

# Feedback and Complaints Policy

National Operations

Document Owner

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## 1 Purpose

Housing Choices Australia welcomes feedback and complaints from our customers and stakeholders, and we are committed to providing a fair and transparent process for receiving and responding to feedback and complaints about our services, actions, and decisions.

This policy aims to ensure that we handle feedback and complaints fairly, efficiently, and effectively so that we:

- Have easy and accessible options for providing feedback and complaints;
- Respond to issues raised in feedback and complaints in a consistent, timely, fair, and reasonable way;
- Use information provided through feedback and complaints process to improve our services;
- Maintain a register of feedback and complaints and report on outcomes.

Housing Choices has a regulatory and legislative responsibility to ensure we are delivering safe and quality services and feedback and complaints are an important contributor to this.

## 2 Scope

This policy applies to our residents, clients, household members, neighbours of our residents, housing applicants, service delivery partners, maintenance contractors, stakeholders and members of the community impacted by our services.

This policy applies to feedback or complaints relating to services provided by our staff or maintenance contractors, the decisions we have made, or the way we have handled feedback and complaints.

This policy does not cover:

- Issues with the behaviour of residents or neighbours which are handled under the Good Neighbour Policy. However, an issue with the way we have handled a neighbour dispute or anti-social behaviour may be lodged as a complaint under this Feedback and Complaints Policy;
- Matters beyond the control of Housing Choices such as the lack of available housing where we would redirect people to the most appropriate services;

- Actions under the Fraud, Corruption and Misconduct Prevention or Whistleblower Policies;
- Actions handled under the Appeals Policy;
- Compliments; and
- Some elements of complaints handled by an external party.

### 3 Policy Statement

We respect and value feedback and complaints about our products, services, staff, and complaint handling. Feedback and complaints provide an opportunity to address service issues and provide valuable information for continuous improvement.

Feedback and complaints provide a review process for people who feel they have been disadvantaged by our actions or decisions in relation to the services we provide and helps us to nurture relationships between Housing Choices and our residents, partners, and stakeholders.

There is no time limit on when feedback or a complaint can be raised. We understand that complaining can be difficult and will support complainants to make their issue known and work to resolve it in a way that is comfortable for the person making the complaint.

#### 3.1 PRINCIPLES

- We will ensure that people are listened to, treated with respect, and actively involved in the process where possible and as appropriate.
- We accept feedback and complaints in a variety of ways, including from recognised representatives such as carers or advocates (with consent) and we will arrange interpreter services if required.
- We will ensure that information on how to provide feedback or make a complaint is readily available, easy to understand for everyone and includes information on how to access relevant external authorities or advocacy services. This policy and an Easy English brochure are made available on our website.
- We will respond to feedback and complaints efficiently and objectively, ensuring principles of procedural fairness are adhered to.
- We will ensure that the person handling feedback or a complaint is different from the staff member/s whose conduct or service is involved in the issue.
- Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly.
- We recognise that many people may feel insecure and vulnerable and at times may feel reluctant to exercise their right to provide feedback or make a complaint. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.
- We will not take retaliatory action against a resident or client, such as non-renewal of lease or eviction, because a resident or client has raised a complaint or appeal with HCA.
- We will consider deferring any actions that might have significant detrimental impact on someone who makes a complaint (such as possession action) until the complaint has been finalised.
- All information will be treated as confidential in accordance with our Privacy Policy. Personal information will not be divulged to a third party without the permission of the complainant unless we have a duty of care to do so. We accept anonymous feedback and complaints and will carry out an investigation where there is enough information provided to do so.

- We will approach feedback and complaints without assigning blame and with the objective of reaching a mutually acceptable outcome. A complaint may be withdrawn at any time; however, we will ensure this has not been done under duress.
- We will always provide an outcome and the reason for our decision.
- The outcome of feedback and complaints will be used to support our continuous improvement and how we can improve our services.

When providing feedback or making a complaint, people will be:

- Provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access relevant external authorities;
- Listened to, treated with respect, and actively involved in the process where possible and as appropriate;
- Provided with access to advocacy and support services as required; and
- Provided with an outcome and the reasons for our decisions, with options for redress or review.

## 4 Definitions

### 4.1 WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

Feedback is any comment or advice in relation to our products, services or decisions, whether positive or negative, that is provided without the expectation of a response or resolution. Examples may include a letter outlining an experience, or responses to a survey.

Feedback may be escalated to a complaint later if our services have not improved. There is no requirement to give feedback prior to making a complaint.

### 4.2 WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about Housing Choices products, services, staff, or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

### 4.3 WHAT IS AN APPEAL?

An appeal is a request to review a decision made by Housing Choices or the outcome of a complaint.

## 5 How to lodge feedback and complaints

Feedback and complaints can be provided in the following ways and will be accepted via an authorised representative, carer support person or advocate where we have consent.

- In person;
- In writing;
- By phone;
- By email to [complaints@hcau.org.au](mailto:complaints@hcau.org.au);
- By completing a form on our website.

