

SAPPHIRE COAST TENANCY SCHEME

HOW TO COMPLAIN

INFORMATION FOR USERS OF OUR SERVICE

We want to offer a really good service to everyone in our community. Your views are welcome, even if they are critical. We will listen carefully to all suggestions and complaints. We are committed to improving our service.

When can I complain?

If you are not satisfied with our service or one of our policies, if you have a dispute with a neighbour, you have the right to complain. For instance you might think we have done something unreasonable or illegal, or you might feel we have treated you badly. If you are one of our tenants, you may have problems regarding your tenancy, for example problems with your neighbours.

Please give us a chance to fix the problem - we want to sort it out, whether we made a mistake, there was a misunderstanding, or we need to make a change to how we do things. As a tenant you have rights under the Tenancies Act and may take action through the Consumer Trade Tenancies Tribunal.

If you want us to reconsider a decision we have made, you do not have to make a complaint. Ask about our appeals procedure.

What should I do?

You can follow these steps in order, or you can choose to start at the point you feel most comfortable with. We will not treat you any differently because of the way you make a complaint. You can request that your complaint remain confidential if this is appropriate.

- ◆ **Talk directly to the person in the organisation you think is responsible for sorting out the problem.** Ask who you should talk to if you are not sure. Explain your problem and what would sort it out for you, and listen to their response.

This may resolve your complaint, but if not ...

- ◆ **Talk the problem over with someone not directly involved in the problem.** They can help you be clear about what the problem is and what you want done about it. They can help you decide how best to handle it. They can talk to us on your behalf.

This may resolve your complaint, but if not ...

- ◆ **Put your complaint in writing.** You can use our 'I want to complain...' form, or write us a letter describing what happened and why you are not satisfied. Be clear and to the point. Tell us what action you think should be taken to sort things out. Tell us how the problem is affecting you, how urgent it is. Tell us if you need an interpreter, or someone to help you.

(You may prefer to ask for an appointment with your housing manager, and ask them to help you fill out the complaints form.)

Written complaints will be tabled at a Management Committee meeting. You may request that your name be kept confidential if you feel this is appropriate. When we have a written record of your complaint, we will follow our internal complaints procedure. You will be given a copy of this procedure.

If our response still does not resolve your complaint ...

- ◆ **Take your complaint to a higher authority.** Who this will be depends on what the problem is. You could ask us or your advocate which is most appropriate for your complaint. They can mediate between us, and may make a binding decision. Examples

are the Consumer, Trade Tenancy Tribunal, the Community Services Commission, and the Anti-Discrimination Board.

What will happen after I make a complaint?

We will listen to your complaint carefully, and to anyone advocating on your behalf. We will discuss the different options with you. We will take part in mediation or arbitration if you want to use an external process. We will try to find a solution that satisfies you and is possible for us.

What happens to things I say or write?

We will keep a file about your complaint with your personal (applicant or tenant) file. This file will contain everything you have sent us, letters we send you and notes on what happens during the complaints process. We will show you this file if you ask to see it. The file will be destroyed at the end of your tenancy, or 12 months after the complaint has been resolved, whichever is sooner.

The things you tell us or write down are confidential. We will not give anyone outside the organisation any of this information unless you ask us to.

We will record some details about your complaint on our complaints register which is a summary of all complaints. This register will not identify you.

What will be done to resolve my complaint?

We will put our response to your complaint in writing. This might be

- an apology
- an explanation of why things happen that way
- an assurance it won't happen again
- a description of the positive action we have taken to put things right

Can I ask someone else to help me?

We will be as helpful as we can. You may also want someone who is independent of our organisation to help you.

- You can seek help from an advocate. For instance, you could ask a Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service worker, a community worker, or a friend to talk to us on your behalf or come with you to meet with us.
- You can ask for help from an 'Alternative Dispute Resolution body', for instance a Community Justice Centre. They can help mediate the problem
- You have the right to make an application for a hearing to another organisation which can help resolve the problem by mediation and arbitration. For example
 - breach of Residential Tenancy Agreement: Residential Tenancy Tribunal
 - breach of the voluntary housing association Code of Practice: NSW Federation of Housing Associations Code of Practice Advisory Committee
 - unfair discrimination: Anti-Discrimination Board; Disability Complaints Service
 - breach of rules of incorporation: the relevant registration body (Department of Fair Trading, Registry of Cooperatives, Australian Securities Commission)

What records should I keep?

Keep a record of who you spoke to, what they said they would do, and the date and time. You may want to write a letter confirming these things, and telling us whether or not you are satisfied.

