

Complaints & Appeals Procedure

Purpose

Westside Housing Company Ltd (Westside) is committed to maintaining natural justice principles and we believe that people have the right to lodge a complaint.

This purpose of this procedure is to ensure that we handle complaints and appeals fairly, efficiently and effectively so we can:

- Respond to issues raised in complaints and appeals in a timely, fair and equitable way
- Use information provided through complaints to deliver service improvements
- Have an accessible and consistent complaint handling procedure
- Maintain a register of complaints and appeals,
- Take all reasonable steps to investigate and resolve complaints within 14 days and appeals within 30 days.

Scope

This procedure applies to all customers with a legitimate interest in the matter related to the complaint or appeal. Complaints and appeals can be lodged by:

- A person on their own behalf
- A person who is responsible for the person wishing to lodge a complaint or appeal
- A support person or advocate of the person, as long as they have the consent of the person wishing to lodge a complaint or appeal.

This procedure does not cover:

- Disputes between tenants and/or neighbours. These are dealt with under Westside's Neighbour Dispute Resolution procedure
- Matters not directly related to the customer
- Staff or management grievances or disputes
- Matters that are the responsibility of other tribunals, courts or the police

Principles

Westside respects and values the views of customers and welcomes their feedback as part of our continuous improvement processes. If a customer is unhappy with our services, we want to know so that we can attempt to resolve the matter and to improve our services.

Westside expect all staff to understand the complaints and appeals process and inform customers who disagree with a decision made by Westside. We will:

- Promote our complaints, feedback and appeals processes to customers; verbally, via brochures and our website
- Treat all complaints and appeals fairly in line with natural justice principles, ensure customers can complain or withdraw complaints or appeals without fear of discrimination or recrimination
- Encourage customers to use an advocate, support person or interpreter if needed throughout the process
- Respond to complaints and appeals in a timely manner, in line with procedural timeframes
- Keep customers informed throughout the process, including of any potential delays
- Provide decisions in writing
- Maintain a Complaints Register
- Use the outcome of complaints when reviewing our practices.

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Use of interpreters

Where the customer has limited English, Westside will access the services of a support person or advocate or where this is not suitable or appropriate, Translating and Interpreting Service Ph: 13 14 50.

Confidentiality

We will protect the identity of people making complaints and appeals where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identified individuals will only be disclosed or used by Westside as permitted under the relevant privacy laws.

Definitions

Appeal: when a customer using our services asks for a decision to be reviewed

Appellant: person lodging the appeal

Complaint: when a customer using our services advises us that they are not satisfied with our service, standards or policies

Customer: Westside applicant, tenant, stakeholder (i.e. members of the local community with a legitimate interest in the matter).

Appeal timeframes

- **Appeal (Internal):** acknowledged within (3) working days, responded to within 30 days unless the person reviewing the case is unable to speak to the parties involved
- **Appeal (external):** made to SACAT for most tenancy matters

Complaint timeframes

- **Initial complaints:** acknowledged within 14 days (2 weeks) unless the person reviewing the case is unable to speak to the parties involved..
- **Escalated complaints:** acknowledged within three (3) working days. Responded to within 21 days (3 weeks) unless the person reviewing the case is unable to speak to the parties involved.
- **External complaints:** Made to an external body: Office of the Housing Regulator in relation to Westside services

Procedure

We understand that making a complaint can be difficult and will work with complainants to try to resolve the issue in the most comfortable way possible for the complainant.

We will deal with complaints and appeals within the following timeframes outlined in the table below. Please speak to one of our staff for further information.

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What is a complaint?

A complaint is a concern that something about our, services, standards or policies is not satisfactory to a customer.

Types of complaints

- **Rude or inappropriate staff behaviour:** not returning phone calls or emails.
- **Lateness:** staff running late for an appointment and not letting you know.
- **Providing an inconsistent or inaccurate service:** responding differently in the same circumstances. Providing incorrect information on Westside Policy. Receiving inconsistent information from different staff.
- **Complaints about tenant charges:** charging a tenant for water when the lease states no charges apply.
- **Incorrect use of personal information:** disclosing a customer's personal information to a 3rd party without the customers consent
- **Delays to or no services provided:** not completing repairs. Not attending an inspection as advised.
- **Poor administration of a service:** not recording changes in circumstance. Not sending appropriate forms requested.

Complaint process

There are five main steps in the process. This process aims to be simple and straightforward for both customers and staff to follow.



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What is an external complaint

If a customer remains unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they can make a complaint to an external agency.

External complaints relating to Westside service can be addressed to: Office of the Housing Regulator

Web: <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/housing/public-and-community-housing>

Email: OHRcommunityhousing@sa.gov.au

Ph: 08 7424 7206

Mail: GPO Box 292 ADELAIDE SA 5001

What is an appeal?

An appeal is a request from a customer using our services for a decision to be reviewed.

The grounds for making an appeal are that we have not followed our policies or procedure, that our policies and procedures are not fair or that we made a decision without the all the information.

It is important to Westside that any issue with our service, conduct, staff and complaint handling be addressed and resolved as promptly and satisfactorily as possible

Time to lodge an appeal

An appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the customer being informed of the decision in question. In exceptional circumstances, and where the decision in question resulted in an ongoing, binding agreement without pre-determined review points, an appeal may be lodged after the 30 day period.

What is an external appeal?

If a customer is unhappy with the outcome they can make an appeal to an external agency.

If the appeal relates to the occupation, (or potential occupation) of one of Westside's properties under the Residential Tenancies Act 1995:

SA Civil & Administrative Tribunal (SACAT)

Web: <http://www.sacat.sa.gov.au>

Ph: 1800 723 767

Mail: GPO Box 2361 ADELAIDE SA 5001

What can be appealed?

- Rental rate assessment
- Rejections for rehousing
- Not eligible for housing
- Not selected for housing
- Allocated inappropriate housing
- Request for property improvements rejected
- Complaint handled badly

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How to lodge an internal complaint or appeal

Customers wishing to lodge a complaint or appeal will be required to:

Complete a Feedback Form. The form is available via our website, at our office, in person or via telephone or email request

Return the completed form:

Via Westside's website,

Email: feedback@westsidehousing.org.au or

Post: Complaints and Appeals Officer
Westside Housing Company
478 Port Road WEST HINDMARSH SA 5007

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How to lodge an external appeal

External appeals can be addressed to:

SA Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT)

Web: <http://www.sacat.sa.gov.au>

Ph: 1800 723 767

Mail: GPO Box 2361 ADELAIDE SA 5001

Withdrawing a complaint or appeal

A customer can withdraw a complaint or appeal at any time. Westside would prefer the withdrawal of a complaint in writing. Customers will not be discriminated against should they wish to withdraw their complaint or appeal. A record of the withdrawal will be made on the complaints and/or appeals register.

Contact details

8155 6070

e: admin@westsidehousing.org.au

w: www.westsidehousing.org.au

 [/creatinghomesconnectingpeople](https://www.facebook.com/creatinghomesconnectingpeople)

478 Port Road
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Office hours: Mon-Fri 9am-4pm

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