

September 2016

Approved by resolution of the Abbeyfield Australia Board

Introduction

An Abbeyfield House is a group house in which residents live independently in a shared supportive environment. We understand that disputes and complaints may arise from time to time and we aim to prevent minor concerns becoming major grievances by responding to them promptly.

Often a local Abbeyfield House Committee of Management member, the Housekeeper or a fellow resident can help resolve issues quickly and quietly. Another good informal way to resolve an issue is to raise it at a Residents' Committee meeting. The Residents' Committee meeting is your meeting and more often than not, other residents will be keen to listen and help resolve the issue.

If it's not appropriate to raise the issue at a Residents' Committee meeting or if you are not satisfied with the outcome at the Residents' Committee meeting, then this *Complaints and appeals procedure* is a formal way getting your issue addressed.

Regrettably in some instances and particularly in group house environments such as an Abbeyfield House, it may not be possible to resolve a complaint to everyone's complete satisfaction. However in all instances, Abbeyfield's commitment is to apply this procedure fairly; be open to complaints and appeals; and use our best endeavours to reach a solution which is satisfactory to all.

Complaints and appeals

We want residents to be happy and satisfied in their Abbeyfield Housing. So if you are an Abbeyfield House resident and dissatisfied with any aspect of the service we provide to you, then you have the right to complain. This document tells you how to make a complaint and how we will investigate and respond to that complaint.

If you are an Abbeyfield House resident and not satisfied with a decision we have made, (whether it relates to how we responded to a complaint or any other decision we have made), then you may also appeal that decision.

Similarly if you are not an Abbeyfield House resident but have been affected by a decision we have made about residency in an Abbeyfield House, then you too can appeal that decision.

This document tells you how to appeal a decision if you want to do that.

Resident Liaison Officer

If it is not appropriate to raise an issue at the Residents' Committee Meeting, an Abbeyfield House resident may wish to talk to the Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) at the Abbeyfield House. The RLO will try to resolve the complaint promptly and within fourteen days.

Abbeyfield Local Society Committee of Management

Where a resident is not satisfied with the response from the RLO or has had no response from the RLO, the Resident may escalate the complaint to the local Committee of Management. (This is the volunteer Committee which manages the Abbeyfield House.)

Residents should write to the Secretary of the Committee of Management and explain:

- what has occurred
- why you are not satisfied

- what action you would like to see
- anything else you think relevant.

The letter can be very simple but provide as much information as possible to help the Committee understand the complaint and how best to respond to it.

Your local Abbeyfield Committee of Management has the best interests of all Abbeyfield House residents at heart and so will want to try to resolve complaints as quickly as possible.

The Committee of Management may consider complaints ‘as a whole’ and so manage the process of assessing the complaint, making decisions about it and informing the parties. Alternatively, the Committee of Management may delegate the matter to its Executive Committee.

In any event, the Resident who made the complaint will be kept informed of the action being taken and receive a final written response from the Committee as soon as reasonably possible and within 45 days of your letter to the Secretary.

(At this point the Committee of Management will also advise Abbeyfield Australia of the written complaint and the outcome of that complaint.)

Appealing a decision to Abbeyfield Australia Ltd

If an Abbeyfield House resident is not satisfied with the response from the local Committee of Management or has had no response from the Committee of Management, the Resident may appeal that decision to the CEO of Abbeyfield Australia Ltd.

Similarly if you are not an Abbeyfield House resident but have been affected by a decision we have made about residency in an Abbeyfield House, then you too can appeal that decision.

To appeal a decision, simply write to the Chief Executive Officer, Abbeyfield Australia, Suite 1 / 329 Mitcham Road, Mitcham Vic 3132 or email admin@abbeyfield.org.au .

Send us:

- a brief covering letter including your name and contact details
- a copy of your letter to the Committee of Management
- a copy of the written response you received from the Committee of Management
- any other relevant information

The CEO of Abbeyfield Australia will then investigate the matter by talking to you and the Committee of Management and seeking any other information required. The CEO will keep you informed of any action being taken and respond within 60 days of receiving the appeal.

External appeal - An independent avenue of appeal

Some states and territories also have independent external agencies to which you can appeal if you are not satisfied with the response given to you by the CEO of Abbeyfield Australia.

The contact details for these external appeal bodies are shown below. They all offer free services and will all act independently to try to resolve the issue.

State / Territory	External appeal agency
Tasmania	There is no designated external appeal agency in Tasmanian

State / Territory	External appeal agency
Victoria	Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) 55 King Street Melbourne 3000 03 9628 9800 Web: https://www.vcat.vic.gov.au/ Email: vcat-rt@vcat.vic.gov.au
NSW	Housing Appeals Committee PO Box 1030 Westfield Burwood NSW 2134 Free call:1800 629 794 Email: hac@fac.s.nsw.gov.au Website: www.hac.nsw.gov.au
ACT	ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal ACT Health Building Level 4, 1 Moore Street Canberra City ACT (02) 6207 1740 http://www.acat.act.gov.au/
Queensland	Residential Tenancies Authority 1300 366 311 https://www.rta.qld.gov.au/
South Australia	South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal GPO Box 2361 Adelaide SA 5001 Phone: 1800 723 767 Email: sacat@sacat.sa.gov.au Web: http://www.sacat.sa.gov.au/

Privacy and confidentiality

Abbeyfield Australia and Abbeyfield local societies will keep formal complaints and appeals confidential and only tell other people about them with your approval, or if required by law. In some instances it may not be possible to fully investigate and resolve a complaint or appeal unless you give us permission to speak to other people about it.

This procedure statement is reflected in the Abbeyfield House Management Manual

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