

Purpose

This policy establishes the approach of Salvation Army Housing (Victoria) (SAHV) to complaints and appeals in respect of housing, social housing applications and housing services.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints and appeals made to SAHV by:

- tenants and prospective tenants of SAHV in respect of rental housing; and
- people whom SAHV has assisted to make an application for social housing under the Victorian Housing Register (VHR).

Policy

Guiding principles

All tenants and prospective tenants of SAHV and applicants (**clients**) have the right to:

- complain about the way that SAHV has gone about delivering housing or related services; and
- appeal a decision made by SAHV in relation to their housing, application or services.

SAHV welcomes complaints from clients as a key way by which SAHV receives feedback, responds to the needs of clients and improves its service delivery.

Accordingly, SAHV will:

- provide clients with clear information about how they can make a complaint or lodge an appeal with SAHV and about any external complaint-handling bodies that are relevant (such as DHHS or the Housing Registrar);
- support clients to make a complaint or appeal in a way that is accessible to them;
- respond to complaints and appeals promptly, fairly and transparently;
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of clients who make a complaint or lodge an appeal;
- not take any adverse action in respect of a client simply because the client has made a complaint or lodged an appeal; and
- keep records of complaints made and appeals lodged; and
- use the outcome of complaints and appeals to improve SAHV's service delivery and minimise future complaints and appeals.

Complaints by tenants or prospective tenants about rental housing

Tenants or prospective tenants of SAHV who are affected by decisions of SAHV on matters relating to rental housing may ask for their complaint to be dealt with under the complaints and appeals procedure.

Under this procedure, SAHV must take all reasonable steps to resolve such complaints within 30 days after the complaint is made to SAHV.

An individual who is a tenant or prospective tenant of SAHV and who has made a complaint to SAHV may refer the complaint to the Housing Registrar for investigation if the complaint is not resolved within 30 days after it is made.

Complaints or appeals about applications for social housing under the Victorian Housing Register

SAHV participates in the VHR by submitting applications to DHHS with a recommended outcome based on the VHR's eligibility criteria.

Where an applicant wishes to:

- make a complaint about the way in which SAHV has provided service to them in making an application for social housing; or
- appeal a decision made by SAHV in relation to the person's application for social housing to:
 - recommend or not recommend an application for approval;
 - approve or not approve an application;
 - remove an application from the register; and
 - determine if an offer of social housing is a reasonable offer,

then such applicants should first ask that the complaint be reviewed or decision be reconsidered by SAHV under the complaints and appeal procedures.

Applicants for social housing who are unhappy with the resolution of a complaint under the complaints and appeals procedure may refer the complaint to the DHHS Housing Appeals Office.

Procedures

SAHV will establish a complaints and appeal procedures to support this policy.

SAHV will regularly monitor the effectiveness of these complaints and appeal procedures.

Definitions

In this policy:

Appeal	When a person asks for a review of a decision of SAHV to which this policy applies
Applicant	A person who SAHV assists to apply for social housing
Client	An applicant or a tenant or prospective tenant of SAHV
Complaint	A complaint is a client's registered expression of dissatisfaction with any service delivered or action taken by SAHV to which this policy applies.
DHHS	The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
Social housing	Both public housing (housing owned and managed by DHHS) and housing owned, controlled or managed by participating registered agencies (that is, registered housing agencies that participate in the VHR)
VHR	The Victorian Housing Register, the statewide common application for people seeking social housing, which can be accessed via SAHV, DHHS, the mygov portal or designated support providers

Legislation and standards

This policy implements SAHV's obligations under:

- Housing Act 1983 (Vic) Part VIII Division 5 Subdivision 2 (Dispute Resolution)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- DHHS Victorian Housing Register Operational Guidelines