There is no time limit on when feedback or a complaint can be raised.

## 6 Responding to feedback and complaints

### 6.1 RESPONSIVENESS

We will acknowledge receipt of feedback and complaints within 2 business days.

Feedback and complaints will be assessed and prioritised in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and escalated appropriately. If there is not an immediate risk, we aim to review and respond to a complaint within 30 business days.

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Feedback and complaints are managed through a six-stage process to ensure a consistent and thorough approach is applied. This process is comprised of the following elements;

1. **Listen** to the issue
2. **Acknowledge** receipt of the feedback or complaint
3. **Review** the facts and circumstances independently and objectively
4. **Collaborate** with the complainant to find an appropriate remedy
5. **Act** on the agreed plan to achieve remedy
6. **Communicate** the outcome to the complainant and any improvements that have or will be made.

We are committed to keeping people informed as soon as possible of the following:

- Our feedback and complaints process;
- The expected timeframes for resolving complaints;
- The progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay;
- Opportunities to provide feedback through the process; and
- The possible or likely outcome of the feedback or complaint.

We will advise people as soon as possible if we are unable to address any part of their concern and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

### 6.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

We will protect the identity of people providing feedback or making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by Housing Choices as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, and for the purposes of addressing the complaint and any follow up actions.

### 6.3 COMPLAINANT INVOLVEMENT

We will consult with the complainant to ensure our intended actions meet expectations.

Where possible complainants are invited to suggest outcomes and goals to further encourage mutual understanding of the issue being raised and how we can improve.

Any conduct by complainants that is deemed inappropriate or unreasonable may be handled under the Managing Unreasonable Complaints or Complainant Conduct Policy.

## 6.4 COMPLAINTS INVOLVING MULTIPLE AGENCIES

Where feedback or a complaint involves multiple organisations, we will work with the other parties where possible, to ensure that communication with the person and/or their representative is clear and coordinated. Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response. When similar feedback or complaints are made by related parties we will try to arrange to communicate with a single representative of the group.

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Complainants will be informed when external authorities are required. The following complaint types may require reporting to external authorities;

- Notifiable privacy breach;
- Reportable/notifiable incidents including abuse of children and young people, or vulnerable people;
- Reportable incidents under the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission; and
- Criminal activity.

## 7 Reporting requirements

Housing Choices reports on the performance of our complaints management and resolution systems to our regulators and in our annual report and we will use this data to continually improve our business.

## 8 Reportable/notifiable incidents

If feedback or a complaint includes information that someone has been or may be hurt or is at risk, this will be dealt with in a manner that ensures everyone's safety and may involve reporting to the Police or other authorities.

## 9 NDIS participants residing in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)

Housing Choices are a registered provider with the NDIS to provide Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) for participants of the NDIS. Complaints received related to SDA will be referred to the Specialist Housing Group. As per the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework, complaints and concerns will be accepted from:

- Participants and/or their families;
- Individual workers and providers;
- Advocates and Community Visitors;
- Professionals; and
- Members of the community.

The Specialist Housing Group will ensure each resident is provided with easy to understand information on how to give feedback or make a complaint, including the right to make a complaint to the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission and the right to access advocates.

## 10 Responsibilities

All Housing Choices staff are to be aware of this policy and receive and refer to feedback and complaints in accordance with this policy. Staff are required to recognise a complaint and facilitate the making of the complaint in a supportive way. Staff will not attempt to dissuade potential complainants from making a complaint.

### **10.1 MANAGERS AND TEAM LEADERS**

- Ensure that all staff are appropriately trained and aware of this policy.
- Ensure that staff record and process feedback and complaints in accordance with this policy.
- Investigate, review, resolve and respond to feedback and complaints in accordance with this policy.

### **10.2 ASSURANCE TEAM**

- Where appropriate may assist to investigate, review, resolve and respond to complaints.
- Audit the complaints management system.

### **10.3 GENERAL MANAGER HOUSING SERVICES**

- Ensure that staff understand this policy.
- Ensure that feedback and complaints information support strategic decision making and continuous improvement activities.
- Ensure that any complaints about safety, abuse and neglect received through our complaints process are referred to the appropriate authorities, in line with our obligations.
- Identify trends and systemic issues.
- Provide reports to the Executive.

### **10.4 GENERAL MANAGER SPECIALIST HOUSING GROUP**

- Oversee feedback and complaints impacting residents residing in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA).

### **10.5 CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS**

- Review complaints impacting children and young people.
- Advise if external support is required.
- Make reports to external authorities in accordance with the Child Safety Reporting Procedures.
- Complete a risk assessment plan if interviews with children and young people are required in the resolution process.

## **11 Scheduled Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years, following any significant restructure, or in response to legislative or regulatory changes. Consultation will be undertaken across service areas and input welcomed from persons who have been involved in the operation of feedback and complaints.

