

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This policy outlines CEHL's [complaints](#) management and [appeals](#) framework to:

- Clearly define what matters may be considered a complaint
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for managing complaints, whether about CEHL or co-operatives
- Ensure renters and prospective renters are aware of their right to make a complaint, or appeal a decision made by CEHL or a member co-op on matters relating to rental housing
- Define escalation and appeals processes
- Ensure complaints and appeals are managed in a fair and prompt manner
- Outline monitoring and review processes to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the complaints and appeals system
- Ensure complaints are used to improve the direct renter and co-operative housing program.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to CEHL and all member co-operatives and covers all complaints related to housing and tenancy services, including the conduct of CEHL employees and contractors, tradespersons, co-operative members or directors, and the handling of a complaint.

This policy does not apply to [positive feedback](#), [negative feedback](#), [queries](#), [service requests](#) or any other matters unrelated to the delivery of housing and tenancy services.

3. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

The table below outlines the specific policy topics and mandatory requirements that apply.

Topic	Requirements
Complaints within scope	• Complaints relating to the provision of housing and tenancy services by a renter, prospective renter, or neighbouring resident are within scope of this policy, including, but not limited to: ○ Quality of maintenance or capital works ○ Timeliness of maintenance or capital works ○ Concerns regarding the condition of housing and common areas ○ Alleged breaches of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) ○ Concerns related to the impartiality of renter or member selection decisions ○ Co-operative member or board behaviour or conduct ○ CEHL staff behaviour or conduct ○ Tradesperson behaviour or conduct ○ Renter behaviour or conduct ○ Handling of a complaint • Complaints that fall within the following categories are generally out of scope:

Topic	Requirements
	○ General feedback that lacks specificity or is not seeking an outcome ○ Personal disputes and interpersonal conflict between neighbours, residents or members ○ Service requests, queries or negative feedback that can be managed and quickly resolved as part of usual service delivery (e.g. maintenance request, rent query) ○ Matters unrelated to the delivery of housing and tenancy services. ● Complaints are directed to the primary entity with the relevant in-scope responsibility, with examples provided in Table 1.
Documented complaints procedures	● CEHL and co-operatives will have in place documented procedures for registering, investigating, resolving and recording the outcome of complaints and appeals. ● Information on how to make a complaint or appeal will be made available to renters and prospective renters.
Minimum information to investigate a complaint	● Complaints are investigated if all the following criteria are met: ○ Subject matter is within scope ○ Clearly defined allegations are identified ○ Sufficient information is provided to enable a proper and fair assessment of the complaint ○ Allegations are made in good faith and are not frivolous, vexatious or malicious ○ Matters raised do not relate to any active legal proceedings. ● Anonymous complaints may be investigated if sufficient information is provided.
Complaints unable to be investigated	● Complaints that do not meet the minimum information criteria, including where insufficient information is provided to enable a fair assessment, may be closed without further investigation. ● Complaints that are frivolous, vexatious or malicious may not be responded to and steps may be taken to manage unreasonable, abusive, threatening or unsafe behaviour, including limiting further communication where appropriate.
Complaint lodgement and registration	● Complaints can be lodged through CEHL or the co-operative's available complaint channels, including in writing, by telephone, in person or via a complainant's representative or advocate. ● Complaints involving multiple matters will be treated as a single complaint. ● Written acknowledgement of the complaint is provided to the complainant. ● Complaints are registered in the approved Complaints Register, including the date received, who lodged the complaint and the subject of the complaint.
Complaints investigation and resolution	● Complaints are reviewed to confirm information satisfies the criteria for assessment and are referred to a relevant team or individual with appropriate knowledge to investigate and recommend outcomes.

