

Complaints Policy

Purpose

This Policy outlines how Venture Housing Company (“Venture”) will handle dissatisfaction with our service. Venture welcomes complaints and recognises that customers have the right to complain and will not be disadvantaged or penalised for doing so.

This Policy will:

- make it easy for customers to exercise that right; and
- help Venture to review its service delivery and decision-making processes and make policy and service improvements.

Scope

This Policy and its related procedures apply to:

- All customers, current and past including both tenants and applicants.
- All customers seeking to access services provided by Venture.
- Someone who is responsible for the customer, for example a guardian.
- Someone who is the support person or advocate of the customer, as long as written consent has been provided.
- Members of the community who have a direct or indirect legitimate relationship to Venture’s services and operations.
- Agencies and entities interacting with Venture.

This policy does **not** apply to:

- Complaints by a tenant about another tenant or their visitor.
- A noise complaint from a tenant about a neighbour. (Although Venture may be able to assist a tenant in that circumstance, it is not a complaint about the standard or type of service we provide, and therefore not covered by this policy.)
- Rent charged by Venture for properties.
- Allocation and eligibility decisions.

Policy Statement

Effective complaints handling enables organisations to:

Venture Housing Company Ltd

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Larrakia Country

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✉ admin@venturehousing.org.au
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- intervene before a problem becomes worse;
 - ensure customers feel heard and have an appropriate avenue to express their views;
 - provide a review process for complaints by customers who may have been disadvantaged or dissatisfied by a Venture service, action, or decision; and
 - nurture relationships between Venture and its customers.

Similarly, Venture welcomes positive feedback that compliments its staff on the way they deliver a service as it can be used to promote excellence within the organisation and inform the organisation and its staff about areas of customer satisfaction.

Venture acknowledges that errors, misunderstandings, customer dissatisfaction and unexpected problems occur in all systems and services.

Any Venture customer or someone acting on their behalf has the right to lodge a complaint about Venture's services.

Venture is committed to managing complaints fairly, consistently, transparently and efficiently and will also monitor specific areas of its service delivery by providing opportunities for customers to provide feedback.

What is a complaint?

Venture defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with a specific aspect of its services, where the complainant is unhappy with the standard or type of service and requests a changed outcome.

Examples of complaints include:

- Failing to provide a service, such as not completing a repair.
- Rude or inappropriate behaviour from a staff member, such as not returning a phone call.
- Poor administration of a service such as not recording changes in circumstances or sending out inappropriate forms.
- Providing inconsistent or inaccurate service such as responding differently in different circumstances or providing incorrect advice on Venture policy.
- Poor property standards or other matters relating to housing services delivery.

Making a complaint

Venture encourages customers to raise any concerns with the relevant staff member to which it relates before submitting a complaint in writing.

Complaints should be raised within three (3) months of the time of the issue that is being complained about.

Complaints may be made either verbally or in writing, although our preference is for complaints to be made in writing via email, letter or Venture’s website. The relevant contact details are:

- Phone: (08) 8981 9804
- Email: feedback@venturehousing.org.au
- Postal address: PO Box 1468, Nightcliff NT 0810
- Website: via the ‘Contact Us’ tab

Venture will attempt to resolve verbal complaints at the time the complaint is made. If the customer is unable to resolve their complaint informally or is not satisfied with the result or response, the complaint should be lodged formally in writing. This should include details of the complaint and any relevant and supporting evidence. Once a written complaint is received, Venture will acknowledge the complaint within 2 business days.

How complaints are handled

Once a complaint has been lodged, it will be passed to the relevant Manager to investigate and issue a formal response to the complainant. A Manager who is the subject of a complaint will not investigate that complaint. A complaint about a Manager or executive team member will automatically be escalated to the CEO.

The complaint will be:

- logged in to Venture’s electronic complaints register by the representative handling the complaint; and
- investigated and considered by the appropriate Manager/executive team member for that business area, or as delegated by the Office of the CEO in a fair and transparent manner.

The investigation will be completed, and a written response will be provided to the complainant within 21 days. If the matter requires further investigation, the complainant will be notified within 21 days if an extension of time is required. The written response will detail:

- whether the complaint has been:
 - substantiated;
 - not Substantiated; or
 - partially substantiated, and
- what to do next if the complainant is still not satisfied.