## 12 References:

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS	RELATED INTERNAL DOCUMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privacy Amendment (Notifiable Data Breaches) Act 2017</li> <li>• Health Records &amp; Information Privacy Act 2002 NSW</li> <li>• Housing Act 1983 (VIC)</li> <li>• Information Privacy Act 2000</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013</li> <li>• NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme (Code of Conduct) Rules 2018</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme (Procedural Fairness) Guidelines 2018</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme (Specialist Disability Accommodation) Rules 2018</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management &amp; Resolution) Rules 2018</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme (Quality and Safeguards Commission) Rules</li> <li>• National Disability Insurance Scheme Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2018</li> <li>• Vic Police Guidelines: Guidelines: Criminal Abuse of Children and Vulnerable People in Organisations: Reporting to Victoria Police V12.</li> <li>• Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)</li> <li>• Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Tas)</li> <li>• Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA)</li> <li>• Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)</li> <li>• Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW)</li> <li>• Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</li> <li>• NRSCH 1: Tenant and housing services 1f: Managing and addressing complaints and appeals relating to providing housing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback and Complaints Brochure (TBD)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Complaints and Feedback Easy English brochure SDA</a></li> <li>• Appeals Policy (TBD)</li> <li>• Managing Unreasonable Complaints or Complainant Conduct Policy</li> <li>• Good Neighbour Policy (TBD)</li> <li>• Feedback and Complaints Procedure (TBD)</li> </ul>



#### English:

If you need an interpreter, please call TIS National on 131 450 and ask them to call **Housing Choices Australia** on **1300 312 447**. Our business hours are **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**.

You can also visit the TIS National website for translated information about the service TIS National provides. Visit: [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

#### Arabic:

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مترجم، يرجى الاتصال بـ TIS الوطنية على الرقم 131 450 وأطلب منهم الاتصال بنا على هاتف رقم **1300 312 447** Housing Choices Australia. ساعات العمل الخاصة بنا **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**.

يمكنك أيضا زيارة موقع TIS الوطنية للحصول على معلومات حول الخدمات التي تقدمها TIS الوطنية. قم بزيارة: [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

#### Farsi (alt Persian):

اگر به مترجم نیاز دارید، لطفاً با شماره تلفن تیس نشنال 131 450 تماس بگیرید و از آنها بخواهید با **Housing Choices Australia** به شماره **1300 312 447** تماس بگیرید. ساعت کاری ما **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday** است.

www.tisnational.gov.au شما همچنین می توانید به وب سایت تیس نشنال برای اطلاعات در مورد خدماتی که تیس نشنال فراهم می کند مراجعه کنید. به

#### Vietnamese:

Nếu quý vị cần thông dịch viên, xin hãy gọi cho Dịch vụ Thông Phiên dịch Quốc gia (TIS Quốc gia) theo số 131 450 và yêu cầu họ gọi cho **Housing Choices Australia** theo số **1300 312 447**. Giờ làm việc của chúng tôi là **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**. Quý vị cũng có thể vào thăm trang mạng của TIS Quốc gia để có thông tin về các dịch vụ mà TIS Quốc gia cung cấp. Hãy vào thăm [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

#### Somali:

Haddii aad u baahan tahay turjumaan, fadlan ka wac TIS National taleefanka 131 450 waxaad ka codsataa inay kuu wacaan **Housing Choices Australia** iyo **1300 312 447**. Saacadaha Shaqadu waa **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**.

Waxaad kaloo booqan kartaa website-ka TIS National ee macluumaadka turjuman oo ku saabsan adeegga TIS National ay bixiso. Ka eeg: [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

#### Simplified Chinese:

如果您需要口译员，请拨打TIS National 的电话131 450，请他们打电话给**Housing Choices Australia**，电话号码：**1300 312 447**。我们的营业时间是**9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**。

你也可以访问TIS National 的网站，了解TIS National提供的服务。网址：[www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

#### Traditional Chinese:

若你需要口譯員，請撥打TIS National電話131 450並請他們轉接 **Housing Choices Australia** 的電話 **1300 312 447**。我們的工作時間是 **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**。

你也可以瀏覽TIS National 網站瞭解TIS National 的服務資訊，網址：[www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

#### Spanish:

Si necesita un intérprete, por favor llame a TIS National en el 131 450 y pida que lo comuniquen con **Housing Choices Australia** en el **1300 312 447**. Nuestro horario de oficina es **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**.

También puede visitar el sitio web de TIS National para obtener información acerca de los servicios que provee TIS National. Visite [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

#### Italian:

Se hai bisogno di un interprete, telefona a TIS National al numero 131 450 e chiedi di chiamare **Housing Choices Australia** al **1300 312 447**. I nostri orari d'ufficio sono **9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday**.

Puoi visitare anche il sito web TIS National per informazioni tradotte sul servizio che TIS National fornisce. Visita il sito: [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

For other languages, access to an interpreter is available by contacting **Housing Choices Australia** on **1300 312 447**.