Topic	Requirements
	- Once the investigation is complete, CEHL or the co-operative will advise the complainant (and any other parties involved) in writing of the outcome of the investigation and any actions planned. - The Complaints Register will be updated to reflect the investigation outcomes and any further actions.
Timeliness, fairness and transparency	- CEHL and co-operatives will ensure that complaints or appeals are managed in a prompt, fair and transparent manner. - Where an actual, potential or perceived conflict exists, measures will be taken to ensure the complaint is managed objectively. - CEHL and co-operatives will seek to ensure complaints and appeals are managed in a culturally safe and trauma-informed manner. - CEHL and co-operatives will make all reasonable endeavours to resolve complaints and appeals in a timely fashion. - CEHL and co-operatives aim to resolve in-scope complaints within 30 days of receiving the complaint and all required information, wherever practicable.
Monitoring and review	- The Complaints Register is regularly reviewed to: - monitor the number and type of complaints to identify any trends and systematic or recurrent issues - turnaround time for responding to complaints - identify opportunities to continuously improve housing and tenancy services. - Quarterly reports for CEHL complaints are provided to the Managing Director - Complaints management processes are regularly reviewed to monitor their effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement. - CEHL provides ongoing guidance and support to co-operatives.
Privacy and confidentiality	Complaint information is to be managed sensitively and confidentially and is only shared on a need-to-know basis.
Complaint prioritisation and escalation	- Complaints involving risks related to renter safety will be prioritised for response - Complaints can be escalated from a co-operative to CEHL to manage if certain legal or safety thresholds are triggered, such as major fraud, allegations of violence, threats or sexual assault, any child safety concerns or serious governance breaches.
Mediation and external support	- Complainants may seek assistance from an external regulator, dispute resolution service or tribunal at any time, where relevant to the nature of their complaint. Depending on the nature of the complaint, this may include: - Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) - The Victorian Housing Registrar - Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) - Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) - Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria - Other regulators, tribunals or agencies with relevant jurisdiction.

Topic	Requirements
	Complainants may seek independent advice, advocacy or legal assistance at any stage of the complaints process. This may include obtaining support from a community legal centre, a tenant advocacy service, a legal practitioner, or another support organisation.
Appeals	- Outcomes from an investigation can be appealed by the complainant in accordance with the primary entity's (i.e. CEHL or co-operative) complaint management and appeal processes. - Appeals will be considered by CEHL or the co-operative, ensuring objectivity from the original complaint assessment. - Appeals for CEHL complaints will be managed at the Executive level and may be referred to the Managing Director for review, as appropriate. - Responses to appeals will be made in a timely manner, with CEHL or the co-operative aiming to provide a response within 30 days after all required information is received, wherever practicable.
Training and development	Training and guidance materials are prepared for CEHL employees and co-operatives to assist with the effective management of complaints, including better practice principles, cultural safety and trauma-informed practice.

4. POLICY GUIDANCE

The table below provides examples of complaints that may arise and the types of complaints that are managed by [Common Equity Rental Co-operatives](#) (CERCs), [Community Managed Co-operatives](#) (CMCs) and CEHL.

Table 1: Example Complaints Managed by CERCs, CMCs and CEHL

CERC	CMC	CEHL
- Tenancy related, including neighbours - Responsive maintenance (excluding capital works) - Member selection - Co-operative member or board conduct - Co-operative governance and/or procedures	- Member selection - Co-operative member or board conduct - Co-operative governance and/or procedures	- CMC tenancy related, including neighbours - CMC responsive maintenance and capital works - CERC capital works (via co-operative directors) - CEHL staff conduct - CERC and CMC escalated complaints (via co-operative directors)

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section outlines the specific roles and responsibilities applicable to the implementation, oversight and compliance with this policy. Responsibilities are listed in order of hierarchical significance.

