

Feedback and Complaints

Related Policy: Centacare Housing Services Policy

Purpose & Objectives

Centacare Housing Services (CHS) recognise that occasions will occur when tenants have feedback about the services or facilities provided by the organisation. Feedback – in the form of complaints, compliments and suggestions - offers CHS the opportunity to review the services it provides, and where appropriate, improve these services. CHS upholds the rights of tenants to an easily accessed, responsive and fair complaints procedure. All CHS tenants have the right for a complaint to be heard and dealt with promptly.

Welcoming feedback allows CHS to:

- Check that the needs and expectations of tenants and stakeholders are being met
- Enhance service quality
- Acknowledge a job well done

This procedure outlines how staff should respond to feedback. Additionally CHS will:

- Ensure that its Feedback (Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions) Procedure will be conveyed to tenants and potential tenants by way of the 'Centacare Housing Services Tenants Guide' brochure (provided to all existing and new tenants) and posters displayed at the CHS office locations.
- Ensure that staff are adequately informed of the procedure.
- Act on all feedback received and welcome this feedback as an opportunity to enhance service delivery
- Provide tenants with information at first contact regarding their rights and responsibilities and privacy, and how to provide feedback

This procedure intends to:

- Promote the prompt resolution of conflict and/or settlement of complaints
- Ensure all parties understand their rights and receive a fair hearing
- Facilitate simplicity and understanding by all concerned
- Ensure efficiency, effectiveness and service improvement where indicated
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

Throughout all stages of a complaint proceeding to resolution, work is to continue normally in accordance with the custom or practice existing prior to the complaint being raised. Should the complaint be about an individual staff member, that staff member shall not have contact with the tenant making the complaint until the complaint has been resolved.

Where a complaint of a criminal nature is made about a staff member, volunteer or Board of Management member, the complaint will be referred to the police, by the CEO or delegate and in accordance with any mandatory reporting requirements, for investigation. Such complaints are not to be internally investigated.

Procedure

Who can provide feedback?

Anyone may provide feedback, including any member of the public, tenant, their family or carer, or other service provider, etc. Tenants are entitled to have the support of another person to act as their advocate if making a complaint and throughout the complaint resolution procedure. Tenants should be informed of this right when seeking to lodge a complaint.

Feedback may be provided in person, over the telephone, in writing or via an advocate.

Verbal Feedback (including those taken over the telephone)

Verbal feedback is to be documented and initially dealt with by the staff member receiving the feedback. It is then referred to the Feedback and Privacy Officer or Manager of Housing Services due to time constraints. Feedback taken over the telephone must be documented on the 'Feedback - Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions' Intranet Workflow, located on the left hand side of the Intranet homepage.

Written Feedback

If someone advises they wish to provide written feedback, or make a written complaint, the Receptionist or staff member will provide a copy of the 'Centacare Housing Services Tenants Guide' and the 'Feedback - Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Form' (Appendix 1.06-1) for the submission of the written feedback or complaint. There are also brochure style feedback slips available with "Help Us Improve Our Service". Either form can be used to document feedback or a complaint.

Written feedback may also be received at any time in the form of a letter or card and should be entered on the Intranet workflow by the person receiving the feedback.

Compliments

Given the challenging nature of some of the work we do, it is important to acknowledge a job well done. Compliments may come in the form of cards or emails from tenants, verbal thanks from a tenant or sometimes verbal recognition to another staff member such as reception staff.

It is important that this is also recorded, using the Intranet workflow. Anyone receiving a compliment on our service should record it. If the compliment is about an individual staff member, this will then be passed onto them.

Suggestions

Tenants, carers, family and other organisations may have suggestions for CHS which are neither complaints nor compliments. Suggestions may relate to improvements in service or suggestions to provide more of something which is positive.

Receipt of complaint

On receipt of a complaint the following shall occur:

- Permission shall be obtained from the complainant to follow up the complaint
- Acknowledgement of the complaint using the form letter on the intranet workflow – unless the complainant has indicated they do not want to be contacted or the complaint is being handled via the telephone - A 'Complaint Acknowledgement letter' should be sent to the complainant within two working days by the Complaints & Privacy Officer
- The complainant shall be informed of CHS's process for following up complaints and given this information which is contained in the "Centacare Housing Services Tenants Guide" brochure and the Feedback Fact Sheet
- The staff member receiving the complaint, shall enter the details on the 'Feedback & Complaints Form' Intranet Workflow
- The Complaints & Privacy Officer will allocate the complaint for investigation, monitoring and recording
- If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, the 'Feedback & Complaints Form' with the description of the complaint, shall be for investigation and recording only.
- If the complaint is resolved on receipt, a finalisation letter shall be sent using the 'Complaint Finalisation Letter', by the Complaints & Privacy Officer
- If a complaint has potential for legal implications the CEO shall be advised immediately. If the complaint is of a criminal nature, it will not be investigated internally – it will be referred to the police for investigation.

