



COMPLAINTS & DISPUTES RESOLUTION

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Policy Owner: Management Committee	Version Number: 4.1
Date Approved: 1/4/2025	Date Effective: 1/4/2025
Next Review Date: 1/4/2027	Page: 1 of 6

1.0 PURPOSE

This document sets out Central East Accommodation & Care Alliance Inc (CEACA) policy with respect to accepting, recording and resolving complaints. CEACA is committed to freely receiving and resolving complaints in an accessible and transparent way.

CEACA, through this document, makes the commitment to continual quality improvement by taking into consideration the data provided by the implementation of an effective complaints management system.

This policy aims to ensure that we handle feedback and complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively so that we:

- Have easy and accessible options for providing feedback and complaints;
- Respond to issues raised in feedback and complaints in a consistent, timely, fair and reasonable way;
- Use information provided through feedback and complaints process to improve our services;
- Maintain a register of feedback and complaints and report on outcomes.

CEACA has a regulatory and legislative responsibility to ensure that we are delivering safe and quality services and feedback and complaints are an important contributor to this.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

What is Feedback?

Feedback is any comment or advice in relation to CEACA's products, services or decisions, whether positive or negative, provided without the expectation of a response or resolution eg. response to a survey. Feedback may be escalated to a letter of complaint if CEACA's services are not improved. There is no requirement to give feedback prior to making a complaint.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about CEACA products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Example of a Complaint: Neighbourhood Dispute.

CEACA encourages early intervention for neighbours in dispute. Unless unsafe to do so, the first step that CEACA would take is to encourage the tenant to approach the neighbour to resolve the situation. When a neighbourhood issue is reported to CEACA, we will:

- Ascertain whether the issue is antisocial behaviour and prioritise is depending on its nature and impact.
- Where appropriate, connect the tenant to community legal centres to access specialist neighbour mediation services.
- Ask the tenant for as much detail as possible which will include asking for the tenant to record incident diaries or Police and Council report numbers.
- Investigate the allegations/issues impartially, seek evidence and speak to all parties involved.
- Work with external agencies to resolve issues, including Council, service providers, supports and Police.

As a Landlord, the way in which CEACA can assist tenants is limited if:

- The issue is not a breach of the *Residential Tenancies Act (WA) 1987*.
- The issue is a Police or Council matter.
- The people involved are not CEACA tenants.
- There is insufficient evidence of antisocial behaviour.
- All parties are at fault or there is evidence of retaliation.

If the antisocial behaviour is substantiated and continues despite our attempts to resolve it, CEACA may take action under the *Residential Tenancies Act (WA) 1987*.

Policy Owner: Management Committee	Version Number: 4.1
Date Approved: 1/4/2025	Date Effective: 1/4/2025
Next Review Date: 1/4/2027	Page: 2 of 6

What is an Appeal?

An appeal is a request to review a decision made by CEACA or the outcome of a complaint. Refer to CEACA Appeals Policy.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to our tenants, clients, household members, neighbours of our tenants, housing applicants, service delivery partners, maintenance contractors, stakeholders and members of the community impacted by our services. This policy applies to feedback or complaints relating to services provided by our staff or maintenance contractors, the decisions we have made, or the way we have handled feedback and complaints.

This policy does not cover:

- Issues with the behaviour of tenants or neighbours which are handled under the Good Neighbour Policy. However, an issue with the way we have handled a neighbour dispute or anti-social behaviour may be lodged as a complaint under this Complaints & Disputes Resolution Policy.
- Matters beyond the control of CEACA such as the lack of available housing where we would redirect people to the most appropriate services.
- Actions under the Fraud and Corruption Control or Whistleblower Policies.
- Actions handled under the Appeals Policy.

