

Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to ensure that complaints handling responsibilities and pathways are clear and that procedures and approaches are fair, equitable, consistently managed and properly documented.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints and appeals made to CatholicCare Victoria Housing Ltd (CCVH) by:

- renters and prospective renters, their advocates, and other stakeholders; and
- people whom CCVH has assisted to make an application for social housing through the Victorian Housing Register (VHR).

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 CCVH.
- complaints by contractors of CCVH; or
- complaints relating to the behaviour of neighbours (see *Good Neighbour Policy*).

CCVH recognises that where feedback and/or complaints fall outside of the scope of this policy, the complaint will be handled in accordance with the 'no wrong door' principle and will be resolved by referring the complainant to the correct complaint and/or feedback pathway.

Policy Statement

CCVH welcomes and values feedback and is committed to responding to this feedback to improve service delivery.

For the purposes of this policy, feedback can be:

- a complaint about the way CCVH have gone about delivering housing or related services; or
- an application for an internal review of a decision made by CCVH in relation to housing, application, or services.

CCVH manages every complaint through a clear and consistent process and are committed to finding a quick and effective resolution. There is also a commitment to learning from feedback and complaints to improve services.

Accordingly, CCVH will:

- provide clear information about how to lodge a complaint or apply for an internal review and how to escalate a complaint to the Housing Registrar.
- provide support to the complainant to make a complaint or appeal to ensure the process is accessible.
- make referrals to appropriate advocacy and legal services to assist complainants (renters can also refer to the renter support information sheet).
- respond to the complaint and/or appeal promptly, fairly, and transparently.
- respect the complainant's privacy and confidentiality when making a complaint or applying for an internal review.

- treat the complainant in a way that is objective, respectful, and fair including consideration of human rights.
- be accountable for decisions as a service provider.
- not take any adverse action against the complainant simply because a complaint or lodgment of an appeal; and
- use the outcome of complaints and appeals to improve service delivery.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation (either written or verbal), related to its products, services, staff, or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. The subject of the complaint may include:

- a policy or decision made by CCVH staff about a rental housing matter.
- the quality of an action, decision or service provided by CCVH staff.
- a delay by CCVH staff in taking an action, making a decision or delivering a service.

Who can make a complaint?

A renter or a prospective renter may make a complaint to CCVH about its products, services, staff, or the handling of a complaint. A representative of a renter or a prospective renter (such as an advocate or a family member) may also make a complaint on a complainant's behalf. The term 'complainant' is used to refer to the individual or organisation that makes a complaint.

CCVH is committed to being accessible and responsive to all complainants regardless of ethnic identity, national origin, religion, linguistic background, sex, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability or other cultural or personal factors.

Please see CCVHs *Renter Assistance Information Sheet* that lists advocates and supports that may be able to assist a complainant with the complaints process.

How to make a complaint

A complainant who is affected by decisions of CCVH on matters relating to rental housing, can ask for the complaint to be dealt with under the complaints and appeals procedure.

Complaints can be made by contacting CatholicCare Victoria Housing Ltd:

Email: info@cchousing.com.au

Telephone: 03 533 789 999

Mail: **CatholicCare Victoria Housing Ltd**

PO Box 2537

Bakery Hill Victoria 3354

Office: 4-6 Peel Street North

Ballarat Victoria 3350.

Website: www.CCVH.org.au

CCVH is committed to ensuring a navigable and culturally safe complaints process that is accessible to everyone. If a complainant has specific communication needs or barriers, the complainant can communicate this to CCVH so assistance can be provided by:

- using an assistance service, such as an interpreter or Teletypewriter (TTY) (for free);
- assistance with reading or writing; and
- communicating with another person acting on the complainant's behalf.

How a complaint will be handled

CCVH will acknowledge a complaint within 3 business days of receiving the complaint.

The Tenancy Manager will:

- contact the complainant to discuss the complaint within six (6) business days of receipt of complaint.
- take whatever steps are necessary to try to resolve the complaint which may include:
 - a. taking direct action to resolve the complaint; and
 - b. referring the complaint to the relevant team or manager for investigation.

CCVH will try to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible. Where this is not possible, CCVH will inform the complainant of the outcome of the complaint and provide reasons in writing within 30 calendar days of receiving the complaint. If there is any reason for a delay, CCVH will contact the complainant and advise when a response can be expected, and the reason for the delay.

A complainant can check the status of the complaint by contacting the CCVH Tenancy Manager.