Investigation of complaint

- If the complaint is not resolved in the first instance a further investigation will take place, this will be conducted by the appropriate person, allocated by the Complaints and Privacy Officer.
- Complaints received will be forwarded to the Complaints & Privacy Officer and recorded in the electronic CHS Complaints Register.
- Where a complainant has indicated they would like to be contacted further about this, this will also be done. The staff member investigating the complaint shall inform the complainant that at any time during the process, they may seek further advice or they may have an advocate assist them or they may contact Consumer Affairs or other relevant office.
- The staff member investigating the complaint shall contact the complainant to discuss or advise of actions in response to their concern
- If a staff member is the subject of the complaint, that staff member will be informed of the complaint and consulted regarding details of the complaint.
- If the CEO is the subject of the complaint, the complaint will be forwarded to the Board of Governance, who will be responsible for investigating the complaint and discussing it with the CEO. The Chairperson will notify the complainant and the Board of Governance of the outcome.
- If it appears the matter has been resolved, a 'Complaint Finalisation Letter' which provides opportunity for further follow up, including appeal, shall be sent to the complainant by the Complaints & Privacy Officer
- When a complaint is finalised the completed 'Feedback & Complaint Form' and all relevant paperwork should be scanned and included. If the complaint related to a staff member, a copy of the paperwork will be included in their HR file.
- If the matter has not been dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant, and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, all documentation shall be forwarded to the next senior staff member for follow up.

When is a Complainant Satisfied?

- To determine if a complainant is satisfied, the person investigating the complaint must ask the complainant if they are satisfied with the result, or, do they wish to pursue the matter further?
- If the complainant states that they are satisfied, then the complaint is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant
- CHS shall endeavor to resolve complaints within 30 days consistent with Key Performance Measure 6 from the Housing Registrar
- It should be acknowledged that not all complaints are able to be resolved to the full satisfaction of the complainant and CHS needs to identify these areas (e.g. the complainant wants CHS to provide services that they are not eligible for)
- The complainant should be informed they may seek further advice or they may have an advocate assist them or they may contact Consumer Affairs or other relevant office

Recording and Reporting Complaints & Feedback

- All conversations with the complainant, any staff member or any other person, in relation to the complaint, shall be documented in writing by the person investigating the complaint
- Documentation pertaining to complaints & feedback shall remain on file electronically and can only be accessed by the investigator and the Complaints & Privacy Officer, who shall maintain the CHS Feedback Register
- All information shall be held in a secure manner and confidentiality of details should be upheld at all times
- The Complaints & Privacy Officer shall provide a report to the CEO quarterly and these reports will be presented to the Risk and Compliance Committee, and tabled at the board of governance meeting.

How to Appeal?

- If after investigation, the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, and the complainant states that they wish to pursue the matter further, information of other agencies must be provided. This information is available on the 'Centacare Housing Services Tenants Guide' brochure and organization's include:
 - Consumer Affairs www.consumer.vic.gov.au 1300 558 181
 - Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission of Victoria 1300 292 153 (for harassment or discrimination)
 - Federal Privacy Commissioner 1300 363 992 (for misuse of confidential information)
 - Victoria Police (for criminal acts or behaviour) www.police.vic.gov.au
 - Victorian Housing Registrar www.housingregistrar.vic.gov.au

Related Procedures, Practice Guidelines and Forms

Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Form

Appendix 1.06-1

Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Form

Help Us Improve Our Service!

Feedback, Compliments, Complaints

We value your feedback, compliments and complaints. To provide us with your feedback please complete this form and either submit it to one of our staff or place it in the locked box at our reception.

You may also post this form or complete it online at our website
www.centacareballarat.org.au/services/housing

Centacare
Complaints & Privacy Officer
Reply Paid 2537
Bakery Hill, VIC 3354

Date: _____

Details of compliment, complaint, feedback:
(What would you like us to know?)

Suggested Resolution:
(What would you like us to do?)

Optional

Name: _____
Address: _____
Telephone: _____

Would you like us to contact you about the outcome of your feedback: YES NO



Program Name:
4-6 Peel St Nth, Ballarat, Vic 3350
Phone: 03 5337 8999

www.centacareballarat.org.au