

Complaints Management Policy

Introduction

Veteran Housing Australia (VHA) aims to provide a high standard of service in all areas of our operations. We recognise however that there will be occasions when clients and others receiving services from us, providing services to us or significantly affected by VHA's operations may wish to compliment, comment on or complain about an aspect of our service. VHA appreciates any feedback that our clients choose to provide and aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner.

- A complaint is a registered expression of dissatisfaction with a service, lodged by a complainant or their representative. It must relate to a specific occurrence or episode, including the non-delivery of service, which has an impact in the individual complainant. It may be lodged verbally, in writing via post, email or by completing a form available from our office, or online by visiting the website, or over the telephone, or in person.

This policy describes our overall arrangements for responding to comments and complaints. It is supported by detailed operational procedures. The policy and procedure applies to any person[s] who receives, requests or provides a service from or to us, or is significantly affected by VHA.

Aim

The aim of the policy is to ensure that:

- All comments on the standards of services are considered and where appropriate acted upon, with a response provided to the person providing the feedback.
- All complaints are dealt with in a timely manner within the prescribed timeframes, and where possible to the satisfaction of both the complainant and ourselves.
- Any improvements to our policies and procedures identified as a result of a comment or complaint are implemented.
- We perceive comments and complaints as an opportunity for positive action.

Principles of VHA Client Feedback Policy

GENERAL

VHA is committed to the efficient and fair resolution of all comments and complaints lodged.

The management of complaints will meet all legislative requirements, industry standards and guidelines and comply with any specific program requirements.

VISIBILITY

Information on how to provide feedback and/or make a complaint will be available in the form of brochures located at all VHA offices and on the VHA website at www.VHA.org.au

The VHA Client Feedback Policy will be published on the organisation web site and can be requested to be viewed by a client at any time. This will include information on external bodies that clients can contact to assist in resolving the complaint.

RESPONSIVENESS

All complaints will be dealt with courteously. We will aim to respond within specified timeframes. The current timeframes are detailed in the Complaints Indicative Timeframes section and in the VHA Client Promise.

CONFIDENTIALITY

VHA staff members shall respect the privacy of complainants and treat all documentation as confidential. A client's personal information will not be given to another person unless there is lawful reason to do so and/ or with consent. Wherever possible, we will respect the confidentiality of complainants and those being complained about. Where it is necessary to reveal the name, we will only do so with the individual's consent.

OBJECTIVITY

To provide VHA clients with the opportunity to have feedback received by VHA and any complaint to be reviewed in a fair and equitable way. To encourage continual improvement in the operational policies and practices of VHA.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The complaint handling procedure must follow due process and be just to all parties. All complaints will be dealt with fairly and professionally without consequence to the client or their status as a VHA client.

ACCESSIBILITY

We will, where necessary, assist those wishing to make a comment or complaint by arranging translation facilities or providing help for those with hearing or sight impairment. An advocate can assist a client during the complaint's procedure. The person making the complaint may advise VHA in writing if they wish to authorise a particular person to act on their behalf. The authority will include the advocate's name, contact number and relationship to the client. Staff should also acknowledge that some complainants may only wish to make a verbal complaint and in those instances, they should be treated no differently to complaints lodged in writing via post, email or by completing a form available from our office, or online by visiting the website or over the telephone.

APPEAL

A person making a complaint has the right to pursue a formal Appeal Process if they are dissatisfied with the VHA Complaints Process and subsequent outcome. Any complaint received from a client that fails to be resolved within the complaints indicative timeframe will be referred to the internal appeal process with the permission of the client.

Should the client still not be satisfied with the outcome of this process, they will be referred to an appropriate external Appeal Body for their State and requirements in which VHA has operational presence. A list of agencies that may assist in resolving the complaint is detailed in the External Avenues of Appeal document.

STAFF

If a complaint involves investigations into staff conduct, VHA Disciplinary Procedures may be applicable. In the case of complaints being made against the Chief Executive Officer, the Board of Directors will undertake the investigation.

COMPLAINTS INDICTIVE TIMEFRAMES

Complaint received	
1 business day	Recorded on client feedback register
2 business days	Receipt is acknowledged in writing
3 – 13 business days	Complaint is investigated by VHA
14 business days	Progress report or outcome and intent to close letter sent
28 business days	Closure letter sent with information on appeals process, should client not be satisfied with the outcome

How VHA aims to achieve these policy principles

RESPONSIBILITY

The General Manager is responsible for ensuring this Policy is implemented. They must:

- ensure the Client Feedback Policy is adhered to
- ensure that all complaints received are entered into the VHA Client Feedback Register

MONITORING

VHA will:

- record and respond to all complaints received and ensure it is operating effectively and responding to changing needs and circumstances.
- make changes to policies and procedures if this is recommended as a result of a complaint. The approval of the VHA Board of Directors is required.

Related legislation

EXTERNAL LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORKS

The Australian Consumer Law, 2011 (ACL)
The Privacy Act 1988
National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018.
Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
National Community Housing Standards
National Regulatory Code
Victorian Regulatory Framework
Western Australian Community Housing Regulatory Framework

VHA RELATED POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Appeals Policy
VHA Client Promise