Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy

1. Purpose

To set out the requirements for fair, efficient and effective handling of feedback, complaints and appeals. These help Housing Choices Australia (**HCA**) provide safe, quality services and meet its legal and regulatory responsibilities.

2. Application

This policy applies to anyone who want to provide feedback, make a complaint or lodge an appeal. It also applies to HCA staff, volunteers and contractors receiving or managing feedback, complaints or appeals.

This policy applies to feedback, complaints or appeals about HCA's services, decisions, staff, contractors or how HCA has handled complaints and appeals. This policy does not apply to usual service requests or reports of Antisocial Behaviour. Complaints about HCA's handling of these matters are covered by this policy.

The HCA Whistleblower and Public Interest Disclosure Policy should be referred to prior to reporting any complaints related to serious misconduct or corruption.

Governance documents support HCA people to live Our Values. They set out important controls that help keep people safe, manage organisational risk, and support compliance with legal and regulatory obligations.

HCA staff, volunteers and contractors are expected to comply with this policy. Where non-compliance occurs, it will be managed in accordance with the organisation's performance management and disciplinary procedures.

3. Policy Statement

HCA welcomes feedback, complaints and appeals and recognises their importance in improving services, strengthening relationships with customers and communities and promoting accountability. All customers have a right to complain to HCA.

Customers may ask for a decision or complaint outcome to be reviewed if they believe it was unfair, based on incorrect information or not made in line with policy.

HCA is committed to promoting a positive complaints culture where people feel safe, respected and supported to raise concerns. HCA handles feedback, complaints and appeals consistently and seeks to resolve concerns as early as possible.

P: 1300 312 447 ABN: 23 385 731 870
E: contact@housingchoices.com.au www.housingchoices.org.au

4. Policy Principles

HCA manages feedback, complaints and appeals in accordance with the following principles:

Accessibility	People can easily provide feedback or make a complaint through a range of accessible channels. HCA is committed to ensuring people with disability can access our feedback and complaints processes.
Fairness	HCA considers feedback, complaints and appeals objectively and impartially. Appeals are reviewed by a person who was not involved in the original decision or complaint outcome wherever possible and practicable.
Respect	People who provide feedback or make complaints are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect and are encouraged to participate in the process.
Putting Things Right	HCA acknowledges when we get things wrong or could have provided a better service and takes reasonable steps to remedy mistakes appropriately.
Learning	HCA uses feedback, complaints and appeals to identify trends, address systemic issues and improve services.

5. Lodging feedback, complaints and appeals

Feedback, complaints and appeals can be lodged:

- By speaking directly with a HCA staff member in person or over the phone, and telling them you want to complain
- On the HCA website
- By emailing complaints@hcau.org.au
- In writing to any of our offices.

Complaints about rent or payments should include specific information such as:

- What the issue is
- Relevant payment dates
- How the payment was made.

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Further information about how to provide feedback or lodge a complaint or appeal is publicly accessible through:

- HCA offices and employees
- Customer information materials
- HCA and Catherine House websites.

This information can also be provided on request.

Feedback, complaints and appeals can be made directly by a customer or through an authorised representative, carer, support person or advocate.

There is no time limit on when feedback or a complaint can be raised. If a complaint relates to older events, HCA will explain whether it can investigate and respond, and why.

Where required, HCA will provide reasonable assistance to help people provide feedback or make a complaint or appeal, such as interpreting services for people who speak languages other than English or engaging external organisations such as advocacy services to assist people in engaging with HCA processes.

6. Responding to complaints and appeals

6.1. Responsiveness

HCA will:

- Acknowledge complaints and appeals and explain what will happen next
- Assess each issue on its merits and decide how best to respond
- Consider the outcome sought by the complainant and discuss other options where the request is not possible
- Keep complainants informed of progress or delays
- Investigate issues based on their complexity and seriousness
- Ensure staff involved in responding to complaints have appropriate support and independence
- Clearly explain findings, decisions and reasons
- Advise complainants of any available review, appeal or external escalation options
- Use complaint outcomes to improve services.

6.2. Putting things right

Where a complaint or appeal investigation identifies a mistake by HCA, HCA seeks to put things right in a fair, reasonable and proportionate way.

This may include:

- Taking action to resolve the issue
- Acknowledging where things went wrong
- Providing an apology
- Explaining what occurred and why
- Correcting errors or amending records

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- Reconsidering, changing or reversing a decision
- Making service improvements or reviewing and changing policies, procedures or practices
- Providing a financial remedy in specific circumstances to recognise loss or financial impact resulting from HCA's actions or inactions.

6.3. Appeals

Appeals may be made regarding:	Appeals cannot be made about:
• Decisions affecting a customer, including decisions about housing or support services • Complaint outcomes • The application of HCA's policies to a person's circumstances.	• Matters that are before a court or tribunal • Decisions made by an external agency • Legislative or regulatory requirements that Housing Choices is required to apply • Decisions affecting another person's tenancy or personal circumstances.

When reviewing an appeal, HCA may consider:

- Whether the process was fair and the decision was reasonable
- Whether relevant policies, procedures and legislation were applied correctly
- Whether all relevant information was properly considered and whether there is new information to consider.

Customers who appeal HCA decisions will be encouraged to provide information, explain their circumstances, and identify their specific concerns with the original decision.

6.4. Privacy and record keeping

People can complain anonymously. However, this may limit HCA's ability to investigate, act or respond.

