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CITY WEST
HOUSING

COMPLAINTS POLICY

GOVERNING POLICY



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It is the responsibility of the user of this document to ensure that only the current version is being used. City West Housing Pty Ltd may amend this document at any time.

DOCUMENT AND AMENDMENT HISTORY

VERSION NUMBER	DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
1.0	01/07/14	First publication
2.0	23/07/20	Update to procedure
3.0	26/08/20	Minor amendments
3.1	01/07/22	Update to timeframes
3.2	05/10/23	Addition of section 9

This document can be downloaded from www.citywesthousing.com.au.

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1. PURPOSE

This Policy outlines how City West Housing will handle dissatisfaction with our service. City West Housing recognises that customers have the right to complain and will not be disadvantaged or penalised for doing so.

- Give customers the right to complain
- Make it easy for customers to exercise that right
- Help City West Housing review what is and what is not working well within our organisation

2. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

Complaints can be made by customers of City West Housing, who are defined as tenants or applicants. A complaint is where a customer is dissatisfied with the service(s) they have received from City West Housing and want us to respond or take action.

Examples of complaints include:

- Poor service
- Change or withdrawal of service
- Repairs not completed within time frames
- The organisation has not followed its documented policies and procedures.

3. WHAT IS NOT A COMPLAINT?

City West Housing does not class any of the following as a complaint or service failure:

- An appeal of a decision made by City West Housing (refer to the Appeals Policy).
- Matters that are the responsibility of other agencies, tribunals and courts e.g. NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), Housing Appeals Committee (HAC), etc.
- Matters already escalated to other agencies, tribunals and courts e.g. NCAT, HAC, etc.
- Disputes between tenants unless related to the handling of the dispute
- Matters not directly related to the customer.

4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

City West Housing is committed to:

- Providing a quality service to our customers
- Answering your questions as soon as we can
- Improving our services as much as we can within the resources we have.

As a provider of services to you, we aim to make sure that our staff:

- Deliver a quality service with courtesy and the least delay
- Treat you with dignity and respect
- Commit to understanding your needs to help you
- Are well supported and trained
- Use any learnings from customer complaints to help improve service delivery.

5. OUR APPROACH TO MANAGING COMPLAINTS

City West Housing will:

- Ensure that all current and potential complaints are dealt with equitably and fairly

- Not penalise or disadvantage customers for making a complaint
- Ensure that resources are distributed on the basis of a complaint's merits, rather than a complainant's demands or conduct
- Manage complainant expectations from the beginning of the complaints process to ensure they are reasonable and realistic
- Provide complainants with clear, timely and firm communication about the status of their complaints, if there has been a delay
- Maintain confidentiality in relation to the identify and personal details of the complainant and those mentioned in a complaint and only disclose this information to the extent necessary to undertake a review
- Request that complainants show respect for and cooperate with staff in any contact or communication

6. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

- A customer on their own behalf.
- Someone who is responsible for the customer, for example a guardian.
- Someone who is the support person or advocate of the customer, as long as written consent has been provided. An Authority to Act form can be provided on request.

City West Housing recognises that a complainant may not be able to personally submit a complaint in writing. A complainant may provide consent for a third party to submit a complaint on their behalf. The consent must be expressly documented and presented at the time of submission.

There are also external bodies that can provide assistance with documenting complaints. These include:

- Community Legal Centres contactable through www.clcnsw.org.au
- The NSW Fair Trading Information Centre who can be contacted on 133 220 or at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au.

7. PROCEDURE

City West Housing encourages customers to raise any concerns with a relevant staff member (for example the Allocations Manager, Housing Manager, Maintenance Coordinator or CWH's Customer Service Assistant) before lodging a written complaint. This can be done over the phone or, in certain circumstances, via a face to face meeting.

City West Housing will attempt to resolve verbal complaints at the time the complaint is made. If a customer is unable to resolve their complaint informally or is not satisfied with the response then the complaint should be put in writing. The customer should provide details of the complaint and include any available evidence. Once the written complaint is received, an acknowledgment letter will be sent within 7 days along with a copy of the Complaints Policy.

The complaint will be recorded by the Complaints and Appeals Manager who will gather the details of the case.

The Complaints and Appeals Manager is designated by City West Housing to oversee the complaints management process. The Complaints and Appeals Manager typically does not investigate or resolve the complaint but coordinates the overall process including accurate recording of each complaint and the management of the Complaints and Appeals Register.

The Complaints and Appeals Manager will determine whether the matter is a complaint or an appeal. This may include contacting the person who has lodged the complaint for more information.

Where a complaint has been received via email, all formal correspondence (acknowledgement and response letter) should be expected via return email. Complaints that have been posted or

handed in to the office will be responded to via post. Complainants are welcome to request a different method of contact.

There are two internal review stages for written complaints:

STAGE 1 – MANAGER REVIEW

Once a complaint has been processed by the Complaints and Appeals Manager, the complaint will be passed to the relevant departmental manager to investigate and issue a response. Where it was the relevant department manager that made the original decision, the complaint will be referred to another manager or escalated to the next stage.

The investigation and resolution process will take no longer than 28 business days. If there is any reason this timeframe cannot be met, City West Housing will contact you and provide an update.

The letter will inform the complainant of their right to proceed to Stage 2 of the complaint process if they have outstanding concerns about the response.

STAGE 2 – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they are able to escalate their complaint for a further review. Details of how to do this are provided in the response letter.