Complaint conduct

The success of the complaints process depends on:

- CCVH's ability to work effectively and efficiently.
- the health, safety, and security of CCVH staff.
- CCVH's ability to allocate resources fairly across all complaints received.

CCVH requires staff to be respectful and responsive in all their communications. Where a complainant's behaviour or conduct raises health, safety, resource, or equity issues, this may significantly affect the complaint handling process. CCVH will act proactively and decisively to manage unreasonable complainant conduct and will support staff to do the same in accordance with this policy. CCVH may adjust its communication method/s to minimise any adverse impacts for staff and complainants.

The outcome of a complaint

CCVH will contact the complainant advising outcomes of the complaint and provide details of:

- actions taken in response to the complaint.
- the reasons for the decision made.
- where CCVH has made an error, the steps that will be taken to redress the situation and
- information on options for internal or external review if the complainant is not satisfied with the decision.

A complaint outcome will be made in writing with written reasons to the complainant. Once a decision is made in relation to the complaint, the details of the complaint will be recorded on the *CCVH Complaints Register* and closed.

It is a regulatory requirement for CCVH to record the complaint on a Complaints Register and provide it to the Housing Registrar on an annual basis for regulatory purposes.

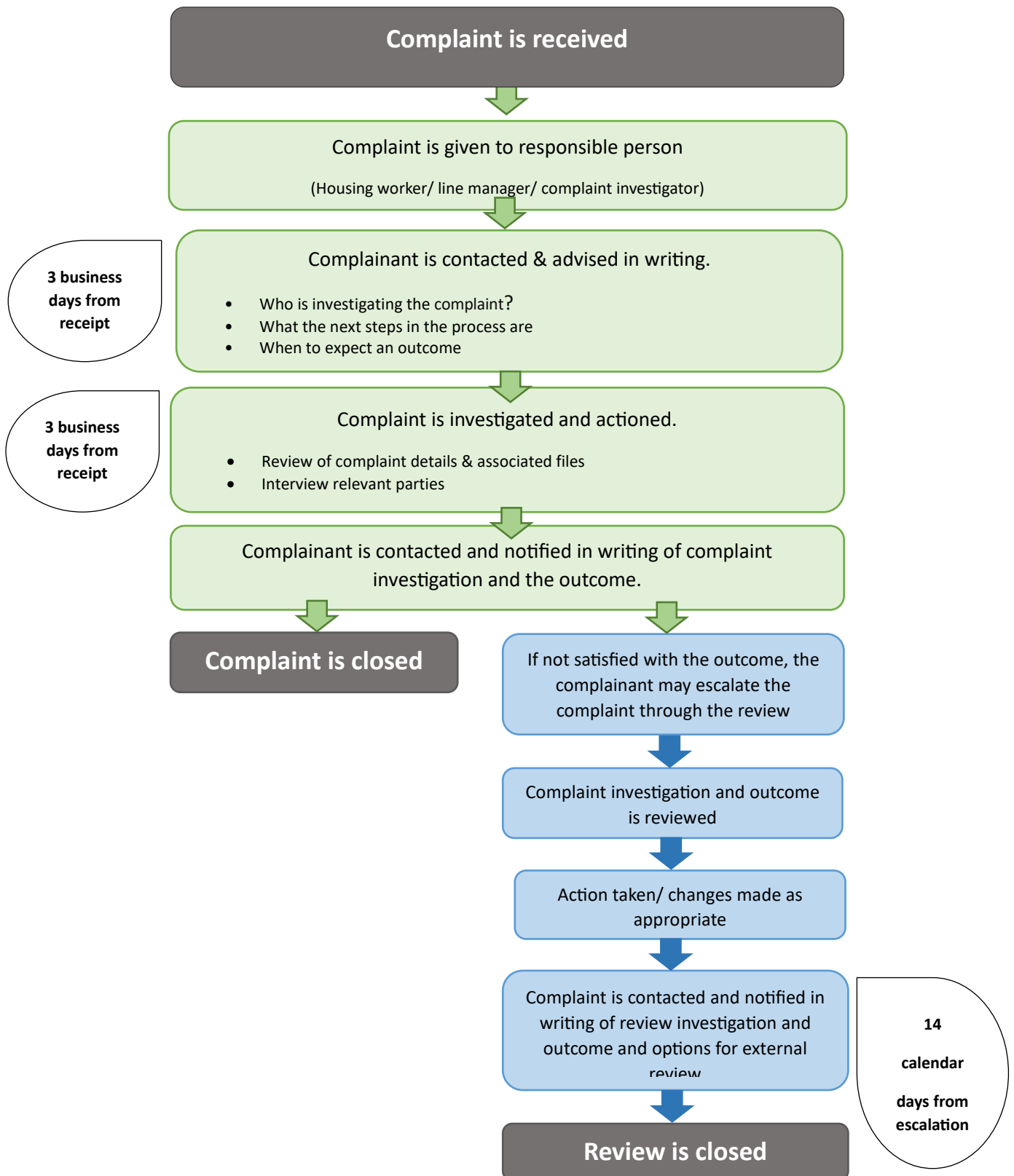
Requesting an internal review of the outcome of the complaint

