourhood disputes are conflicts that arise between household members of homes in close proximity due to behaviour that is disruptive, causes a nuisance or impacts the quiet enjoyment of renters. Such behaviour can include but is not limited to; noise disturbances; incursion onto private property; abusive language; and inappropriate use of common areas.

Examples

Illustrative examples for key terms	
General enquiry	A renter queries what the expected timeframe will be for attending to requested maintenance.
Service request	A renter requests that a damaged wall be repaired.
Feedback	A renter advises that they are pleased with the expected timeline.
Complaint	A renter advises that a maintenance person attended their home but was rude and did not adequately rectify the issue.
Appeal	A renter is determined to be responsible for costs associated with repairs to rectify property damage. The renter disagreed with this outcome and asks for it to be reviewed.
Neighbourhood dispute	Conflict arises due to the noise from one renter's home causing a disturbance to a renter in a neighbouring property. There is disagreement regarding whether the noise levels are reasonable.

Further Assistance

Should you have any questions or comments in relation to the information in this resource please email leadingpractice@chiavic.com.au.

This resource will be periodically reviewed and continually updated based on sector feedback.