4.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Principles

- We will ensure that people are listened to, treated with respect and actively involved in the process where possible and as appropriate.
- We accept feedback and complaints in a variety of ways, including from recognised representatives such as carers or advocates (with consent).
- We will ensure that information on how to provide feedback or make a complaint is readily available, accessible, easy to understand for everyone and includes information on how to access relevant external authorities or advocacy services.
- We will respond to feedback and complaints efficiently and objectively, ensuring principles of procedural fairness are adhered to.
- We will ensure that the person handling feedback or a complaint is different from any staff members whose conduct or service is involved in the issue.
- Conflicts of Interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly.
- We recognise that many people feel insecure and vulnerable and at times may feel reluctant to exercise their right to provide feedback or to make a complaint. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people are not adversely affected because of a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.
- We will not take retaliatory action against a resident or client, such as non-renewal of lease or eviction, because a resident or client has raised a complaint or appeal with CEACA.
- We will consider deferring any actions that may have significant detrimental impact on someone who makes a complaint until the complaint has been finalised.
- All information will be treated as confidential in accordance with the CEACA Privacy Policy.
- We accept anonymous feedback and complaints without assigning blame and with the objective of reaching a mutually acceptable outcome. A complaint may be withdrawn at any time; however, we will ensure this has not been done under duress.
- The outcome of feedback and complaints will be used to support our continuous improvement.

Policy Owner: Management Committee	Version Number: 4.1
Date Approved: 1/4/2025	Date Effective: 1/4/2025
Next Review Date: 1/4/2027	Page: 3 of 6

5.0 ACCESSIBILITY

CEACA will actively bring this policy to the attention of tenants and applicants. CEACA is committed to promoting and ensuring visibility of our complaints management program. To help us do this we:

- Make this policy available free of charge (online or in hard copy).
- Make special arrangements for those with a disability, ensuring they and their advocates have access to this policy (free of charge) and are aided in the resolution of their complaint.
- Make sure that all relevant staff, Management Committee Members, volunteers and representatives of CEACA are aware of the requirements of this policy and procedure and are provided with relevant training or coaching if required.
- Publish the Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure on the CEACA website (www.ceaca.org.au) and send to customers on request. It is intended as a clear and concise guide to our standard complaints and dispute resolution procedure.

6.0 RESPONSIVENESS

CEACA will acknowledge receipt of feedback and complaints within 2 business days and will aim to resolve the dispute within 30 days. Complainants will be informed when external authorities are required. The following complaint types may require reporting from external authorities:

- Notifiable privacy breach.
- Reportable/notifiable incidents including abuse of children and young people, or vulnerable people.
- Criminal activity.

7.0 REPORTABLE/NOTIFIABLE INCIDENTS

If feedback or a complaint includes information that someone has/may be hurt or is at risk, this will be dealt with in a manner that ensures everyone's safety and may involve reporting to the Police or other authorities.

8.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- All staff are required to comply with this policy.
- All CEACA staff have a responsibility to assist people who wish to make complaints access the CEACA complaints process.
- All staff, Members, volunteers or representatives managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.
- CEACA will ensure that management of complaints is not hindered by a lack of resources.
- CEACA Managers will ensure that adequate training is provided to assist with managing complaints and provide coaching and mentoring to ensure the correct process is followed.
- The Executive Officer and Operations Manager are responsible for:
 - Ensuring the Complaints and Disputes Resolution policy is kept up to date and available to CEACA Members, staff and representatives, electronically or in hard copy.
 - Establishing and implementing the process of complaints management.
 - Allocating resources to ensure compliance under applicable laws and this policy.
 - Promoting and advocating for a customer centric approach in the company as a whole and in the resolution of complaints.
 - Reporting of complaints and disputes to the Chairperson and Management Committee Members, to include the number and nature of complaints or disputes.
 - Continually reviewing the effectiveness of managing CEACA complaints or disputes, including the processes in place.

Policy Owner: Management Committee	Version Number: 4.1
Date Approved: 1/4/2025	Date Effective: 1/4/2025
Next Review Date: 1/4/2027	Page: 4 of 6

9.0 CEACA MEMBERS

The CEACA Members must ensure:

- They are kept informed of all complaints and disputes lodged with CEACA.
- That the CEACA Complaints and Disputes Resolution Policy and processes are read and understood by Members.
- Must ensure that quality improvements are made based on areas identified by genuine complaints.
- Ensure any complaints of a serious nature are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

10. MONITORING AND IMPROVING

- Complaints will be tracked at an individual and organisational level.
- Any systemic issues identified will be brought to the attention of the CEACA Chairperson and Management Committee Members during their routine meetings.
- CEACA's Members will direct the Executive Officer to address systemic issues identified during a complaints process.

