



Complaints and Appeals Policy

1.0 Introduction

McCormack Housing welcomes and values complaints and feedback and is committed to responding to this feedback to improve service delivery.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints and appeals made to McCormack Housing by:

- renters and prospective renters, their advocates, and other stakeholders; and
- people whom McCormack Housing has assisted to make an application for social housing through the Victorian Housing Register (VHR).

For the purposes of this policy, feedback can be:

- a complaint about the way McCormack Housing has delivered housing or related services; and
- an application for an internal review of a decision made by McCormack Housing in relation to housing, application, or services.

This policy does not apply to complaints or feedback received from people who are not renters, prospective renters, or applicants for social housing. This includes:

- complaints or grievances by employees of McCormack Housing.
- complaints by contractors of McCormack Housing; or
- complaints relating to the behaviour of neighbours.

McCormack Housing recognises that where complaints and/or feedback fall outside of the scope of this policy, the complaint will be handled in accordance with the 'no wrong door' principle which means it will be resolved by referring the complainant to the correct complaint and/or feedback pathway.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints handling responsibilities and pathways are clear and that procedures and approaches are fair, equitable, consistently managed and properly documented.

2.0 Definitions

- **Applicant:** A person who McCormack Housing assists to apply for social housing.
- **Complainant:** The individual or organisation that made a complaint.
- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, employee or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. The subject of the complaint may include:
 - a policy or decision made by McCormack Housing employee about a rental housing matter.
 - the quality of an action, decision or service provided by McCormack Housing employee.
 - a delay by McCormack Housing employee in taking an action, deciding, or delivering a service.

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- **Complaint outcome or decision:** The response provided by McCormack Housing about a complaint.
- **Feedback Response Officer:** An employee appointed to monitor adherence with the Feedback Management Framework.
- **Feedback Resolution Officer:** The employee assigned to respond and manage the feedback to resolution.
- **The Group:** ACSO and McCormack Housing employees
- **Review of a complaint outcome or decision:** A request by a complainant for review of a complaint outcome or decision.
- **VHR:** The Victorian Housing Registrar, the state-wide common application for people seeking social housing, which can be accessed via McCormack Housing, Homes Vic, the MyGov portal or designated support providers.

3.0 Policy Implementation Guidelines

McCormack Housing handles every complaint through a clear and consistent process and is committed to finding a quick and effective resolution. There is also a commitment to learning from complaints to improve services.

Accordingly, McCormack Housing will:

- provide clear information about how to lodge a complaint or apply for an internal review and how to escalate a complaint to the Housing Registrar.
- ensure the complaint and appeal process is accessible to all complainants
- make referrals to appropriate advocacy and legal services to assist complainants (renters can also refer to the renter support information sheet).
- respond to the complaint and/or appeal promptly, fairly, and transparently.
- respect the complainant’s privacy and confidentiality when making a complaint or applying for an internal review.
- treat the complainant in a way that is objective, respectful, and fair including consideration of human rights.
- be accountable for decisions as a service provider.
- not take any adverse action against the complainant simply because a complaint or lodgment of an appeal; and
- use the outcome of complaints and appeals to improve service delivery.

3.1 Who can make a complaint?

A renter or a prospective renter may make a complaint or a representative of a renter or a prospective renter (such as an advocate or a family member) may also make a complaint on a complainant’s behalf to McCormack Housing.

McCormack Housing is committed to being accessible and responsive to all complainants regardless of ethnic identity, national origin, religion, linguistic background, sex, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability or other cultural or personal factors.

Please see McCormack Housing renter assistance information sheet that lists advocates and supports that may be able to assist a complainant with the complaints process.

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3.2 How to make a complaint

A complainant who is affected by the decisions of McCormack Housing on matters relating to rental housing can ask for the complaint to be dealt with under the complaints and appeals procedure.

Complaints can be made by:

- Telephone: (03) 9413 7000
- Online: www.mccormackhousing.org.au. There is a link on every page where you can submit and complaint or feedback.
- Email: info@mccormackhousing.org.au
- Post: 1 Hoddle St Richmond Victoria 3121
- In person: 1 Hoddle St Richmond Victoria 3121

McCormack Housing is committed to ensuring a navigable and culturally safe complaints process that is accessible to everyone. If a complainant has specific communication needs or barriers, the complainant can communicate this to McCormack Housing so assistance can be provided by:

- using an assistance service, such an interpreter or TTY (for free).
- assistance with reading or writing; and
- communicating with another person acting on the complainant's behalf.

