

Complaints & Feedback Policy

1. Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this policy is to:

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

This policy applies to:

- all renters, clients, their families and advocates, applicants and support workers.
- neighbours of Unison properties, other stakeholders and members of the general public.
- all Unison Housing, Unison Property Corporation and MakeSpace staff, including employees, contractors and volunteers.

This policy does not cover:

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

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.

This policy aligns with the requirements of the DFFH *Complaints Management Policy for Funded Organisations*, based on the principles of visibility and accessibility, responsiveness, assessment, feedback, improvement focus and service excellence.

3. Policy Statement

As a housing provider, there is communication Unison receives from renters, clients and the local community which is within our scope to address and respond to. There is also communication that we receive that falls outside the scope of a housing provider, or that we are restricted in our capacity to respond to due to privacy legislation or the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.

Feedback provides Unison with an opportunity to review staff, services, facilities or systems which can lead to quality improvements for the renter.

Unison has a commitment to the fair resolution of complaints by adopting the “Natural Justice Process”. This means that a minimum standard of fairness is applied to the investigation and resolution of a complaint.

Unison ensures that renters have a say in how their housing is run, and that their views are heard and reflected on by Unison in considering how to deliver and improve housing services, outlined in the *Renter Voice Policy*.

All details and information collected through the feedback and complaints process is kept confidential and shared only with those involved in the management of the feedback.

Unison ensures that staff are familiar with and understand the *Complaints & Feedback Procedure* and that customers are aware of their right to make a complaint and the right to have an advocate to assist them with this process.

3.1 Principles

Unison is committed to:

- providing the opportunity for people to safely express their opinions or dissatisfaction in an easy and accessible way.
- a procedure and register in place for the recording and management of complaints, feedback and appeals.
- Training to staff on the recording and management of complaints.
- managing complaints and appeals in a fair, transparent and timely manner.
- meeting all its legal, contractual and regulatory requirements regarding the management of complaints and appeals.
- using information collected through feedback, complaints and appeals to continuously improve Unison services.

The details of Unison’s feedback management system are outlined in the *Complaints & Feedback Procedure*.

3.2 Making a complaint or an appeal

If a renter, client, their children, advocate or a stakeholder is not satisfied with a service provided by Unison, they can lodge a complaint. Unison encourages people to raise their concerns, exercise their right to complain or appeal a decision.

3.2.1 Providing information

Unison ensures that all renters and prospective renters are provided with information about Unison’s complaints process, including how to contact the regulators and other external agencies, through the [Complaints, Feedback & Appeals brochure](#).

This information is:

- included with any initial information given to prospective renters.
- included in tenancy information packs given to new renters.
- available on Unison’s website.
- available at any of Unison’s offices.
- if reasonably practicable, available in the renter’s or prospective renter’s preferred language.

3.2.2 Complaint handling performance standards

Unison’s complaint handling performance standards are:

Acknowledgement to complainant	2 business days
Written response to complainant	Within 10 business days
Follow-up response to complainant	Within 5 business days of receipt of complainant’s response
Final resolution and/or completion of process	Within 30 days

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.

Complaints and appeals can be made using the [Feedback Form](#) available on the Unison website, or by email, letter, telephone or in person.

Online:	https://unison.org.au/tenant-resources/tenant-feedback
Phone:	03 9349 0250
Mail:	PO Box 12145 A’Beckett Street, Melbourne 8006

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

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

A complaint is recorded for reporting and service improvement purposes only.

3.3 **Handling of complaints and appeals**

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:

- acknowledges, responds and resolves complaints and appeals within 30 business days
- appropriately engages and communicates with all concerned stakeholders
- maintains accurate records of all communications
- utilises information and outcomes to ensure continuous improvement of Unison services
- where appropriate, provides information about available supports and relevant policies to assist stakeholders to navigate the process and understand how decisions have been reached.

3.4 Feedback

Unison encourages all stakeholders to provide feedback regarding organisational services and service delivery. Feedback includes:

- Compliments to Unison employees
- Positive feedback on service experience
- General or constructive feedback and suggested improvements.

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 is given if expected or appropriate.

Unison may proactively request feedback from stakeholders to ensure the continuous improvement of services.

3.5 Privacy & confidentiality

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 is shared without permission. Online: unison.org.au/feedback Phone: 03 9349 0250 Letter: PO Box 12145 A'Beckett St, Melbourne 8006.

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

3.6 Escalation of complaints and appeals

If you are not satisfied with the resolution of a complaint, you can appeal and request a review of the decision.

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 are reviewed by the Housing Registrar are those where:

- 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
- The complaint is about a service delivered or decision made by an individual registered agency about a rental housing matter; and
- 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.
 - For information on the Housing Registrar's role, refer to <https://www.vic.gov.au/makingcomplaint-about-community-housing>

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 825 955), [Homelessness Advocacy Service - Council to Homeless Persons website](#), or has@chp.org.au.

Other avenues for escalation include:

- The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), for complaints or requests regarding applications for housing under the Victorian Housing Register.
- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for residential disputes between renters and rental providers under the Residential Tenancy Act (Vic).
- Consumer Affairs Victoria for information about renter rights and obligations and dispute resolution.
- Victorian Ombudsman for complaints concerning the Victorian Housing Register (VHR).
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) for the resolution of complaints concerning any type of discrimination, intimidation or vilification.
- Tenants Victoria.
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

Unison cooperates with all regulators and public agencies investigating complaints about Unison or a decision made by Unison. On request, Unison promptly provides the Housing Registrar’s office with a copy of its complaints register and complies with any directions concerning a complaint or future complaint.

3.7 Advocates

- Victoria Legal Aid provides information, legal advice, and education with a focus on the prevention and early resolution of legal problems
- 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
- Tenants Victoria provides information, advice, and legal representation to promote and protect the rights of Victorians who rent their homes.
- Council to Homeless Persons Homelessness Advocacy Service provides assistance for people who have a problem with a homelessness assistance or social housing service.

4. Definitions

Complaint: a complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required” as defined in the Australian Standard *AS/NZS ISO 10002:2014 Guidelines for Complaints Management in Organisations*.

Unison has adopted the ‘no wrong door’ principle and must recognise complaints which are outside its areas of responsibility. These complaints are resolved by referring the complainant to the correct complaint pathway.

Complaints Officer: Senior Advisor Complaints, Incidents & Policy

Compliment: a compliment is an expression of praise, encouragement or gratitude about a service that is funded, regulated or provided. It may be about an individual staff member, a team or a service.

Feedback: Feedback is a compliment, comment or suggestion where a response is not normally sought and is not mandatory to action, but where improvements to Unison services may be realised.

5. Document owner

The Deputy CEO is responsible for the review of this document. Refer to them to suggest any revision.

6. Related Information

6.1 Internal documents and links

- *Complaints & Feedback Procedure*
- *Complaints, Feedback & Appeals Brochure*
- *Incident Management Procedure*
- *Renter Voice Policy*
- *Unison Privacy Policy & Collection Notice*
- [Unison website Feedback Form](#)

6.2 External documents and links

- [DFFH Complaints Management Policy for Funded Organisations](#)
- [AS/NZS ISO 10002:2018 Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations](#)
- [Mental Health & Wellbeing Act 2022](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014](#)
- [Victims and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018](#)
- Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission