

Feedback, Complaints & Appeals Policy

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Policy owner:	Director Corporate Services

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- a** provide a process for any person to provide feedback, make a complaint or lodge an appeal against a Unison decision or provision of service
- b** outline how Unison will manage the feedback, complaints and appeals process
- c** describe how Unison will use information collected to identify opportunities for the improvement of operations and service delivery

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to;

- a** all renters, clients, their advocates, applicants and other stakeholders
- b** all Unison staff, including employees, contractors and volunteers

2.2 This policy does not cover;

- a** disputes or grievances from employees, contractors or management
- b** disputes or grievances between renters or their advocate about someone outside of the organisation. For example, a dispute between neighbours
- c** disputes that are covered by other legislation. For example, renter responsibilities that fall under the jurisdiction of the *Residential Tenancies Act (Vic) 1997*

2.3 This policy meets the requirements of the *Housing Act 1983 (Vic)* and Performance Standards that represent the standard of operation required under the provisions of the Act.

Principles

2.4 Unison is committed to;

- a** providing the opportunity for people to safely express their opinions or dissatisfaction in an easy and accessible way
- b** managing complaints and appeals in a fair, transparent and timely manner
- c** meeting all its legal, contractual and regulatory requirements regarding the management of complaints and appeals
- d** using information collected through feedback, complaints and appeals to continuously improve Unison services

Making a Complaint or an Appeal

2.5 Unison encourages people to raise their concerns, exercise their right to complain or appeal a decision.

- 2.6 If a renter, client, their advocate or a stakeholder is not satisfied with a service provided by Unison, they can lodge a complaint.
- 2.7 If a renter, client, their advocate or a stakeholder is not satisfied with the response to a decision made by Unison, including a response to a complaint, they can lodge an appeal.
- 2.8 Complaints and appeals can be made using the Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Form available on the Unison website, or by email, letter, telephone or in person.

Online: unison.org.au/feedback

Phone: 03 9349 0250

Letter: PO Box 12145 A'Beckett St, Melbourne 8006

To ensure an efficient response or resolution, the complaint or appeal should include:

- a any action already taken to resolve the issue
- b any responses or communication received to date
- c the desired action or outcome sought by the complainant/appellant.

A complaint will be recorded for reporting and service improvement purposes only.

Handling of Complaints and Appeals

- 2.9 Unison acknowledges the valid and valuable opinions of all stakeholders received via the feedback, complaints and appeals process. When responding to complaints and appeals, Unison will;
- a acknowledge, respond and resolve complaints and appeals within 30 business days
 - b appropriately engage and communicate with all concerned stakeholders
 - c maintain accurate records of all communications
 - d utilise information and outcomes to ensure quality continuous improvement of Unison services
 - e where appropriate, provide information about available supports and relevant policies to assist stakeholders to navigate the process and understand how decisions have been reached.

Feedback

- 2.10 Unison encourages all stakeholders to provide feedback regarding organisational services and service delivery. Feedback includes;
- a Compliments to Unison employees
 - b Positive feedback on service experience
 - c General or constructive feedback and suggested improvements
- 2.11 Feedback can be given at any time online via the Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Form, or by email, telephone, letter or in person, and while not all feedback requires a response, a response will be given if expected or appropriate.
- 2.12 Unison may proactively request feedback from stakeholders to ensure the continuous improvement of services.

Privacy & Confidentiality

- 2.13 Unison respects your privacy by treating all personal and sensitive information, including information that is collected through the process of lodging a complaint or appeal, in accordance with the privacy legislation. All complaints and appeals are confidential and no identifying information will be shared without permission.

- 2.14 Further details about how we collect, handle, use and disclose your personal information are contained in our Privacy Policy. If you would like to see a full copy of Unison’s Privacy Policy, go to www.unison.org.au, ask a staff member, or phone (03) 9349 0250.

3 Further information

Escalation of Complaints and Appeals

- 3.1 If you are not satisfied with the resolution of a complaint, you can appeal and request a review of the decision.
- 3.2 If you are a Unison renter and have lodged a complaint with Unison and it remains unresolved after 30 days, you may contact the Victorian Housing Registrar for further information. Complaints that will be reviewed by the Housing Registrar are those where:
- a The complaint is made by a renter or prospective renter (or someone authorised to act on their behalf), and is about a rental housing matter; and
 - b The complaint is about a service delivered or decision made by an individual registered agency about a rental housing matter; and
 - c The complaint has already been directed formally to the registered agency, and after 30 days the agency did not resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, and the complainant now wishes to refer it to the Registrar for resolution.
 - i For information on the Housing Registrar’s role, refer to <https://www.vic.gov.au/making-complaint-about-community-housing>
- 3.3 If you are a client of one of Unison’s homelessness programs and have lodged a complaint with Unison and it remains unresolved, you may Contact the Council to Homeless Persons Homelessness Advocacy Service (1800 066 256).
- 3.4 Other avenues for escalation include;
- a The **Department of Families, Fairness and Housing** (DFFH) for complaints or requests regarding applications for housing under the Victorian Housing Register
 - b **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal** (VCAT) for residential disputes between renters and rental providers under the *Residential Tenancy Act* (Vic)
 - c **Consumer Affairs Victoria** for information about renter rights and obligations and dispute resolution
 - d **Victorian Ombudsman** for complaints concerning the Victorian Housing Register (VHR)
 - e **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission** (VEOHRC) for the resolution of complaints concerning any type of discrimination, intimidation or vilification.

Advocates

- f **Victoria Legal Aid** provides information, legal advice, and education with a focus on the prevention and early resolution of legal problems
- g **Justice Connect** provides pro bono legal services to people experiencing disadvantage by connecting to lawyers and barristers willing to act on a pro bono basis
- h **Tenants Victoria** provides information, advice, and legal representation to promote and protect the rights of Victorians who rent their homes.
- i **Council to Homeless Persons Homelessness Advocacy Service** provides assistance for people who have a problem with a homelessness assistance or social housing service.

4 **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years as delegated by the responsible Executive.