3.3 How a complaint will be handled

- McCormack Housing will acknowledge a complaint within 3 business days of receiving the complaint and will enter the complaint in Riskman.
- The Feedback Response Officer and the McCormack Housing Operations Manager (or authorised delegate) will meet to review the feedback and determine a response plan and assign a Feedback Resolution Officer.
- The Feedback Resolution Officer will contact the complainant to discuss the complaint within 7 days business days. The Feedback Resolution Officer will also take whatever steps are necessary to try to resolve the complaint. This may include:
 - taking direct action to resolve the complaint; and
 - referring the complaint to the relevant team or manager for investigation
- The Feedback Resolution Officer will try to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible. The Feedback Resolution Officer will inform the complainant of the complaint outcome and provide reasons in writing within 30 calendar days of receiving the complaint. If there is any reason for a delay, the Feedback Resolution Officer will contact the complainant and advise when a response can be expected, and the reason for the delay.

3.4 Complaint conduct

The success of the complaints process depends on:

- McCormack Housing's ability to work effectively and efficiently
- the health, safety, and security of McCormack Housing employee
- McCormack Housing's ability to allocate resources fairly across all complaints received.

McCormack Housing requires employees to be respectful and responsive in all their communications. Where a complainant's behaviour or conduct raises health, safety, resource, or equity issues, this may significantly affect the complaint handling process. McCormack Housing will act proactively and

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decisively to manage unreasonable complainant conduct and will support employees to do the same in accordance with this policy. McCormack Housing and the Feedback Resolution Officer may adjust its communication method/s to minimise any adverse impacts for employees and complainants.

3.5 The outcome of a complaint

The Resolution Officer will contact the complainant to advise the outcome of the complaint and provide details of:

- actions taken in response to the complaint;
- the reasons for the decision made;
- where McCormack Housing has made an oversight, the steps that will be taken to redress the situation; and
- information on options for internal or external review if the complainant is not satisfied with the decision.

A complaint outcome will be made in writing with written reasons to the complainant. Once a decision is made in relation to the complaint, the details of the complaint will be recorded on the McCormack Housing Complaints Register and closed.

It is a regulatory requirement for McCormack Housing to record the complaint on a Complaints Register and provide it to the Housing Registrar on an annual basis for regulatory purposes.

3.6 Requesting an internal review of the outcome of the complaint

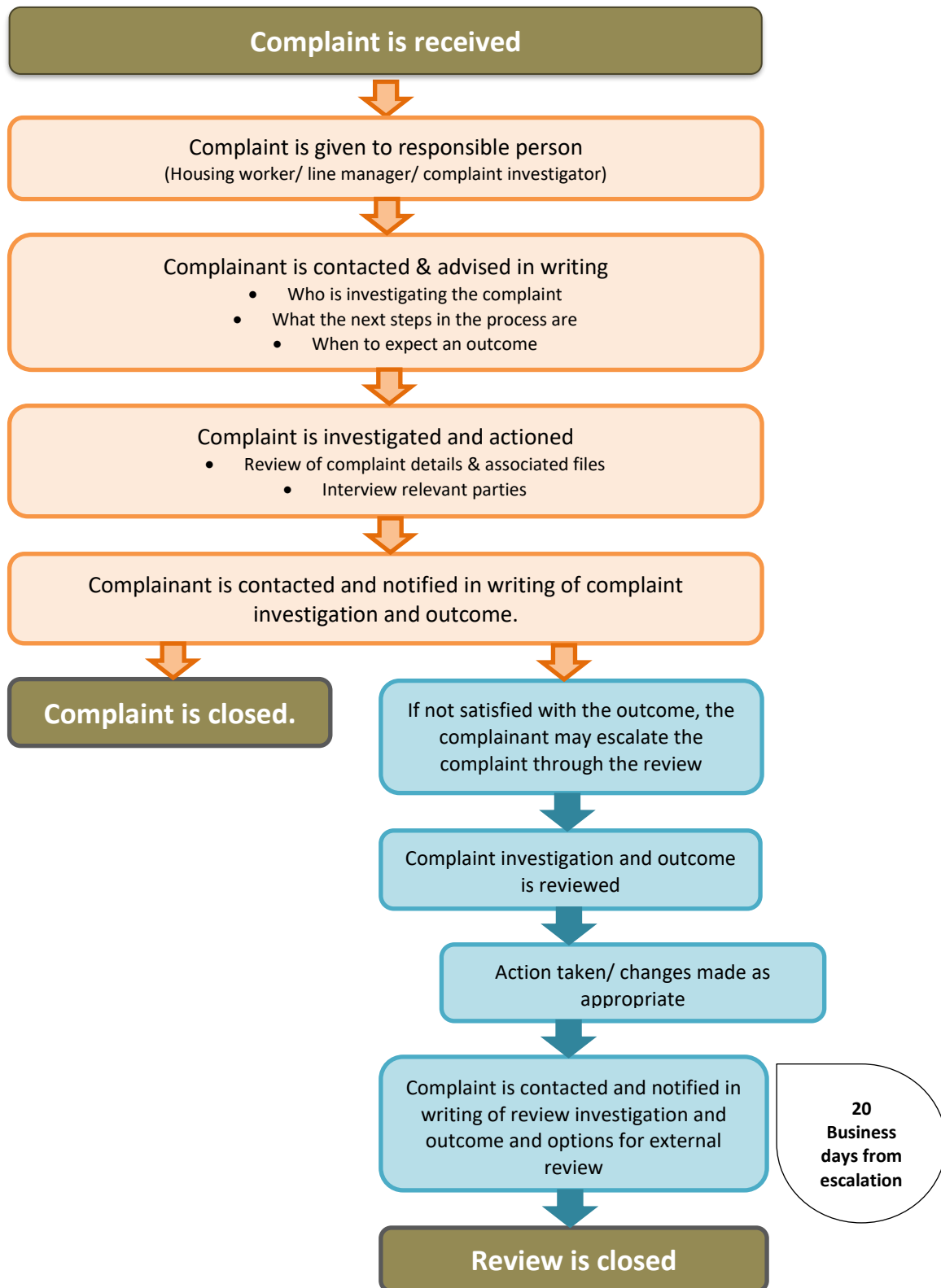
The complainant can request that a decision or outcome of the complaint be reviewed by McCormack Housing where the complainant believes it to be incorrect.