11. RIGHT TO COMPLAIN

- Customers (including tenants and applicants) have a right to lodge a complaint at any time.
- Once a complaint is received, it will be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

12. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ESCALATION

- At any time, a tenant may request an internal escalation of their complaint, and such a request will be granted.
- Complaints will also be escalated where they are complex, urgent or sensitive.
- Tenants and applicants will be informed of the review options available to them if they are dissatisfied with the process being followed.
- Staff who manage complaints will be required to review the complexity, urgency and sensitivity of any complaint received and seek assistance from a specialist where required.
- If a tenant advises that they are not satisfied with CEACA's response to their complaint, the CEACA Appeals process will be explained, and they will be provided with a copy of the *CEACA - Appeals Process Explained* document as well as a copy of the *CEACA Housing Appeal Request form*.

13. COMMITMENT TO TENANTS & APPLICANTS

In all instances, we will:

- Treat tenants and applicants with respect.
- Take any complaints seriously.
- Respect our tenant and applicant privacy and the need to keep personal information confidential.
- Ensure equitable access to our Complaints & Disputes Resolution policy.
- Respond quickly to any complaints in a professional, courteous and fair manner.
- Thoroughly investigate and report on complaints.
- Endeavour to resolve all concerns at the tenant or applicant's initial contact.
- Provide clear and informative responses to complaints.
- Advise tenants and applicants of their right to escalate complaints to the CEACA Management Committee.
- Monitor and review complaints to identify any trends and take appropriate steps to rectify potential problems.

Our customers have rights under various laws including the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)*. We will ensure that we respect those rights. CEACA will provide adequate resources, including appropriately trained and qualified personnel, to enable us to manage customer complaints efficiently and effectively.

Policy Owner: Management Committee	Version Number: 4.1
Date Approved: 1/4/2025	Date Effective: 1/4/2025
Next Review Date: 1/4/2027	Page: 5 of 6

14. COMPLAINTS & MANAGEMENT PROCESS

When a dispute arises between CEACA and a tenant or applicant the following will apply.

1. In the first instance, the complainant should raise the concern directly with CEACA. Generally, the complaints will be addressed by CEACA without the involvement of the Community Housing Registration Office. It is important when making a complaint to keep written evidence of the concern and any ongoing developments in the event the matter is not resolved.

Complaints can be lodged in the following ways:

- In person;
- In writing to CEACA Inc, C/- Regus, PO Box 1257, Osborne Park WA 6017
- By Phone – (08) 9441 4815 or 0414 136 687.
- By email to info@ceaca.org.au;
- By completing a form on our website www.ceaca.org.au;

There is no time limit on when feedback or a complaint can be raised.

2. If not satisfied with the result and response from CEACA, a formal will need to make a formal complaint to CEACA via CEACA's formal complaint handling processes and policies. CEACA will then progress the matter in accordance with those policies.
3. If, after receiving a response, the complainant feels that their concerns have not been addressed by CEACA or CEACA has not followed its policies and procedures, the complainant can explore other avenues such as:
 - Requesting a copy of the *CEACA Appeals Policy* and *CEACA Appeals Process Explained*.
 - Seeking the support and advice from one of the following agencies:
 - DEMIRS (Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety)
Phone: 1300 30 40 54 Email: consumer@demirs.wa.gov.au
 - Tenants Advisory Service - Circle Green (State-Wide) (08) 6148 3636 www.circlegreen.org.au
 - Wheatbelt Community Legal Centre (08) 9622 5200 www.wheatbeltclc.com.au
 - Consumer Protection <https://www.consumerprotection.wa.gov.au/tenancy-advice-and-education-service>.
4. If, the complainant believes their issue to be of such serious or sensitive nature that it needs direct involvement of the Community Housing Registration Office (or other regulatory body) without prior notification to CEACA, then the complainant can contact the Community Housing Registration Office directly and their office will decide the best way to progress the complaint. Refer to the CHRO Complaints Handling Fact Sheet for Tenants [complaints-handling-fact-sheet-information-for-tenants.pdf](#)

15.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATION

- Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- CEACA Privacy Policy
- CEACA Appeals Policy

Policy Owner: Management Committee	Version Number: 4.1
Date Approved: 1/4/2025	Date Effective: 1/4/2025
Next Review Date: 1/4/2027	Page: 6 of 6