



# MAREEBA COMMUNITY HOUSING COMPANY LTD

## TENANT AND HOUSING SERVICES POLICY

POLICY TITLE: COMPLAINTS, FEEDBACK AND APPEALS

<b>Policy number</b>	<b>1012</b>
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>1b</b>
Date ratified	20/08/2020
Date of review	27/10/2020
Date of next review	30/06/2023
Reference to evidence guidelines	NRSCH 1f
Responsibility	Board of Directors/Manager
Links / cross reference to other policies	Housing Queensland regulation 2015 Community engagement HSQF –standard 5 Management systems

### **Policy statement: direction and intended result**

Mareeba Community Housing Company believes in the right for tenants and stakeholders to fair, open, and transparent opportunities to make complaints and offer feedback.

The Company addresses and responds to complaints and feedback within the framework of continuous quality improvement. Responses to complaints are timely and seek to address practices to achieve improved outcomes for tenants and stakeholders.

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to:

- ❖ ensure that tenants and stakeholders understand their right to complain, the grievance procedure and what is feedback
- ❖ ensure the process is easy to access and understand
- ❖ quality improvement in the delivery of services is tracked, reviewed, and improved

### **Procedures**

#### **Mareeba Community Housing Company definitions**

Complaint – Grievance, objection or criticism towards the company and their staff in the delivery of housing and tenancy services.

Appeals – Demands, request or review of a decision made by the company that directly involves the delivery of housing and tenancy services.

The complaints procedures set out by the company will:

- ❖ Be delivered in a systematic manner for making complaints and giving feedback
- ❖ Be written in easy to understand language
- ❖ Provide set of guiding principles and clear process for Management and staff to follow
- ❖ Accept all complaints



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- ❖ Address the level of complaint and handling process
- ❖ Record complaints and comments and action accordingly
- ❖ Be provided to tenants in tenant information kits
- ❖ Be displayed in the office foyer in one-page statement
- ❖ Use complaints as a source of service delivery improvement
- ❖ Provide training for Management and staff on complaints handling

### **Information on how to lodge and appeal – Stakeholders**

If a stakeholder has a complaint, the following steps will be offered:

- ❖ Stakeholders are encouraged wherever possible to resolve a situation directly with key company personnel
- ❖ If this is unsuccessful the complaint can be delivered to the Manager
- ❖ If a complaint involves the Manager or cannot be resolved satisfactorily at this level, the stakeholder is given information on how to make a complaint to the board of directors
- ❖ MCHC will engage community mediation centres in dispute resolution if it is assessed that mediation will assist the situation to be successfully resolved

A complaint may be made in person, telephone, email or in writing. If a complaint is made in person, the person receiving the complaint shall record the complaint in writing, request the complainant sign it and forward to the relevant manager.

Complainants who request assistance to lodge a complaint will be referred to an advocacy service for support.

Members of the Board of directors and its employees will always act and conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner and are expected to have clear understanding of the appeals process.

Privacy and confidentiality will always be observed by staff and only those directly involved in a compliant process need access to private information.

Every employee has a right to be advised immediately of a complaint against him or her by a tenant/client. Employees have the right to expect that the complaint will be dealt with promptly, confidentially and in a professional manner.

Mareeba Community Housing will ensure that where it decides about an entitlement or a service that it shall include information on the right to appeal in verbal and written communication.

Where stakeholders including tenants have limited or no English, then appropriate opportunities will be put in place including translated information and use of interpreters. (TIS)



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### **Anonymous Complaints**

Complainants may choose to remain anonymous. When an anonymous complaint is received, the complaint will be considered to determine whether sufficient information has been received to evidence the complaint. Provided sufficient information has been received, it will be managed and investigated in the same way as identified complaints in accordance with the process below.

Feedback and advice to the complainant, regarding progress of and any decision on completion of the investigation, will not be provided where the complainant is anonymous.

### **Dispute Procedure and Time Frames**

The following process will be followed in dealing with informal and informal complaints

#### **Informal complaints**

- ❖ The persons making the complaint is directed to the appropriate employee and given opportunity to discuss the issue and request assistance to resolve the complaint.
- ❖ The employee will inform the complainant of MCHC Complaints and Appeals process and if required refer this to senior management.
- ❖ If the complainant is not satisfied with the response the employee/manager will inform the complainant, they can make a formal complaint in writing and arrange the assistance of an interpreter if required.