The complainant can request that a decision or outcome of the complaint be reviewed by CCVH where the complainant believes it to be incorrect.

The review will be conducted by the CCVH CEO who has not had any prior involvement with the complaint. Within 14 calendar days of the request the CEO will provide a written report to the complainant setting out the decision or outcome of the review. The report will provide the rationale for any decision or outcome arrived at as part of the review.

A complainant can request copies of documentation related to their tenancy or complaint as well as copies of relevant policies. CCVH will respond to a request for documentation related to the complaint with copies of documents or clear reasons why any documents have not been provided (e.g., documents belong to a third party, or documents that contain another person's private/sensitive information). Please also refer to CCVH privacy policy.

Below is a flow chart that provides a graphic overview of CCVH’s complaints process.



External Complaint Bodies

There may be times where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint after an internal review by CCVH. In these circumstances, there are external bodies that can deal with different types of complaints about CCVH. The following infographic shows how a complainant can escalate a complaint where they are not satisfied with the process provided by CCVH.



¹From time to time, it may take longer than 30 days to resolve a complaint; this will be discussed with the complainant.

²In some circumstances it may not be possible to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction however the reasons for this will be communicated.

Housing Registrar Details

If CCVH has not resolved the complaint within 30 days, or the complainant is unsatisfied by the decision made about the complaint, the complainant may contact the Victorian Housing Registrar:

- Telephone: 03 7005 8984
- Online: <https://www.vic.gov.au/making-complaint-about-community-housing>
- Post: Housing Registrar, GPO Box 4379, Melbourne, Victoria 3001

Victorian Ombudsman Details

If a complainant continues to be dissatisfied after discussing an issue with CCVH and the Housing Registrar, they can contact the Victorian Ombudsman:

- Telephone: 1800 806 314
- Online: <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/complaints/make-complaint/>
- Post: Level 2, 570 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

A complainant may also have statutory rights of appeal which should be directed to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal:

- Telephone: 1300 01 8228
- Online: <https://www.vcat.vic.gov.au/>
- Email: renting@vcat.vic.gov.au

Confidentiality

All complaints and appeals are confidential and no identifying information will be shared without permission. When a complaint or appeal is made, CCVH will record:

- name and contact details.
- whether the complainant has communication, cultural or assistance needs.
- details of the complaint or appeal; and
- what outcome the complainant is seeking.

CCVH uses this information to respond to a complaint and to improve the services that relate to a complaint. All personal and sensitive information collected in the complaints process will be kept secure and managed in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2015.

CCVH may share information to promote the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children, or to prevent family violence, with other approved information sharing entities as legislated by the Victorian Government.

Related policies

- CatholicCare Victoria Housing Ltd Privacy Statement
- CatholicCare Victoria Housing Ltd Privacy Policy
- CatholicCare Victoria Housing Ltd Good Neighbour Policy
- CatholicCare Victoria Housing Ltd Code of Conduct - Employees
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2015 (Vic)

Legislation and standards

This policy meets the legislative requirements of section 97 of the Housing Act 1983 and the regulatory requirements of the Performance Standards established under section 93 of the Housing Act 1983.

This policy also implements CCVH obligations under DHHS Victorian Housing Register Operational Guidelines

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on website.

Definitions

In this policy:

Applicant	A person who CCVH assists to apply for social housing
Complainant	The individual or organisation that makes a complaint
Complaint	An expression 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
Complaint outcome or decision	The response provided by the CCVH about a complaint
Review of a complaint outcome or decision	A request by a complainant for review of a complaint outcome or decision
VHR	The Victorian Housing Register, the state-wide common application for people seeking social housing, which can be accessed via CCVH, Homes Vic, the myGov portal or designated support providers.

Transparency and Accessibility

This policy will be available on our website.

Version

Version	#1	Review frequency	Approved: June 2023 Next Review: June 2025
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