

## M098a Feedback and Appeals Procedure

### Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the process if feedback or an appeal is received from a client/tenant or other YWCA Housing or YWCA Australia (YWCA) stakeholder. Feedback and Appeals will be fully assessed and investigated as per the procedure outlined here.

Employee complaints do not form part of this process and are to be managed via the Employee Grievance or Speak Up policies and procedures.

### Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, contractors and volunteers of YWCA (Employees) and is to be used when addressing feedback or an appeal from all stakeholders such as prospective clients or tenants, current clients or tenants, guardians and funding bodies. This procedure should be used in conjunction with the YWCA Feedback and Appeals Policy.

### Definitions

<b>Advocate</b>	a person who assists the client/tenant making a complaint. The advocate can be a friend, independent person, an employee or a person from an external advocacy service.
<b>Appeal</b>	when a person asks for a review of a decision made by YWCA Australia
<b>Complaint</b>	an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. It relates to a specific episode, occurrence or provision of service that has resulted in an impact on any individual or group.
<b>Complaint Register</b>	a document or database/system that contains the details of all complaints raised including those made anonymously. The Manager lodges details of the complaint on the Register and update the entry when the matter is resolved/closed.
<b>Complainant</b>	the person making a complaint
<b>Compliment</b>	an expression of satisfaction with one of its services or with the way the service has been delivered by one or more employees
<b>Corrective Action</b>	an action taken to preclude occurrences of an identified hazard or to prevent recurrence of a problem.
<b>Feedback</b>	information about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc. which is used as a basis for improvement
<b>Employee concerned</b>	the employee about whom the complaint has been made

<b>Receiving employee</b>	the employee who receives the complaint from the client/tenant or their representative
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## Overview

Feedback and Appeals are ways we gauge satisfaction with and the quality of our services and their delivery. Feedback includes all complaints, compliments, and comments anyone receiving a service from, or impacted by a service provided by, YWCA. All feedback is welcome and should be actively encouraged as a guide to improved service delivery.

All prospective clients/tenants/renters will receive information on how to provide feedback or lodge an appeal during their initial intake and/or sign-up appointment with YWCA. This includes information on privacy and confidentiality and will be available in Easy Read format. Information will also be displayed at all YWCA sites.

The process will be clear, fair and accessible for the person making the complaint. Feedback and appeals will be acknowledged and responded using appropriate communication methods within specified timeframes. YWCA is committed to handling and resolving complaints and appeals confidentially and equitably, without adverse impact or effect to the client/tenant/renter status of the complaint or appellant with YWCA.

Any employee can receive feedback from client/tenant/renter and/or their nominated advocate, either verbally or in writing, via any communication method, including but not limited to:

- In-person
- Telephone
- Email
- SMS
- Letter
- Web form

YWCA also receives feedback (comments, compliments and complaints) through surveys, feedback forms and ongoing client/tenant reviews.

Appeals are required to be submitted in writing to ensure correct information and sequence of events is provided for fair assessment. YWCA Employees will assist any client/tenant/renter wishing to submit an appeal to ensure accurate provision of information regarding their situation and the decision they believe is unfair, incorrect or in breach of YWCA policy and/or legislation requirements.

This may include completing the appeal form with them or ensuring they have access to an advocate that can assist them. Sufficient grounds for an appeal must be established as part of the assessment process.

## Complaints and Comments

If you receive a complaint the following is to be taken into consideration:

- The person who contacted you will want acknowledgement or resolution as soon as possible and their emotions may be heightened. Let them know we will work with them to resolve issues as soon as possible. Show empathy, be compassionate.
- Ask the person if they would like to make a formal complaint. If they do not, inform your manager of the situation. It may still require investigation depending on the nature of the feedback received.
- If the complaint wishes to remain anonymous, they are able to do so, however please ensure they are advised that we will be unable to formally respond to them without personal details being provided. These complaints must still be registered.
- If they do, advise the person of the next steps i.e. that you will advise your line manager of the issue and

we will be in touch with them. Communicate clearly. Check to ensure the person's understanding of the process.

