

Compliments, Complaints and Appeals

Purpose

This policy outlines the way Bridge Housing manages compliments and complaints about its service delivery and appeals about decisions that have been made by Bridge Housing.

Scope

This policy applies to all customers of Bridge Housing Limited and all its related entities (we, our, us). This includes tenants, household members, applicants, support agencies and the communities in which we provide a service.

Disputes between neighbours and within communities are not covered by this policy. These matters are handled under our Good Neighbour Policy.

Policy overview

We respect and value the views of all customers. We recognise that errors, misunderstandings, dissatisfaction, or unexpected issues can occur in any service.

We are committed to managing complaints and appeals fairly, consistently and efficiently

We take a structured and transparent approach to managing, monitoring and analysing all feedback on our services

We will ensure that our complaints and appeals process is clear and accessible and is managed consistently, fairly and promptly.

Policy

Any of our customers, or someone acting on their behalf, can lodge a complaint or appeal about our decisions or how our services are delivered. We view fair and transparent complaint and appeal handling as an opportunity to identify issues early and prevent problems from escalating.

Complaints and appeals are always welcome, as they provide valuable feedback that helps us identify opportunities for improvement and strengthen the way we deliver our services.

Similarly, we welcome positive feedback and use this to acknowledge good service and promote excellence within the organisation.

What is a compliment?

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction with one of Bridge Housing's services, or with the way a service has been delivered by staff members.

Examples of compliments include:

- Sensitivity in dealing with a change in circumstances
- Prompt handling of correspondence and phone calls
- Efficient processes for responsive repairs

- Approachable and responsive staff members.

What is a complaint?

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about a specific aspect of Bridge Housing's services, where a person is unhappy with the quality or type of service provided and is seeking a changed outcome.

Examples of complaints include:

- Failing to provide a service or an aspect of a service such as not completing a repair, not conducting tenant visits or not providing rent statements
- Staff conduct concerns such as not returning calls or communicating inappropriately
- Poor administration of a service such as not recording changes in circumstances or sending out appropriate forms
- Providing an inconsistent or inaccurate service such as responding differently in different circumstances or providing incorrect advice on Bridge Housing policy.

Complaints about service delivery are handled internally by a delegated staff member in accordance with this policy.

What is an appeal?

We define an appeal as disagreement with a decision Bridge Housing has made. The appeal process provides an opportunity to review the decision and consider whether it was made based on full and accurate information, and in accordance with relevant legislation, policies, and procedures.

Appealable decisions are defined by the Housing Appeals Committee and are listed on their website: www.hac.nsw.gov.au.

Decisions that can be appealed include:

- Social Housing Eligibility
- Housing Entitlements
- Priority Housing Eligibility
- Eligibility for Temporary Accommodation
- Private Rental Subsidy Cancellation
- Succession of Tenancy
- Housing Assistance for Elderly
- Offers of Accommodation
- Transfer
- Relocating Tenants for Management Purposes
- Rental Subsidy (Charging rent)
- Modification to Property
- Absence from Dwelling
- Length of Lease
- Tenant Charges
- Joint Tenancies
- Former Tenant Category

- Water Charges

There is a two-step process to manage an appeal:

1. First Tier Appeal

If a tenant or applicant disagrees with a decision made by Bridge Housing, they may request a review of that decision. We will investigate and advise the person of the outcome in writing. This internal review is called a *First Tier Appeal*.

The appeal will be managed by a staff member who was not involved in making the original decision.

2. Second Tier Appeal

If a tenant or applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the First Tier Appeal, they may lodge a Second Tier Appeal with the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). The HAC is an independent agency that reviews certain decisions made by community housing and public housing providers.

Following their review, the HAC will provide a report outlining their findings and any recommendations to both the person who submitted the appeal and to Bridge Housing. For more information, contact the Housing Appeals Committee on 1800 629 794 or visit

www.hac.nsw.gov.au.

How to make a complaint or appeal

We are committed to creating a culture where feedback is encouraged, valued, and used to improve our services.

We aim to ensure that the process for making a complaint or appeal is fair, transparent, and accessible. Everyone involved in the complaint or appeal process can expect to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

Making a complaint or appeal will not result in any form of retaliation or discrimination, nor will it affect the attitude or quality of service received from Bridge Housing staff.

A complainant or appellant has the right to:

- Have their concerns handled confidentially, respectfully, and professionally
- Request assistance or advocacy in raising their concerns
- Invite a support person to attend any meetings or discussions
- Access interpreting and translating services where needed
- Receive information about tenant advice and advocacy services.