Once the escalation has been processed and the acknowledgement letter is sent, the complaint will be passed to the Chief Executive Officer who will initiate a further review and make her determination on the matter. The turnaround time for a Stage 2 response is 28 business days from the date of escalation. If there are any delays to this timeframe, City West Housing will contact you to provide you with an update.

For both Stage 1 and Stage 2, responses will be provided in writing within 28 business days outlining either:

- Complaint Upheld
- Complaint Not Upheld
- Complaint Partially Upheld

The response may include one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An assurance about further actions
- Information on proposed changes to how things are done

The response letter will contain details of what to do next if the customer feels that the matter is still unresolved.

8. WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME

If the complainant still remains dissatisfied with the response, it is recommended they seek external advice. Please see further information:

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/factsheets/community-factsheet>

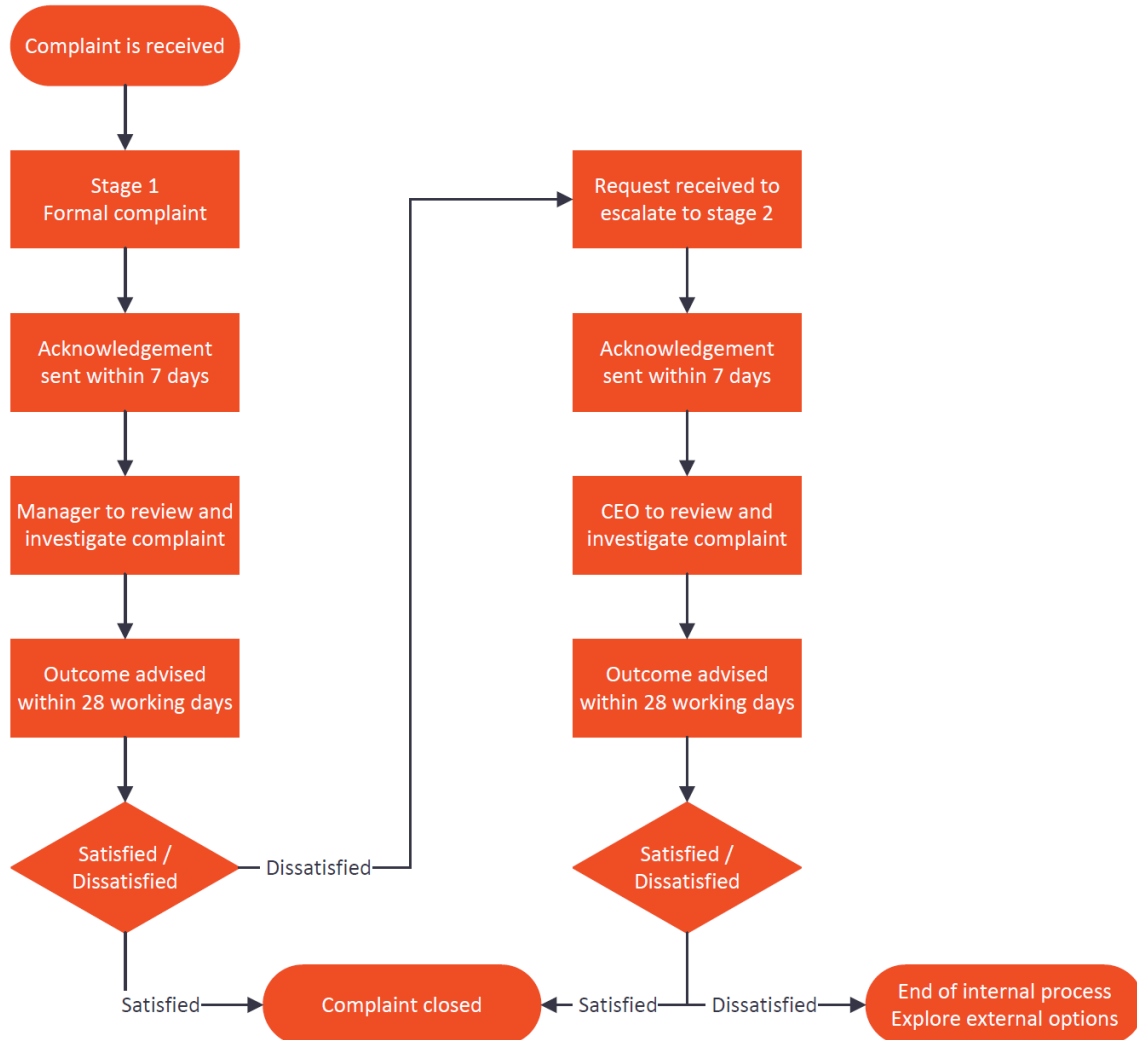
9. ISSUES OUTSIDE THIS POLICY

If you believe CWH has failed to comply with the community housing legislation, the matter can be raised with NSW Registrar of Community Housing (RCH), an external body that will investigate complaints of this nature. Please see further information:

<https://www.nrsch.gov.au/providers/guidance-and-policy/complaints-management-policy.html>

10. PROCESS DIAGRAM

The following diagram shows the steps that City West Housing will follow for Stages 1 and 2.



11. UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT CONDUCT

Unreasonable complainant conduct ('UCC') can be defined as any behaviour by a current or former complainant which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the parties to a complaint.

Where City West Housing identifies a complainant as acting unreasonably, we reserve the right to stop responding to the individual's ongoing complaint about a matter, as per Section 5 of this Policy.