The response may include one or more of the following:

- an apology.
- an explanation.
- an assurance about further and future actions.

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- information on proposed changes to operations or service improvements .

Escalation

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they can escalate their complaint for further review. Escalated complaints will be logged, reviewed, and responded to within 21 days, and are automatically escalated to and handled by the CEO or delegated to an executive team member by the CEO. If the original complaint was handled by the CEO (because it related to a Manager or executive team member), then the escalated complaint will be handled by a Director of the Board of Venture. An escalated complaint will consider:

- Accessibility - the availability of the complaints management and investigation process.
- Timeliness - of response, considering the degree of complexity or seriousness of the issue.
- Satisfaction - with the complaint investigation process and the outcomes of the resolution.
- Effectiveness – of the investigation, response and redress offered.
- Compliance – with the complaint management policy and procedures, legislation, and funding requirements.

Vexatious and Unreasonable Complaint Conduct

In a very small number of cases, some complainants behave in ways that are inappropriate and unacceptable, despite our best efforts to resolve the complaint. These complaints may be considered vexatious or unreasonable at any time by Venture staff. Complaints of this nature raise issues relating to health, safety, resources and equity for Venture, our staff, other service providers and the complainant.

These types of complaints can be divided into five categories:

1. Unreasonable persistence – continuous, incessant, and relentless conduct often associated with disproportionate views.
2. Unreasonable demands – expressed or implied demands that are considered unreasonable or unable to be met ethically and/or legally.
3. Unreasonable lack of cooperation – unwillingness and/or inability by a complainant to cooperate with Venture, staff and/or our complaints policy and procedure.
4. Unreasonable arguments – arguments that are not based on reason or logic. They are often incomprehensible, false, or inflammatory.
5. Unreasonable behaviours – behaviour that is considered unreasonable regardless of how stressed or frustrated the complainant may be.

Once a Venture staff member has established grounds for a vexatious or unreasonable complaint, a formal warning letter will be issued to the complainant. If the vexatious or unreasonable

behaviour continues despite the formal warning letter being issued, Venture may limit how we interact with the complainant.

This may include but, is not limited to:

- limiting contact to a sole contact person/staff member within Venture;
- restricting the subject matters of complaints that we will consider and/or to which we will respond;
- limiting the complainant's contact with our office to a particular day, time, length of time or frequency in which they can contact us;
- limiting the locations where we will meet face-to-face; or
- limiting the contact that a complainant may have with us.

This includes but is not limited to, limiting face-to-face contact, telephone calls, written communications, and access to our premises as well as contact only through a mutually recognised representative.

In very rare cases, and where all other strategies have been exhausted, the CEO may decide to restrict the complainant's access to our services and contact with our organisation, and / or report the matter to the Police, as appropriate. This is an extreme measure and will only be implemented if it becomes apparent that the complainant is not likely to adjust their behaviours and conduct, or where it amounts to criminal conduct.

Behaviours which may cause restriction of contact and/or services include but are not limited to:

- aggressive actions including physical or verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, and harassment;
- malicious damage to property while in our office;
- threats made with a weapon;
- entrapping a staff member and preventing them from freely moving either in the office or off-site; or
- unlawful conduct.

Complaints outside this Policy

The NT Civil and Appeals Tribunal deals with tenant issues arising from Venture's legal obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* (NT) and can be contacted on 1800 604 622.

The National Regulatory System for Community Housing investigates complaints that raise concerns about a registered community housing provider's compliance with the Regulatory Code including the way it is governed and how it manages its assets. A complaint can be made using the online complaint form found at http://www.nrsch.gov.au/complaint_form.

Tenants who are NDIS participants and living in Specialist Disability Accommodation can make a complaint to Venture about their accommodation services provided by Venture. If NDIS

participating tenants have a complaint about the services and supports provided by their Supported Independent Living provider, they can make a complaint to the NDIS Commission by calling 1800 035 544 or via an online form at <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>. Tenants who are not satisfied with Venture’s response or do not feel comfortable raising the issue, can make a complaint to the NDIS Commission by calling 1800 035 544 or via an online form at <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>.

Related references / resources

- *Residential Tenancies Act NT 1999* (NT)
- *Community Housing (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2013* (NT)
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (Cth)
- *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2014* (NT)
- Appeals Policy
- Tenant Handbook
- Customer Service Charter

Policy Information

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