Role	Responsibilities
CEHL Feedback Team	• Oversee the CEHL complaint management and appeals framework • Review and assess in-scope complaints and co-ordinate responses to complainants • Maintain records of CEHL complaints and outcomes. • Prepare quarterly reports of CEHL complaints for the Managing Director • Refer in-scope CERC or CMC complaints to the co-operative to manage where the complaint falls within co-operative responsibilities, as defined in Table 1. • Provide ongoing guidance and support to co-operatives. • Escalate to the Executive Director Co-op and Housing Services or the Managing Director for direction in the management of co-operatives complaints when required, including: ○ when significant risks, compliance breaches, or governance failures are identified ○ where required under funding, registration or compliance obligations ○ when complaints are escalated by the co-operatives. • Review appeals related to CEHL complaints and escalate to the Managing Director, as required. • Remain the key liaison with the Housing Registrar and the central point of contact for communication with co-operatives, providing updates to the Housing Registrar as required.
Co-operatives (CERCs and CMCs)	• Remain the first point of contact for in-scope complaints from members. • Review and respond to in-scope complaints referred by CEHL. • Maintain and manage internal dispute resolution policies and processes. • Respond to all complaints in accordance with the approved co-operative rules, policies and procedures. • Maintain records of complaints and outcomes. • Seek guidance from CEHL where required. • Escalate matters to CEHL that are unable to be resolved or meet the intervention threshold e.g. legal or safety matters.
Housing Registrar	• Consider escalated complaints from co-operative members and make enquiries of CEHL as part of this process, where required. • Assist in facilitating an outcome for the complainant through local resolution where possible. • Ensure CEHL has acted in accordance with their policies and procedures, and their obligations under the Housing Act 1983 (Vic) and associated Performance Standards.

6. POLICY BREACHES

All CEHL employees and member co-operatives must comply with any lawful direction issued by CEHL in relation to this policy. CEHL may amend this policy at any time at its sole discretion.

Breaches of the policy are to be reported to CEHL through established complaints reporting channels.

Reports of policy breaches will be assessed and managed in accordance with CEHL's complaints management processes.

7. DEFINITIONS

Key Term	Definition
Appeal	A request by a complainant for an independent review of a decision, finding, outcome or action arising from a complaint or complaint investigation, where the complainant believes the matter has not been resolved fairly, appropriately or in accordance with the relevant policy or process.
Common Equity Rental Co-operative (CERC)	A housing co-operative that leases properties from CEHL and is responsible for managing tenancies and property maintenance. The co-operative, acting through its Board of Directors, is the rental provider and is responsible for meeting relevant tenancy and housing obligations.
Community Managed Co-operative (CMC)	A housing co-operative where CEHL manages tenancies and property maintenance on behalf of the co-operative. Co-operative members participate in the co-operative community and member selection processes, while CEHL acts as the rental provider and is responsible for meeting relevant tenancy and housing obligations.
Complainant	A person or organisation that makes a complaint regarding a service, decision, action, conduct, or omission and seeks a response or resolution.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction in relation to housing or tenancy services delivered by CEHL or a member co-operative, employee, member or director conduct, or the handling of a complaint, that requires a resolution or response. A complaint must be detailed and specific and must provide sufficient information for the complaint to be investigated and resolved.
Negative Feedback	Critical or unfavourable comments related to CEHL or co-operative services or conduct that does not require a resolution or response, or where a specific outcome or action has not been requested.
Positive Feedback	Complimentary or praising comments related to CEHL or co-operative services or conduct.
Query	Request for information or clarification regarding a decision, service or outcome.
Service Request	Request for any housing or tenancy service, such as a maintenance request, review of a rent assessment or property upgrade.

8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Category	Detail
Legislation/Regulations	- Housing Act 1983 (Vic) - Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)

	• Co-operatives National Law Application Act (Vic) • Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
Standards	• ACNC Governance Standards
Internal documents	• CEHL Complaints and Appeals Operating Procedure (<i>for internal use only</i>)
Resources	• Managing complaints vic.gov.au • Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria vic.gov.au • Residential tenancies VCAT • Home Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV)

9. DOCUMENT CONTROL

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