- Ensure the person knows that they can nominate an advocate to support/assist them. If they have an advocate, ask for the name of the person. If they do not have an advocate and would like one, refer them to an impartial and qualified agency/service to act on their behalf.
- If the complaint is received in writing, acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint must be sent within 2 business days via the contact method provided by the complainant. If the complaint is received verbally, clearly acknowledge the complaint has been received and record verbal acknowledgment in the register.
- Advise the complainant we aim to investigate and finalise complaints (close out) and provide a response within 10 business days, however if the issues are complex the process may take longer. If the process is to take longer than 10 business days, all parties involved (complainant and/or advocate) will be informed.
- YWCA aims to resolve all complaints within 30 days of receipt.

Once received, the complaint or comment must be recorded in the register and referred to a line manager immediately. If the complaint is about the line manager, it must be immediately referred to their line manager.

Careful attention to professional note taking and keeping is essential for quality records in the feedback register and to ensure privacy and confidentiality of staff and clients/tenants/renters. YWCA refrain from using employee and/or clients/tenants/renters names in records and refer to people by their position, status or relationship in regard to the complainant.

If the complaint is unable to be resolved within the 30 day timeframe, it may be referred to an external agency or body for review and resolution, such as the Housing Registrar (VIC).

## NDIS Commission Complaint Handling

If an NDIS participant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they can contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to take the complaint further. The information on NDIS Commission complaint handling can be found here: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>. If the NDIS participant requests information on this process, YWCA will provide information on how to complain to the Commission.

Information on NDIS Commission complaint handling is also available in the NDIS Service Agreement signed on commencement of services.

## Compliments and Comments

This procedure has a primary focus on the complaint and appeal processes; however we also receive comments and compliments.

- When a compliment or comment is received it is to be acknowledged verbally and/or in writing.
- The compliment or comment is to be logged in the Feedback register and reviewed for opportunities for improvement in process, policies and procedures.
- Please inform your line manager when you receive a comment or compliment

## The Emotional Side of Complaint Handling

Dealing with complaints can be difficult especially if emotions are escalated. People may also feel nervous or anxious when making a complaint. It can be confronting as people deal with allegations or issues that may be out of their control or sphere of influence.

All people involved need to be supported through the process, so they feel heard. It is important to understand the impact on everyone involved including yourself during the process as information comes to light and the investigation is undertaken.

If you need support or are finding the process difficult when dealing with a complaint you can access our EAP services as can any other employees involved. They provide confidential support for employees who need it. If you need the service, they are available 24/7 on 1300 361 008.

## The Action Plan

All complaints and appeals and some feedback will require an Action Plan to ensure that the issues that have been raised are dealt with appropriately. The information in the Action Plan will be summarised in the Feedback Register and monitored to ensure all agreed actions are closed out.

The Action Plan will include:

- What we agree to doing – the actions
- Who will do what and when?
- The dates we'll do things by
- How they will be done
- And how we will make sure we're on track to getting everything done.

Check in with the person who has made the complaint to see if they agree with the actions to be taken and ensure they are advised once the actions have been completed. **Please note that actions relating to employees are to be summarised with no explicit information provided to the complainant.**

## Appeals

If a person is unhappy or expresses dissatisfaction with a decision made by YWCA or the outcome of the complaint process, they have the right to lodge an appeal.

The appeal process provides the opportunity to review the decision and to reflect on whether a decision has been made based on full and accurate information and in accordance with legislation and/or policies and procedures.

If a person wishes to appeal a decision, they or their representative/advocate must contact YWCA and formally request a decision be reviewed and/or the escalation of a complaint to the line manager or General Manager.

The Manager or General Manager will first establish whether there are sufficient grounds for the appeal to be progressed. If it's based on a received complaint, they will investigate the complaint by reviewing all correspondence, files and related material. If it based on a decision made by YWCA, all documents, information, associated regulations, legislation, policies and processes associated with that decision will be reviewed. The sorts of decision that YWCA may be asked to reconsider could include:

- rental rate assessment
- rejection for rehousing
- not eligible for housing
- not selected for housing
- allocated inappropriate property
- request for property improvements rejected
- complaint handled badly

Having considered all the information, YWCA will either:

- Change our original decision in full or in part
- Reject the appeal

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

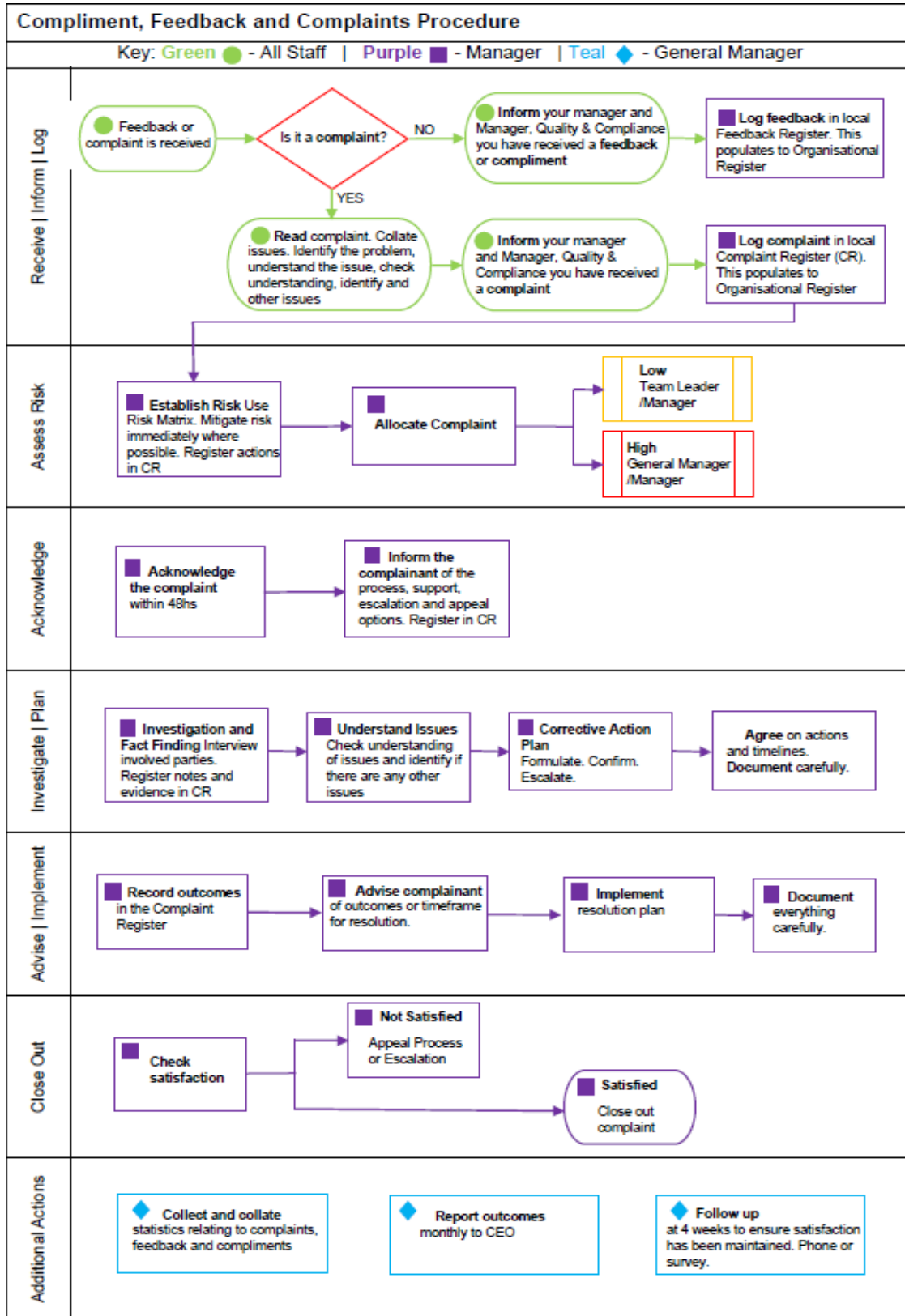
The person will be advised of the General Manager's decision, in writing, within 14 days and the General Manager's decision is final.

The Appeal Process will be articulated in Easy Read documentation and provided to clients and tenants/renters when they come onboard. It will also be available on notice boards and our website.

YWCA will provide clients/renters/tenants with a list of the organisations and bodies they can contact to lodge an appeal against a decision made by us.

