

HOW TO MAKE AN APPEAL

At Southern Cross Housing (SCH) we make decisions that are based on policies and procedures that aim to be transparent and fair to everyone. These policies and procedures are designed to meet agreed standards of service for community housing and they contain standards that ensure SCH complies with relevant legislation.

You may not always agree with a decision that we make. If you do not, you can ask us to reconsider our decision. This is called an Appeal.

When can I appeal a decision?

Below are examples of decisions you may want reconsidered:

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 offered a property you do not want to accept
- The number of bedrooms you are entitled to
- Being refused temporary accommodation

For a tenant:

- The level of your rent rebate
- Water charges or refusal of a water usage allowance
- Being refused rehousing or a transfer
- Being refused a rent rebate or having one cancelled
- Being refused permission to make modifications

For a past tenant:

- The classification of your ex-tenancy
- Charges for tenant damages
- Security of tenure

What should I do if I am unhappy with a decision?

Write to us or come and see us, give us your reasons and lodge an appeal.

What will happen after I have lodged my appeal?

The decision will be reviewed based on what you have written, documentation of the original decision and our policy and procedures. We may also contact you for additional information.

Having considered all the information, we will either change our original decision in full or in part, or reject the appeal.



The original decision will be changed if:

- The decision was made without the full information
- The decision was outside the relevant policy, or 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.

How will I know when my appeal has been finalised?

Within 21 days of you lodging your appeal we will write to you and advise the outcome. If you need an answer sooner because you will suffer financial loss, you can ask for an Accelerated Appeal which will be finalised within 7 days.

What happens to the things I say or write?

We will keep a record of your appeal. This record will contain all correspondence during the appeals process. We will show you this record if you ask to see it. The details of your appeal may also be recorded on the Housing Pathways register which is accessed by Housing NSW and other social housing providers.

Can I ask someone else to help me?

We will be as helpful as we can, but you may also want someone outside of our organisation to help you. You can seek help from a Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service worker, or a community worker. You may also ask a friend to talk to us on your behalf or to 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'm not happy after the internal appeal?

Decisions that you believe breach our landlord responsibilities or deny your rights under the Residential Tenancies Act can be resolved by making an application to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Other decisions can be referred to the Housing Appeals Committee. You may also be able to complain to the Minister for

Complaints and Appeals

Information for Tenants and Applicants

ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

The information in this brochure will assist you in making a complaint about Southern Cross Housing or appealing a decision that is made by Southern Cross Housing.

Our complaints and appeals policies outline how we handle dissatisfaction with our service or our decisions. Copies of both the policies are available on our website at www.scch.org.au

DEFINITIONS

A complaint is when you tell us that you are not satisfied with our service, standards, practices or policies.

An appeal is when you ask for a decision we have made to be reviewed.

Please contact our office for complaints or appeals

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

SCH encourages feedback from our customers. This feedback, including complaints provides an opportunity for SCH to identify problems and issues and to implement strategies that result in better work practices and outcomes for tenants.

What sort of issues warrant making a complaint?

If you are not satisfied with the services that you are receiving from SCH, one of our policies, or the quality of customer service that you are receiving you may wish to lodge a complaint.

Some examples of complaints are:

- Poor quality services provided by SCH staff
- Discrimination or harassment
- Poor behaviour by a contractor (eg, failing to clean up following maintenance)
- Poor administration such as a loss of documents or information
- Faulty maintenance work (where failure to undertake maintenance work properly is the issue)

Complaints that are related to an alleged breach of the 2014 National Regulatory Code for Community Housing should be referred to the Registrar of Community Housing. Complaints that relate to alleged fraud or corruption should be referred to the Australian Securities Investment Corporation.

All other complaints, including complaints relating to tenancy management, access/ and application management and SCH staff, are initially dealt with by SCH.

How do I make a complaint?

The first step is to document the reasons for your complaint. To do this you can use the complaint form that is available on the SCH website) or write to us describing what happened and why you are not satisfied. Try to be clear and to the point.

Tell us what action you think should be taken, how the problem is affecting you and how urgent it is. It is also important to let us know if you need an inter p r e t e r , or someone to help you. You may also request an appointment with your Housing Officer to help you fill out the complaints form.

F-GEN001

Your written complaint should be sent to Southern Cross Housing by either post, hand delivered or email. Addresses are provided in this brochure.

When we have a written record of your complaint, we will follow our internal complaints procedure. A copy of this procedure is available on our website at www.scch.org.au, or you can ask for a copy from any of our offices.

Investigating complaints

A Team Leader, Services Manager or the CEO will investigate your complaint. The complaint will be reviewed independently and will consider all information available at the time of the complaint.

Responding to complaints

Once the investigation is completed you will be formally advised of the outcome. SCH will provide a response to you within 21 days.

Depending on the nature of your complaint and the outcome of our investigation, we may:

- Provide you with an apology
- Explain why things happened the way that they have
- Change our processes to ensure that the situation does not happen again
- Offer you a different service
- Take action to put things right for you
- Advise you why we disagree with you

The response will explain the reason(s) for any decision. If you are still not satisfied with the response, you have the option of referring the matter to an external body. The response that is provided to you will include information on how to make a complaint to an external body.

What happens to things I say or write?

At SCH we keep a record of your complaint. This record will contain all correspondence that has been created during the complaints process. We will show you this record if you ask to see it. The details of your complaint may be recorded on the Housing Pathways register which is accessed by Housing NSW and other

social housing providers.

Can I ask someone else to help me?

We will be as helpful as we can but you may also want someone who is outside of our organisation to help you. 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 could also ask for help from an 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' body such as a Community Justice Centre. They will be able to act as mediator.

What if I disagree with the outcome of the complaint after SCH has reviewed it?

Decisions that you believe breach our landlord responsibilities or deny your rights under the Residential Tenancies Act can be resolved by making an application to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Other decisions can be referred to the Housing Appeals Committee. You may also be able to complain to the Minister for Housing if your property is owned by the Land and Housing Commission.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service 1800 807 225
 - Community Justice Centre 1800 990 777
 - NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal 1300 006 228
 - Registrar of Community Housing 1800 330 949
 - Southern Cross Housing 1300 757885
- Email: info@SCCH.org.au