



Complaints Policy

Version Number: 03 2023 replacing 02 2018

Approved by: CEO

Approval date: 1 December 2023

Review date: Every 2 years

1. Purpose

The Complaints policy outlines how SEARMS will handle dissatisfaction with our service.

Its purpose is to:

- give applicants and tenants the right to complain
- make it easy for applicants and tenants to exercise that right
- help SEARMS review what is and isn't working well within our organisation

2. Policy

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the quality or type of service received. A complaint can be lodged by an applicant or a tenant if they are dissatisfied with any aspect of service provision from SEARMS.

The Complaints policy outlines how SEARMS will effectively:

- register, investigate, resolve and record complaints
- ensure applicant and tenant rights, and
- enable applicant and tenant views to influence how we deliver our housing services

What can a client complain about?

A complaint may be about dissatisfaction with:

- standard of service
- actions or decisions
- inaction or delay
- policy or processes.

provided by any staff member of SEARMS or its Contractors for example:

- Any type of alleged discrimination including racial, ethnic, gender based or sexual preference
- Contractor behaviour such as failing to clean up following repairs/maintenance undertaken
- Claims of maladministration such as loss of documents or misuse of important information

A complaint does not include:

- an initial request for a service or action
- request for information
- formal request for a review (see Appeals policy)

SEARMS also does not use this policy to investigate:

- Tenant complaints about another tenant (or someone else outside the organisation)
- Complaints about our organisation or our tenants by people who are not service users (e.g. neighbours, funding body, real estate agents). These are assessed individually and dealt with in terms of the relevant housing management, organisational or staff management policy.

SEARMS welcomes complaints as they are seen as an important transparency mechanism for future planning and continued service improvement strategies. Complaints are also useful in highlighting potential staff and contractor training needs and are therefore seen as an effective measure in improving the organisation.

What the complainant can expect from the process

- Applicants and tenants are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities, and have realistic expectations of what the service can provide;
 - Any request for information about the service, or any concern or objection about rules, practices or tenancy conditions expressed by clients will be responded to promptly and appropriately with the intention of firstly clarifying rules, rights, responsibilities or services provided
 - Applicants and tenants can make complaints without fear of recrimination.
 - SEARMS informs applicants and tenants about our complaints policy through pamphlets, newsletters and verbally
 - Complaints are handled in the context of a broader client relations policy which aims to ensure good working relationships with clients, thus minimising the potential for unresolved problems:
 - Applicants and tenants can involve their own advocate or support person at any point in the complaint's procedure
 - Client's satisfaction with the service will be canvassed regularly and their ideas for improvements sought
 - Our procedure states who are responsible for dealing and processing complaints, how long it takes and how it is recorded.
- 3.** Should the Complainant remain unsatisfied with the outcome of SEARMS internal complaint process, they may take it to the Registrar of Community Housing. The Registrar will request supporting evidence and information and assess whether it:
- fit within the Registrars scope
 - are minor in nature and do not require the Registrar's involvement, or
 - are more appropriately dealt with by another body.
- 4.** For more information on lodging complaints via the Registrar please visit the Registrar's website/Tenants/Making a Complaint <https://nrsch.gov.au/tenants/making-a-complaint.html>

5. Responsibility

Housing/Asset Officers

To manage informal complaints

CSO/COO	To investigate, provide information and draft written response to the CEO
CFO	To maintain the complaints register and provide quarterly report to Chief Executive Officer.
CEO	To respond to formal complaints and report to the Board.

References

Legislation	Residential Tenancies Act 2010
Related policy	National Registration System for Community Housing Requirements
	Appeals Policy
	AHO Housing Services Guidelines and Policy Framework