The aim of these bodies is to mediate between YWCA and the client/tenant/renter and achieve a mutually satisfactory outcome. They will advise YWCA management of their decision and any outcome or required actions and their decision will be binding on YWCA.

# Complaints Flowchart



## Complaints Procedure

<p>Receive   Inform   Log</p>	<p><b>All Employees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a person identifies that they wish to provide feedback and make a complaint direct them to the YWCA website or provide a hard copy form for completion</li> <li>• The person can also email, fax or write to us</li> <li>• Verbal feedback is valid. Verbal feedback is to be captured as accurately as possible in writing by an employee.</li> <li>• Employees are encouraged to support the complainant and/or their support network/advocates during the complaint management process and may assist clients/tenants in completing a Feedback Form if required. Employees are not to engage in the complaint process any further than this, to avoid a conflict of interest.</li> <li>• Inform your line manager that you have received the complaint and provide a documented overview of the issues as soon as possible. If high risk, the complaint may need to be escalated.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY ONE</b></p> <p>Be respectful and responsive. Establish rapport. Listen.</p>
<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the complainant of the process and their rights within 2 business days and include formal acknowledgement of receipt.</li> <li>• Inform the complainant in writing of the person who will be managing their feedback and explain the next steps.</li> <li>• Assess any conflict of interest and ensure no employee named in the feedback is part of the management of the feedback.</li> <li>• The complainant has the right to a support person and the right to appeal the decision if they are unhappy with an outcome. See the section on <i>Appeals</i>.</li> <li>• If the complaint is anonymous, log the complaint and action as necessary.</li> </ul>		
<p>Register   Review</p>	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complaint must be logged on the local complaint register which will automatically populate to the organisational complaint register held by the Manager, Quality and Compliance</li> <li>• Read the complaint and make sure you've identified the problem – find the key points, make sure you understand the issues and that you've identified any other additional issues.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY ONE</b></p>
<p>Assess Risk</p>	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Risk Matrix with your line manager to establish the level of risk associated with the complaint.</li> <li>• Once the level of risk is established the complaint is allocated to the relevant person to action.</li> <li>• If the risk is high the General Manager may handle the complaint directly.</li> <li>• If the complaint relates to alleged criminal or protection related issues the complaint must be referred to the General Manager or relevant Director must be notified. Authorities or other statutory bodies may be notified on the direction of senior management.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY ONE</b></p> <p>Assess severity</p>

Investigate	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange to speak with the complainant to check your understanding of the issues as required.</li> <li>• Resolve complaints promptly and informally where possible.</li> <li>• Formally and separately, meet/speak with all parties identified in the complaint. If support is required speak with your line manager and People and Culture if required.</li> <li>• Identify additional issues that become apparent through the investigation process.</li> <li>• Crosscheck and clarify your findings with the complainant and others as required.</li> <li>• Be mindful at all times not to breach confidentiality to minimise impact on people.</li> <li>• Agree with the people involved on actions and timelines that will close out the complaint.</li> <li>• Document everything very carefully. Keep accurate notes.</li> <li>• Where resolution was not achieved or if the complainant is not satisfied with resolution, the complaint is to be escalated to your line manager. An appeal may be lodged by the complainant.</li> <li>• If either party is still dissatisfied with the resolution, the matter may be referred to an appropriate external agency. The Manager, Quality and Compliance can assist with this.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY 1-5</b> Empathise Acknowledge emotion Clarify  Agree on actions and timelines</p>
Outcomes	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is fault, apologise. Ensure this is done with approval from your line manager.</li> <li>• Identify required service improvements and actions required to close out the complaint.</li> <li>• Formulate an Action Plan (see below).</li> <li>• Confirm the actions with relevant parties – are they achievable and within budget?</li> <li>• Escalate as required for approval.</li> </ul> <p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record all outcomes in the Complaint Register. Include completion dates for corrective actions.</li> <li>• Systemic issues e.g. change in policy or procedure will be advertised to the whole organisation.</li> <li>• Changes put in place will be reviewed periodically to ensure they are working and sustainable.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY 1-7</b> Assess Options Negotiate Provide explanation If there is fault, apologise Debrief</p>
Close Out	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complaint is to be closed out, where possible, within 10 days of receipt. Informing line manager and/or General Manager of the outcomes</li> <li>• A letter outlining the outcome will be sent to the complainant. Ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.</li> <li>• If the complainant is not satisfied, they can ask for the outcomes to be reviewed or further actions to be undertaken. There may be a subsequent negotiation is deemed appropriate.</li> <li>• If necessary, make a follow up call to the complainant at four weeks post close-out to ensure satisfaction has been maintained.</li> <li>• Ensure that information is provided to the complainant on next steps they can take and who they can contact if they are unsatisfied with the outcome or our decision</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY 7-10</b> Solution Action Thank you</p>
Additional Actions	<p><b>General Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The data from the organisational complaint register will be analysed for trends, risks and systemic issues that require change to policy and procedure.</li> <li>• A monthly report is submitted to the CEO outlining statistical and high-risk information.</li> <li>• The register will be made available at the request of external parties e.g., Housing Registrar (VIC), National Community Housing Regulator, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Analyse</b></p>