HCA will only use or disclose personal information as permitted by relevant privacy laws.

HCA must keep complaints records for at least seven years. These records may include:

- Details of the complainant
- Details of the complaint
- Actions taken
- Investigation records and evidence
- The outcome of the complaint
- Any referral or reports to relevant regulatory authorities including information about dispute resolution schemes.

6.5. Complainant involvement

Complainants are encouraged to suggest the preferred outcome to their complaint. Where the complainants' preferred outcome is not possible, HCA will let them know and encourage complainants to suggest an alternative solution.

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HCA will ask complainants if they are satisfied with the proposed solution before closing their complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and HCA cannot take further action, HCA will provide information about external review or advocacy services.

Any conduct by complainants that is deemed inappropriate or unreasonable may be handled under the Managing Unreasonable Complaints or Complainant Conduct Policy, which can be found on the HCA website.

6.6. Complaints involving multiple agencies

Where feedback or a complaint involves multiple organisations, HCA 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, HCA will try to arrange to communicate with a single representative of the group.

The following complaint types require reporting to external organisations:

- Eligible data breach under the *Privacy Act 1988*
- Reportable/notifiable incidents including abuse of children and young people, or vulnerable people
- Complaints relating to Centrepay deductions that are serious, unresolved or repeated to Services Australia, within five business days
- Reportable incidents under the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission
- Where contractually required, to State Government program funders.

Where lawfully required, HCA will notify complainants that their complaint has been reported to an external organisation.

7. Child Safety

If feedback or a complaint involves child safety concerns, allegations or an incident, HCA's Child Safety Responsible Officer will initiate and oversee the review and investigation and ensure all agreed actions are implemented.

8. Exceptions

- Exception requests should be submitted by email to the Policy Owner.
- Exceptions may be granted in circumstances where the complaint or appeal is vexatious or unreasonable.

9. Implementation

This policy is implemented through:

- Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Brochure
- Complaints and Feedback Easy English brochure Specialist Disability Accommodation
- Managing Unreasonable Complaints or Complainant Conduct Policy
- Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

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10. References

This policy should be read in the context of the following:

- *Privacy Amendment (Notifiable Data Breaches) Act 2017*
- *Health Records & Information Privacy Act 2002 NSW*
- *Housing Act 1983 (VIC)*
- *Information Privacy Act 2000*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*
- NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Code of Conduct) Rules 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Procedural Fairness) Guidelines 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Specialist Disability Accommodation) Rules 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management & Resolution) Rules 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2018
- Vic Police Guidelines: Guidelines: Criminal Abuse of Children and Vulnerable People in Organisations: Reporting to Victoria Police V12.
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Tas)*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA)*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW)*

11. Definitions

Term	Definition
Antisocial Behaviour Report	A report of antisocial behaviour is information provided to HCA about behaviour that might affect the safety, wellbeing, peace, or comfort of residents and neighbours of the community. A report of antisocial behaviour might become a complaint when a person expresses dissatisfaction with HCA's handling of the report including the timeliness of the response, or HCA's decisions or communication about the matter. Any response to a complaint will be about HCA's service, actions or decisions, rather than determining whether the alleged antisocial behaviour occurred.
Appeal	An appeal is a request to review a decision made by HCA or the outcome of a complaint where the customer believes relevant information was not considered, incorrect information was relied upon, policy was applied incorrectly, procedural fairness was not observed, or the outcome was unreasonable in the circumstances.

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Complaint	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about HCA's services, actions, decisions or failure to act, where a response or resolution is sought. A complaint is not normally a service request, request for information, maintenance request or report of antisocial behaviour, unless the person is dissatisfied with HCA's response, actions, or lack of action in relation to that matter.
Complainant	Any person who expresses dissatisfaction about HCA and is seeking a response or resolution. A complainant is the person making the complaint and may be directly affected by an issue or acting on behalf of a person affected by the issue.
Customer	Any person who may, has, or will receive a housing service from HCA. Includes but is not limited to 'tenants', 'renters', 'residents', 'neighbours' and 'private neighbours', 'participants', 'applicant''.
Feedback	Feedback is any comment, suggestion, compliment or concern about HCA's services. Feedback is provided without seeking a response or resolution. A compliment is positive feedback about HCA or its services. Examples may include a letter outlining an experience, or responses to a survey.
Procedural Fairness	Procedural fairness means making decisions in a fair and unbiased way. This includes listening to people, considering relevant information, explaining decisions, and providing information about review and appeal options.
Representative	Any person who is not a customer but is acting on behalf of a customer. Includes but is not limited to advocates, external agencies, carers or other persons authorised to act.
Service Request	A service request is a request for HCA to take action, help, investigate an issue, deliver a service or put something right. Examples include maintenance and repair requests, requests for information or clarification, requests for tenancy assistance, or requests for updates. A service request could become a complaint when a person expresses dissatisfaction with how HCA considered or responded to it, the quality or adequacy of the action taken or a failure to act.

12. Document details

Title	Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy
Version	v3.0
Approver	Chief Operating Officer
Owner	Manager, Customer Experience & Contact Centre Operations
Approval date	27/10/2026
Review period	3 years

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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

Arabic:

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مترجم، يرجى الاتصال بـ TIS الوطنية على الرقم 450 131 وأطلب منهم الاتصال بـ **Housing Choices Australia** على هاتف رقم **1300 312 447**. 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

Farsi (alt Persian):

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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