SAPPHIRE COAST TENANCY SCHEME

I WANT TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

My name _____

My address _____

_____ My phone number _____

What I am dissatisfied about

Please say what happened, and when it happened

What I have already done to try to sort this out

Please tell us about any phone conversations, letters, visits or meetings

What I would like you to do now to sort this out

Please tell us what you think would resolve the problem for you

I want you to consider the following

Please tell us about anything else that we should be aware of, so we can respond to your complaint in the most helpful way. You can attach copies of relevant letters or documents.

Please tick here if you would like us to arrange an interpreter? ☐ Language _____

Signed Date

Not enough room to say everything you want? - please write on the back of this form.

Make sure you keep a copy of the completed form, and any letters or documents.

Deliver this form to:

**The Management Committee,
Sapphire Coast Tenancy Scheme Inc.
Bega Valley Regional Learning Centre Building
9/14 Cabarita Place
Merimbula NSW 2548**

**Phone: 6495 3300
Fax: 6495 3366**

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SAPPHIRE COAST TENANCY SCHEME

HOW TO APPEAL

INFORMATION FOR USERS OF OUR SERVICE

We make decisions based on set guidelines that aim to be fair to everyone. These guidelines are our policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are designed to meet agreed standards of service for community housing and to comply with the law.

You may not always agree with a decision we make. If you do not, it is important that you ask us to review our decision. We recognise that sometimes we may make a mistake or act in a way that is unfair; sometimes we may want to change the policies and procedures that guide how we make decisions.

When can I appeal a decision?

The sorts of decisions you may want us to reconsider include:

For an applicant

- not being accepted on the waiting list
- being given a low priority on the waiting list
- removal from the waiting list
- being allocated a property you do not want to accept

For a tenant

- the level of your rent rebate
- being refused rehousing
- being refused a rent rebate
- being refused permission to make modifications to your property
- not being accepted as a member of the organisation
- having membership withdrawn

What should I do?

Talk to the person who made the decision and ask them to reconsider it and give your reasons why you are asking them to do this. If they make the same decision and you still think it is the wrong decision you can appeal. Complete our appeals form (you can ask someone else to help you do this, or you can make an appointment to do it with a member of staff).

What will happen after I have lodged my appeal?

The decision will be reviewed based on what you have written, an interview with you, the judgement of the person responsible for making the decision and our policy and procedure guidelines. Having considered all the information, we will either

- change our original decision in full or in part
- reject the appeal

When will a decision be changed?

The original decision will only be changed if:

- the decision was made without the full information
- the decision was outside the relevant policy
- procedures were not properly followed
- the policy or procedure are found to be inadequate, or to be inconsistent with community housing standards or the law

What happens to things I say or write?

We will keep a file about your appeal with your personal (applicant or tenant) file. This file will contain everything you have sent us, letters we send you and notes on what happens during the appeals process. We will show you this file if you ask to see it. The file will be destroyed at the end of your tenancy, or 12 months after the appeal has been resolved, whichever is sooner.

The things you tell us or write down are confidential. We will not give anyone outside the organisation any of this information unless you ask us to.

We will record some details about your appeal on our appeals register which is a summary of all appeals. This register will not identify you.

Can I ask someone else to help me?

We will be as helpful as we can. You may also want someone who is independent of our organisation to help you.

You can seek help from an advocate. For instance, you could ask a Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service worker, a community worker, or a friend to talk to us on your behalf or come with you to meet with us.

You have the right to make an application for a hearing to another organisation which can help resolve the problem by mediation and arbitration.

What if I am not happy after the internal review and appeal?

Ask us about other appropriate external appeals processes you could access.



Housing Appeals Committee

For More Information:
Housing Appeals Committee
PO Box 1030
BURWOOD WESTFIELD NSW 2134

Offices 5-6 Ground Floor
1-17 Elsie Street
BURWOOD NSW 2134

Free Call: 1800 629 794
Phone: 02 8741 2555
Fax: 02 8741 2566

SAPPHIRE COAST TENANCY SCHEME Inc.

I WANT TO APPEAL

My name _____

My address _____

_____ my phone number _____

The decision I want to appeal

Please say what service you requested and what you understand our decision to be

I have already asked for an informal review: yes / no (Please circle one)

If yes, please tell us when this was and who you dealt with

I want you to consider the following

Please tell us about anything that we should be aware of, so we can review our decision based on all the facts.

You can attach copies of relevant letters or documents.

Please tick here if you would like us to arrange an interpreter? ☐ Language _____

Signed Date

Not enough room to say everything you want? - please write on the back of this form.

Make sure you keep a copy of the completed form, and any letters or documents.

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