## Appeals Procedure

Receive   Inform   Log	<p><b>All Employees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a person identifies that they wish to lodge an appeal, supply an appeal form for completion</li> <li>• The person can also email, fax or write to us to request an appeal be lodged</li> <li>• Verbal appeal requests can be taken but must be captured as accurately as possible in writing by an employee.</li> <li>• Inform your line manager that you have received and appeal and provide all associated documentation as soon as is practicable. If high risk, the appeal may need to be escalated.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY ONE</b></p> <p>Be respectful and responsive. Establish rapport. Listen.</p>
	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formally acknowledge receipt in writing and advise on the process for the appeal to be reviewed within 2 business days</li> <li>• Assess any conflict of interest and ensure no employee who was part of the original decision is part of the appeal assessment</li> <li>• The appellant has the right to a support person</li> </ul>	
Register   Review	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appeal must be logged on the local feedback register which will automatically populate to the organisational register held by the Manager, Quality and Compliance</li> <li>• Read the appeal and make sure you've identified the decision being questioned –make sure you understand the issues and that you've identified any other additional issues.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY ONE</b></p>
Assess Risk	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Risk Matrix with your line manager to establish the level of risk associated with the appeal</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY ONE</b></p> <p>Assess severity</p>

<b>Investigate</b>	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the appeal has sufficient grounds for progress and review</li> <li>• Arrange to speak with any associated parties to gain clarity on the original decision-making process</li> <li>• Identify additional issues that become apparent through the investigation process.</li> <li>• Crosscheck and clarify your findings with others as required.</li> <li>• Be mindful at all times not to breach confidentiality to minimise impact on people.</li> <li>• Agree with the people involved on actions, decisions and timelines that will close out the appeal</li> <li>• Document everything very carefully. Keep accurate notes.</li> <li>• Where resolution/satisfaction was not achieved, the matter may be referred to an appropriate external agency. The Manager, Quality and Compliance can assist with this.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY 1-5</b> Empathise Acknowledge emotion Clarify  Agree on actions and timelines</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is fault, apologise. Ensure this is done with approval from your line manager.</li> <li>• Identify required service improvements and actions required to close out the complaint.</li> <li>• Formulate an Action Plan (see below).</li> <li>• Confirm the actions with relevant parties – are they achievable and within budget?</li> <li>• Escalate as required for approval.</li> </ul> <p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record all outcomes in the Feedback Register. Include completion dates for corrective actions.</li> <li>• Systemic issues e.g., change in policy or procedure will be advertised to the whole organisation.</li> <li>• Changes put in place will be reviewed periodically to ensure they are working and sustainable.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY 1-7</b> Assess Options Negotiate Provide Explanation If there is fault, apologise Debrief</p>
<b>Close Out</b>	<p><b>Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appeal is to be closed out, where possible, within 10 days of receipt. Informing line manager and/or General Manager of the outcomes</li> <li>• A letter outlining the outcome will be sent to the appellant. Ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.</li> <li>• Ensure that information is provided to the appellant on next steps they can take and who they can contact if they are unsatisfied with our decision</li> </ul>	<p><b>DAY 7-10</b> Solution Action Thank you</p>
<b>Additional Actions</b>	<p><b>General Manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The data from the organisational complaint register will be analysed for trends, risks and systemic issues that require change to policy and procedure.</li> <li>• A monthly report is submitted to the CEO outlining statistical and high-risk information.</li> <li>• The register will be made available at the request of external parties e.g. Housing Registrar (VIC), National Community Housing Regulator, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Analyse</b></p>

