

Compliments and Complaints Management Procedure & Workflow

Introduction

This procedure is linked to the Common Equity Housing SA Ltd (CEHSA) Compliments and Complaints Management Policy, which embodies the five fundamental principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration.

There are six key stages in our complaint management system — receipt and acknowledgement, assessment, investigation planning, responding to the complainant and providing reasons for decision/s, information regarding appeals, reporting outcomes and recommendations, and review.

Scope

This procedure applies to all employees and volunteers receiving or managing compliments and complaints from the public made to or about us, our services, products and/or how we handle complaints.

Procedure – Please refer to **CEHSA’s Compliments and Complaints Procedure Flowchart, CEHSA’s complaints investigation and resolution process chart**, and the following:

Guiding principles for Complaint Management:

<p>ACKNOWLEDGE all compliments and complaints quickly</p>	<p>In the case of complaints, acknowledgement can be an important tool in managing the complainant’s expectations, and can reassure the client that their complaint is receiving attention. The acknowledgement should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outline the complaint process • provide CEHSA’s general contact and email address details, and the name of a contact person • state how long it is likely to take to resolve the complaint (as far as possible) • when the complainant will next be contacted
<p>ASSESS the complaint and give it priority</p>	<p>Effective complaint handling requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early assessment for complexity and/or difficulty, dealing with one or more aspects of a complaint according to priority • deciding who will deal with the complaint, and whether other agencies should be involved • asking the client how they would like to see their complaint resolved—what outcome they are seeking <p>Some problems might not be easy to resolve (e.g. major policy or procedural change) – in these instances it is important the complainant knows that their concern is being taken seriously and that work on it is progressing.</p>
<p>PLAN the investigation</p>	<p>A written plan will provide focused attention and should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define what is to be investigated • list the steps involved in investigating the complaint and state whether further information is required, either from the complainant or from another person or organisation • provide an estimate of the time it will take to resolve the complaint • identify the remedy the complainant is seeking, whether the complainant’s expectations are realistic or need to be managed, and other possible remedies • note any special considerations that apply —e.g. the need for an interpreter, or the need to safeguard identity, & sensitive or confidential information.

<p>INVESTIGATE the complaint</p>	<p>It is important to revisit the investigation plan regularly and make adjustments as circumstances change, and new information becomes available. The three principles of fair investigation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Impartiality.</i> Each complaint should be approached with an open mind, and the facts and contentions in support of a complaint should be weighed objectively. • <i>Confidentiality.</i> A complaint should be investigated in private, and care should be taken when disclosing to others any identifying details of a complaint. • <i>Transparency.</i> A complainant should be told about the steps in the complaint process and be given an opportunity to comment on adverse information or before a complaint is dismissed. <p>The following are among the requirements that are relevant to complaint investigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A finding on a disputed factual matter must be based on evidence that is relevant and logically capable of supporting the finding—not on guesswork, preconceptions, suspicion or questionable assumptions. • A written record should be kept of evidence that is provided orally. • A complainant is not obliged to substantiate each fact or element in their complaint, although it is reasonable for the investigator to ask them to assist the investigation by providing documents they have or explaining things they know. • The rules of evidence that apply in court proceedings do not apply to administrative investigation, and an investigator can use reliable information obtained from any source. • To accord natural justice, a complainant should be given an opportunity to comment on contrary information or claims from another source before a decision is made to dismiss the complaint.
<p>RESPOND to the complainant with a clear decision</p>	<p>When the investigation of a complaint is completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complainant should be told the particulars of the investigation, including any findings or decision reached • telephone the complainant to let them know that a more detailed written explanation will be forwarded to them • the explanation should be presented in a style the complainant can understand and should deal with each concern or grievance raised in the complaint • an explanation should similarly be given if it has been decided not to investigate or to cease investigation of an issue raised by the complainant • the options available to the complainant, to seek internal review of any adverse finding or to pursue the complaint in another place, should be outlined and information on appeals
<p>FOLLOW UP any customer service concerns</p>	<p>It is good practice to offer complainants the opportunity to seek review of how their complaint was handled and resolved.</p> <p>If a complainant is dissatisfied with an investigator’s findings or decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complainant should also be asked to specify what exactly they would like reviewed, and why they disagree with the investigator’s view • a review should be carried out by an officer who has not been involved in the matter in order to bring finality to the investigation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is common to set a limit on the period in which the complainant must seek internal review • require that the review be sought in writing • provide an external review option to a complainant – the option of external agency mediation, complaining to the Ombudsman or seeking tribunal review of a decision should be mentioned in any letter of notification from CEHSA.
CONSIDER if there are any systemic issues	A systemic administrative problem possibility should always be considered when finalising a complaint. A review of agency procedures and policies can be another beneficial outcome. It is therefore important that complaint issues and trends are reported to and analysed by the executive.

Register

A Compliments and Complaints Register will be maintained by the CEHSA office, and will deal with employee records in accordance with the Fair Work Act 2009, and both client and employee records in accordance with its privacy policy and privacy law obligations.

Appeal against an Adjudicated Resolution

Should either the Complainant or the nominated person to deal with the complaint be dissatisfied with an adjudicated resolution an Appeal may be lodged within 30 days of receiving notification of the decision. Information on Appeals can be sourced at:

<https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/resolving-problems-and-disputes/public-and-community-housing-disputes/options-for-resolving-disputes-with-a-community-housing-provider>

The nominated person shall raise the matter with the Board and the Board will instruct them on what further action (if any) is to be taken. The Board or the Appellant may opt to take the matter further and take the appeal to the appropriate State or National appeals body, or an independent arbitrator.

Politically Based Complaints

Politically based complaints will be referred to the Board and the Board will, on a case by case basis, determine how the Complaint is to be dealt with.

Additional Information & Resources

[South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal \(SACAT\)](#)

Additional Information in the form of fact sheets can be obtained from the NRSCH website.

<http://www.nrsch.gov.au/publications/nrsch-fact-sheets>

Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling

http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/35615/Better-practice-guide-to-complaint-handling.pdf

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

Document History		Prepared by	Review
Version 3	1 February 2018		June 2019
Version 2	14 August 2014		February 2018
Version 1	12 Sept 2013		August 2014

