



Family &
Community
Services

AHO Complaints Resolution Procedure

This document outlines the AHO Complaints Resolution Procedure



Document approval

The AHO Complaints Resolution Procedure/Guidelines has been endorsed and approved by:

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1 Purpose of the AHO Complaints Resolution Procedure

1.1 Purpose

The Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) strives to provide best practice service delivery to its clients and in its dealings with other organisations.

Effective complaint resolution is a key part of good customer service.

Feedback from clients helps to develop services that better meet client needs by reinforcing what the AHO is doing right and providing positive feedback to staff, as well as providing feedback on how AHO can improve services.

1.2 Background and policy links

This procedure is an extension of the *AHO Complaints Resolution Policy* and the *FACS Complaints Management Policy*.

2 Definitions

The table below is a list terms, keywords and/or abbreviations used throughout this document.

Term	Definition
Complaint	<p>A complaint is defined as <i>'any indication that an external person or organisation is dissatisfied with the services, products or facilities provided by the AHO where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.'</i></p> <p>A complaint covered by this procedure can be distinguished from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff grievances• Public interest disclosures made by our staff• Responses to requests for feedback about the standard of our service provision (see the definition of 'feedback' below)• Reports of problems or wrongdoing merely intended to bring a problem to our notice with no

Term	Definition
	expectation of a response (see definition of 'feedback')Service requests (see definition of 'service request' below); andRequests for information
Dispute	An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.
Feedback	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about the AHO, about AHO services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Service request	A service request includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for approval or action • Routine inquiries about AHO's business • Requests for the provision of services and assistance. Requests for explanation of policies, procedures and decisions
Grievance	A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work related incident. These are covered by FACS HR policy.
Public Interest Disclosure	A report about wrong doing made by a public official in New South Wales that meets the requirements of the <i>Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994</i> .

3 Scope and application

This procedure applies to people and organisations that receive or engage with services, products or facilities provided by the AHO. This includes but is not limited to members of the public, housing providers (including Aboriginal Community Housing Providers), local governments, and other government, business or community organisations that deal with or receive services from the AHO, either directly or indirectly.

This procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints directed to and handled by housing providers;
- Complaints from occupants or visitors of houses not owned by the AHO (houses provided by housing providers);

- Service providers managed by housing providers;
- AHO staff grievances; and
- Public interest disclosures

4 Statement

These guidelines outline the process for AHO clients and/or housing providers to lodge a complaint in relation to services provided by the Aboriginal Housing Office.

4.1 Lodging a Complaint

Complaints about services provided by the AHO may be made:

- by letter
- in person
- by telephone
- electronically (by e-mail or from the AHO's website), or
- via correspondence to the Minister, FACS Secretary, Chief Executive, Ombudsman or an AHO staff member.

The AHO will acknowledge receipt of complaint within three (3) working days of the complaint being lodged. This will include contact details of the AHO staff member assigned to handle the complaint.

Where requested and if appropriate, AHO staff members may provide assistance to anyone wishing to make a complaint. This may include registering a verbal complaint and/or completing the AHO Feedback Form.

AHO staff will manage complaints so that:

- the right to provide feedback or make complaints to the AHO is promoted and protected
- people making complaints are listened to and treated with respect and courtesy
- assistance, if required, can be provided to ensure the complaints system is accessible and easy to use
- complaints are resolved efficiently, fairly and as quickly as possible and in line with AHO complaints procedures
- complaints and feedback are used by the AHO to improve the quality of AHO service and responsiveness to customer needs and
- the identities of people making complaints are protected where practical and appropriate or upon their request. Personal information

that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by the AHO as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

4.2 Resolution of Complaints

The AHO will attempt to resolve the complaint within twenty one (21) working days. Where it is not possible to resolve the complaint within twenty one (21) working days, the AHO Officer will inform the person who lodged the complaint of progress throughout the complaints resolution process.

The AHO will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and / or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

4.2.1 Initial Assessment

Upon receipt of a complaint, the AHO will assign an officer to investigate the complaint raised. The AHO Officer may contact the complainant to:

- confirm details of the issues raised and establish if he or she wishes the matter to be progressed as a formal complaint
- confirm if the issues raised are within the AHO's control
- consider the outcome(s) sought by the person making a complaint
- discuss alternative courses of action available and
- where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed

4.2.2 Managing Complaints

After assessing the complaint, the AHO will consider how to manage it. To manage a complaint the AHO will:

- investigate the claims made in the complaint
- gather information from the person or area that the complaint is about;
or
- Provide the complainant with information or an explanation in relation to the issues raised.

4.2.3 Providing Reasons for Decisions

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, the AHO Officer will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action taken by the AHO
- reason/s for the AHO's decision
- remedy or resolution/s that the AHO has proposed or put in place; and
- Any options for review that are available to the complainant such as those outlined in the AHO Appeals policy.

Where an alternative forum for resolution of the complaint exists, the AHO may choose to resolve the complaint by providing information about, or referring the person making the complaint to, further complaints handling mechanisms maintained by other organisations.

4.3 Reviews

If the person making a complaint is unhappy with the AHO's decision, they can ask for their matter to be reviewed and this will be classified as a 'dispute'.

For the AHO to conduct a review, the person making the complaint must tell the AHO:

- how it has erred in reaching the decision and
- Provide the AHO with new and important information that is relevant to the decision the AHO has made.

If the AHO agrees to review the decision, the request will be assigned to an AHO staff member who was not involved in handling the original complaint.

The AHO will only review a decision once.

A review is not a reinvestigation of a complaint. The review is to ensure the processes that the AHO Officer has followed were fair and adequate and the conclusions reached were reasonable based on the information available to the AHO at that time.

If the person lodging the complaint is still not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, or the way their complaint has been handled, a further complaint can be made to other appropriate organisations such as the NSW Ombudsman or, if the complaint is about a privacy issue, the Privacy Commissioner.

5 Roles and responsibilities

The main roles and responsibilities for the implementation of this guideline are as follows:

- AHO staff will adhere to the timeframes and processes outlined in this document.
- Complainants are responsible for adhering promptly and efficiently to requests for further information in order to resolve the complaint/ issues raised.

6 Monitoring, evaluation and review

It is the responsibility of AHO House & Client Services unit to monitor and update this document when required. This document will be reviewed every two years and when any significant new information, legislative or organisational change warrants amendments to this document.

7 Support and advice

You can get advice and support about this document from:

- AHO Operations team
- AHO Regional offices.

If you are reviewing a printed version of this document, please refer to the Intranet to confirm that you are reviewing the most recent version of the policy.