## Roles and Responsibilities

Who	Role	Responsibilities
Chief Executive Officer	Oversight Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular reporting to the Board on complaint management and outcomes</li> </ul>
General Manager	Oversight of operational complaint process and approval of complaint resolution outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve resolution outcomes from complaints</li> <li>Engage as required in complaint management</li> <li>Manage internal and external relationships as required</li> <li>Support and direct regional teams as required</li> <li>Report CEO on complaints and resolution process</li> </ul>
Manager, Quality and Compliance	Support complaint process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain Complaint Register</li> <li>Monitor complaint outcomes</li> <li>Report to General Manager on trends and outstanding complaints</li> </ul>
Regional and other service managers	First point of contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow Complaint procedure and engage with complainant to ensure resolution of complaint</li> <li>Advise and seek guidance as required</li> <li>Maintain local complaint register</li> </ul>
Employees and Volunteers	Support and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support clients/tenants and others to understand the complaints process</li> <li>Engage in the investigation process as required.</li> </ul>

Document Control Data	
<b>Policy Framework</b>	
<b>Responsible Body</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	General Manager, Service Delivery
<b>Application</b>	All employees of YWCA Australia
<b>Supersedes</b>	Previous local policies
<b>Associated documents</b>	Feedback and Appeals Policy Feedback Register Privacy Policy

## Document Control Data

### Policy Framework

<b>Legislation</b>	<p>Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)</p> <p>Residential Tenancies and Rooming House Acc Act 2008 (Qld)</p> <p>Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT)</p> <p>Privacy Act 1988 (COM) Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)</p> <p>Housing Registrar (Vic): Performance Standards NRSCH: Evidence Guidelines and Regulatory Code</p> <p>NRSCH: Evidence Guidelines and Regulatory Code</p> <p>Housing Assistance Act 1996 (COM)</p> <p>Housing Act 1983 (VIC)</p> <p>Housing Act 2003 (QLD)</p> <p>Housing Regulations 2015 (QLD)</p> <p>Housing Act 1982 (NT)</p> <p>National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018</p> <p>Information Privacy Act 2009</p> <p>Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</p> <p>Queensland Human Rights Act 2019</p> <p>The Australian Consumer Law 2011</p>
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## Approval and Amendment History

Review period – 2 years

Approval Date	Version	Amendments	Next Review
30 July 2020	1.0		July 2022
1.12.2020	1.1	Added legislation	July 2022
6.1.2021	1.2	NDIS Commission Complaint Handling section added	July 2022
22/02/2022	1.3	Add legislation Update Roles and Responsibilities	November/2022
29/03/2022	1.4	Review and add updates to appeals	March 2024

## Appendix One

### Risk Rating Matrix

		Consequences				
		1 Negligible	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Severe
Probability	A Almost Certain (81% - 100%)	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Extreme Risk	Extreme Risk
	B Likely (61% - 80%)	Minimum Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Extreme Risk
	C Possible (41% - 60%)	Minimum Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	High Risk
	D Unlikely (21% - 40%)	Minimum Risk	Low Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk
	E Rare (1% - 20%)	Minimum Risk	Minimum Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk

#### Instructions for Using the Risk Rating Matrix

Identify consequence of the risk:	Identify the probability of the risk:	Identify the risk rating:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 = Negligible</li> <li>2 = Minor</li> <li>3 = Moderate</li> <li>4 = Major</li> <li>5 = Severe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A = <b>Almost Certain</b> (81% - 100%)</li> <li>B = <b>Likely</b> (61% - 80%)</li> <li>C = <b>Possible</b> (41% - 60%)</li> <li>D = <b>Unlikely</b> (21% - 40%)</li> <li>E = <b>Rare</b> (1% - 20%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Low</b> – refer to Line manager</li> <li><b>Medium</b> – refer to Line manager</li> <li><b>High</b> – refer to Line manager for referral to Director/CEO</li> <li><b>Extreme</b> – refer to Line manager for referral to Director/CEO</li> </ul>