The review will be conducted by the Chief Corporate Services Officer who has not had any prior involvement with the complaint. The Chief Corporate Services Officer will inform the complainant of the outcome of the internal review and provide reasons in writing within 20 business days of the request.

A complainant can request copies of documentation related to their tenancy or complaint as well as copies of relevant policies and it will be released as per the Responding to Requests for Personal Information Procedure.

Below is a flow chart that provides a graphic overview of McCormack Housing's complaints process:

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4.0 External Complaint Bodies

There may be times where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint after an internal review by McCormack Housing. In these circumstances, there are external bodies that can deal with different types of complaints about McCormack Housing. The following infographic shows how a complainant can escalate a complaint where they are not satisfied with the process provided by McCormack Housing:



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4.1 Housing Registrar Details

If McCormack Housing has not resolved the complaint within 30 days, or the complainant is unsatisfied by the decision made about the complaint, the complainant may contact the Victorian Housing Registrar:

- Telephone: 03 7005 8984
- Online: <https://www.vic.gov.au/making-complaint-about-community-housing>
- Post: Housing Registrar, GPO Box 4379, Melbourne, Victoria 3001

Victorian Ombudsman Details

If a complainant continues to be dissatisfied after discussing an issue with [CHO] and the Housing Registrar, they can contact the Victorian Ombudsman:

- Telephone: 1800 806 314
- Online: <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/complaints/make-complaint/>
- Post: Level 2, 570 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

A complainant may also have statutory rights of appeal which should be directed to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal:

- Telephone: 1300 01 8228
- Online: <https://www.vcat.vic.gov.au/>
- Email: renting@vcat.vic.gov.au

4.2 Confidentiality

All complaints and appeals are confidential and no identifying information will be shared without permission. When a complaint or appeal is made, McCormack Housing will record:

- name and contact details;
- whether the complainant has communication, cultural or assistance needs;
- details of the complaint or appeal; and
- what outcome the complainant is seeking.

McCormack Housing uses this information to respond to a complaint and to improve the services that relate to a complaint. All personal and sensitive information collected in the complaints process will be kept secure and managed in accordance with the McCormack Housing Privacy Policy.

McCormack Housing may share information to promote the wellbeing or safety of a child or group of children, or to prevent family violence, with other approved information sharing entities as legislated by the Victorian Government.

5.0 Related policies

- CG3 Privacy Policy
- P&C01 People & Culture Policy

6.0 Legislation and standards

This policy meets the legislative requirements of section 97 of the Housing Act 1983 and the regulatory requirements of the Performance Standards established under section 93 of the Housing Act 1983.

This policy also implements McCormack Housing obligations under DHHS Victorian Housing Register

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Operational Guidelines.

This policy will be available on the McCormack Housing website:
www.mccormackhousing.org.au/informationfortenants

7.0 Review

This policy will be reviewed at a minimum of every two years.

Version	Date	Author	Reason	Sections
2.1	16 August 2023	Q& R Advisor	Incorporate feedback from Policy Review Group	All
2	29 July 2023	McCormack Housing Manager	Feedback from the VIC Housing Registrar	All
1	September 2022	McCormack Housing Manager	Implementation	All

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