



Customer Feedback and Review

Policy Intent

Housing Tasmania is committed to the provision of quality customer service. Part of that ongoing commitment is to ensure that clients have information about and access to the decision making process, their right of complaint and their right of appeal, which derives from the principles of fairness and the right of the client to seek an unbiased review.

Why does Housing Tasmania need a policy?

Housing Tasmania is committed to improving service to clients by ensuring that all action and decisions are correctly made within existing policies, procedures and standards and resolving matters of complaint and dissatisfaction in a timely, constructive, effective and courteous manner.

The Customer Service Hotline and the Housing Review Committee are seen as ways of enhancing Housing Tasmania's ability to provide high quality customer services.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service offered or provided. Early identification, assessment and referral to the relevant Area Manager are crucial elements in the success of the Customer Service Hotline.

Provision and maintenance of a "process to action consumer complaints and review decisions" is a requirement of the National Affordable Housing Agreement.

Non-Service Delivery complaints

Complaints that are not related to service delivery, (eg. complaints relating to a funding round or tender process) will be directed to the branch responsible rather than the Customer Service Hotline or Housing Review Committee.

Complaints about individual staff members

Complaints about individual staff members should be directed to the supervisor of the staff member concerned. Complaints of this type should not be referred to the Customer Service Hotline and will not be considered by the Housing Review Committee. These processes relate to decision making processes and the application of policies and procedures.

Dealing with a complaint at the Service Centre level

Clients should be encouraged to make initial complaints about Housing Tasmania's service with the staff member with whom they have been dealing.

If they are still dissatisfied they should be encouraged to ask for a formal review by ringing or speaking in person with the appropriate line manager. In some cases it may be appropriate for them to speak with the Area



Manager.

Where clients remain dissatisfied they should be referred to the Customer Service Hotline.

Customer Services Hotline

Housing Tasmania has developed the Customer Service Hotline to:

- Recognise, promote and protect client's rights, including the right to comment and complain;
- Provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving clients complaints;
- Provide information to clients on Housing Tasmania's internal complaints handling process;
- Monitor complaints in an endeavour to improve the quality of products and service; and
- Decrease the number of complaints proceeding to the Minister and the Ombudsman's office.

The Customer Service Hotline is based on the premise that:

- Clients have the right to complain and to have their complaints assessed if they are not satisfied with the service Housing Tasmania is providing, or with a decision that effects them;
- Complaints provide feedback about Housing Tasmania's policies and service provision enabling improvement in these areas; and
- Complaints are investigated through the Customer Services Hotline processes, enabling clients to have an accessible mechanism for input into policy making.

Types of Complaints

Complaints received by the Customer Service Hotline should result from the following three situations:

- A determination has been made whereby a client is not eligible for the service or benefit for which they have applied;
- A client has a complaint about the level or quality of the service; or
- Standards for a service have not been met.

Who Can Complain?

- Any client of Housing Tasmania;
- Any person nominated by the client to do so although written permission is required;



- Any person acting on behalf of a person with an intellectual disability; or
- Any member of parliament or a community organisation representing the interests of a particular group of people.

How does a client make a complaint?

To make a complaint a client should ring the Customer Service Hotline and speak with the Customer Liaison Officer on **1800 808 340**.

Housing Review Committee

The Housing Review Committee (HRC) considers cases where clients dispute decisions that have been made by Housing Tasmania. A client may make an application to the HRC once the relevant Area has investigated the issue and the client remains unhappy. The HRC looks at:

- The “claims” of the client
- The response provided by the relevant Area
- The relevant Housing Tasmania policies and procedures
- The evidence on file

The Housing Review Committee makes a recommendation to the Director as to whether the Area’s decision should be upheld or overturned.

Who can apply to the Housing Review Committee?

A person directly affected by the decision may apply for review, and can nominate a person or organisation to act on their behalf.

All applications for review must be in writing, preferably on the Housing Review Application Form.

The HRC application form can only be offered to a client by the Operational Policy team.

What decisions can be appealed

Clients can seek review of decisions relating to the delivery of operational services in the public housing rental program and Aboriginal housing rental program. This includes decisions about:

- Eligibility for housing
- Eligibility for transfer
- Housing need assessment categorisation
- Cancellation of application
- Vacation maintenance charges



The Housing Review Committee cannot review the following decisions:

- Decisions that have general application
- Decisions not relating to the delivery of operational services
- Asset management decisions including decisions about the purchase, sale, redevelopment or modification of properties and decisions about tenant alteration requests.
- Complaints about the way a service was delivered, as opposed to a decision, including complaints about staff behaviour
- Decisions that are being, or have been considered by the HRC, Ombudsman or the Minister for Health and Human Services
- Decisions where legal action has been commenced by the Director of Housing.

Time to apply for a review

Clients must apply for a review of decisions made prior to 1 July 2010 by 1 July 2012.

Otherwise, clients may apply for review of a decision up to 12 months after they have received notice of, or become aware of, the decision.

Clients Rights

The client has the right to:

- Be heard;
- Know whether Housing Tasmania's policies have been followed;
- Access all relevant information pertaining to their case;
- Know the criteria and process, including avenues for further review;
- Know Housing Tasmania's decision and reasons for the decision; and
- Know the complaint is being reviewed independently and confidentially.

Housing Tasmania's Rights

The Housing Tasmania has the right to:

- Gather sufficient detail about the complaint to enable proper investigation of the case and the response to the client;
- Provide all relevant material about the complaint to the Housing Review Committee.

Publicity

The Customer Service Hotline and Housing Review process will be well publicised to clients and staff and shall include information to clients about 4



their right to complain.

Timeliness

Complaints will be dealt with quickly and complainants treated courteously. Complainants will be made aware of time frames and kept informed of the progress of their complaint. Customer Service Hotline calls should be responded to within two (2) working days. The Housing Review Committee process should be finalised with thirty (30) working days.

Some more complex cases and issues may take longer than these timeframes.

The Ombudsman

Clients have the right to contact the Ombudsman at any time. The Ombudsman is an independent official appointed to investigate complaints against government departments. The contact number for the Ombudsman is 1800 001 170.

If the client contacts the Ombudsman before they have been through Housing Tasmania's review process the Ombudsman's office will generally refer them back to Housing Tasmania's Customer Services Hotline.