#### **Formal complaints**

- ❖ When a written complaint is received it will be directed to the Manager, recorded in the complaints register and a written acknowledgement issued within three days to the complainant.
- ❖ The Manager will investigate the complaint and provide advice within (21) twenty-one days from the date of the complaint on the course of action to be taken.
- ❖ If the complainant is not satisfied with the Managers decision, they will refer the complaint to the Board of Directors who will:  
Appoint two members to review the complaint and make a recommendation to the Board.
- ❖ In complicated complaints involving staff or policy:  
Appoint disputes sub-committee will consist of at least:
  - ❖ Company director
  - ❖ A tenant and/or tenant's advocate
  - ❖ An external person



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The dispute sub-committee must respect and ensure the privacy of all parties involved in a dispute. No information regarding the matter is to be disclosed to any other party unless agreed upon by the parties concerned

The subcommittee will follow the following procedures:

- ❖ On referral of a dispute to the sub-committee, members will meet within fourteen (14) days of receiving the written complaint to consider the matter
- ❖ Members of the sub-committee will maintain confidentiality throughout the proceedings

The disputes sub-committee will arrange for a hearing and investigate and consider matters related to the dispute. The decisions of the dispute sub-committee must be unanimous and take into consideration the aims and objections of the company relevant legislative requirements and have due regard for program guidelines.

The decision of the dispute sub-committee must be taken to the Company chairperson for ratification within five days of the decision. The Board of directors conveys the decision of the disputes sub-committee in writing to all parties within three (3) days of ratification.

Persons who may bring a complaint and are dissatisfied with the outcome may appeal the decision within seven days of being notified in writing of the decision. In an appeal, a mediator approved by both parties will be appointed to hear the grievance and seek resolution.

### **Tenancy Related Disputes**

If the conflict or grievance is tenancy related and is covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, then the matter should be immediately referred to the Residential Tenancies Authority or a tenant's advocacy service.

This information is outlined the Tenant Information Kit and links to the RTAA website.

Determination of the conflict referred to the residential Tenancies Authority or the tribunal shall be deemed to be final.

Tenants will be encouraged to speak directly to the housing manger/officer initially to make a complaint or offer feedback on the housing and tenancy services of the company.

Tenants have the right to expect that a complaint will be dealt with promptly and confidentially and they will not be penalised for making a complaint or appealing a decision.

Tenants are provided with a one-page document outlining Mareeba Community Housing Company Grievance and Appeals policy which includes a flow chart in the Tenant Information Kit at the start of tenancy.

A full copy of the Company policy and procedure will be provided upon request to tenants.



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A list of external agencies is available for tenants wanting to make a complaint or to offer feedback on the housing and tenancy services that may include:

- ❖ a support provider
- ❖ tenant advocacy service

### **Complaints/Appeals Training**

Mareeba Community Housing Company staff and directors will update mediation and conflict resolution skills and participate in training where available by qualified training organisations.

A record of all registered complaints will be transferred into the complaints and appeals register. Complaints and appeals are a standing agenda reporting item in Management reports.

Complaints and appeals will be documented on the relevant file while Tenant/client confidentiality is maintained.

The Board of directors will review the process of complaints and appeals on an annual basis after receipt of the annual report to determine if a more detailed format is required.

The complaints and feedback register will be reviewed by the board on a regular basis and include as a minimum:

- ❖ Date
- ❖ Nature of the complaint/feedback
- ❖ Actions taken including a log of all incremental actions taken to address a situation
- ❖ Key responsibility for implementation – compliance register
- ❖ Subsequent policy and procedure changes – compliance register

MCHC will conduct stakeholder surveys to seek feedback on what is going well and what could be better.

The results will be collated and analysed, and a report will go to the board with recommendations for improvements and be updated in company policy and procedures and contribute to quality improvement of services.

A summary of feedback from questionnaires will be provided to stakeholders.



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### Evidence Sources

- ❖ Grievance and Appeals statement
- ❖ Flowcharts
- ❖ Staff performance reviews
- ❖ Training records
- ❖ Complaints and appeals Register
- ❖ Monthly management reports
- ❖ Annual compliance review
- ❖ Correspondence
- ❖ Surveys
- ❖ Annual reports
- ❖ Training budgets
- ❖ Minutes of monthly board meetings
- ❖ Court proceedings
- ❖ Queensland Human Rights Act
- ❖ Tenant information kit
- ❖ RPM data reports