Compliments, complaints and appeals can be made verbally or in writing:

- By email to customerservice@bridgehousing.org.au
- By completing a feedback form from our office or downloading a form from our website <https://bridgehousing.org.au/my-home/feedback/> and returning it to a staff member or mailing it to any Bridge Housing office.
- By making an appointment for a face-to-face appointment
- By calling our Customer Care Hub on 02 8234 0800

Any Bridge Housing staff member can register a compliment, complaint or appeal and is responsible for recording the complaint internally. The person taking details of the compliment, complaint or appeal will acknowledge the complaint or appeal in writing within two business days. The acknowledgement letter will outline the next steps in the process.

We will assign a Complaint Manager that will be responsible throughout the process for:

- Communicating with the complainant or appellant
- Keeping accurate notes
- Investigating thoroughly and impartially
- Keeping details of the complaint or appeal confidential for internal reporting purposes
- Providing information about external agencies who can investigate in any situation where the complaint or appeal remains unresolved, or the person is dissatisfied with the outcome

To ensure impartiality and fairness, the Complaint Manager appointed to investigate a complaint or appeal will not be the subject of the complaint or involved in the decision made that is under appeal. In some cases, the complaint may be managed by a Complaint Manager from a different team. For example, where the complaint involves staff conduct.

We will aim to resolve complaints and appeals promptly, and wherever possible within 21 business days of receipt. In situations where resolution or an outcome will exceed 21 business days, the Complaint Manager will advise the complainant or appellant of progress to date the anticipated date of resolution and any reasons for the delay.

If the resolution or outcome is expected to take longer than 21 business days, the Complaint Manager will update the complainant or appellant with progress to date, the anticipated date of resolution, and the reasons for any delay.

What happens if I disagree with the outcome of my complaint or appeal?

- If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you may request that the matter be reviewed by Bridge Housing's Executive Team. The Executive Team will consider the complaint at their next scheduled meeting. You will be advised of their decision within 14 days of that meeting. The complaint will be escalated internally, and the decision of the Executive Team is final.
- If you are unhappy with the outcome of the First Tier Appeal, you can lodge a Second Tier Appeal with the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) who will undertake an independent review of the decision that was made.

Assistance for tenants or applicants making a complaint or appeal

We will assist clients to make a complaint or appeal if required. This includes arranging an interpreters, advocacy or support if needed.

External bodies that can help with complaints and appeals include:

- Local Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services: www.tenants.org.au
- Community Legal Centres: www.clcnsw.org.au

- The NSW Fair Trading Information Centre: phone 133 220 or www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au

Complaints about Specialist Disability Accommodation

Tenants who are NDIS participants living in Specialist Disability Accommodation can make a complaint to us about:

- accommodation services we provide or
- about services and supports provided by their Supported Independent Living (SIL) provider.

Tenants who are not satisfied with our response, or who do not feel comfortable raising the issue, can make a complaint to the NDIS Commission by calling 1800 035 544 or visiting <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints> to complete an online complaints form.

How we use information from compliments, complaints and appeals

Bridge Housing regularly reviews information from compliments, complaints, and appeals to identify opportunities to improve our services and how they are delivered.

We provide regular reports to the Bridge Housing Board on the number and types of complaints and appeals received, as well as their outcomes. Information is also reported to meet the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) requirements.

All information from complaints and appeals is used in a way that does not identify the complainant or appellant, ensuring privacy and confidentiality are maintained.

Issues outside this policy

- The NSW Civil and Appeals Tribunal (NCAT) deals with tenancy issues arising from obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*.
- Concerns about fraud, misconduct or illegal activity by one of our staff or our Board are handled by the Bridge Housing Fraud Officer and through the Bridge Housing whistle-blower hotline on 1300 798 101. Please see the Fraud Policy and the Whistle-blower Policy for more information.
- The National Regulatory System for Community Housing investigates complaints that raise concerns about a registered community housing providers' compliance with the Regulatory Code including the way it is governed or how it manages its assets. A complaint can be made using the online form found at www.nrsch.gov.au/complaint_form. A complaint can also be made by contacting the Office of the Registrar in NSW on 1800 330 940.

Related documents and Resources

Type	Title
Legislation	Residential Tenancies Act 2010
Policy	Good Neighbour Policy
Form	Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Form

