

Retirement Living Complaints & Dispute Resolution Policy & Procedure

1. Policy and Procedure Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide the overall framework for the effective management of feedback and complaints relating to Retirement Living with Catholic Healthcare Limited (CHL).
- Ensure all feedback and complaints are systematically and promptly recorded, and there is a standard approach to capturing the data.
- Provide a framework of clear governance that outlines roles and responsibilities of members of the workforce when managing feedback and complaints.
- Enable the establishment of a mechanism for using feedback and complaint data to inform continuous improvement.
- Provide an overview of the process for raising and managing disputes between residents and CHL.

2. Policy Statement

CHL values feedback and complaints as essential for service improvement. Residents and their representatives can raise complaints or disputes freely, without fear of reprisal, and will never face fees, incentives, harassment, or deterrents.

In villages where there is a resident committee, support is available at any stage, at the discretion of the resident. Complaint and dispute processes are written in plain English, accessible online and on notice boards, and provided free of charge. Complaints and disputes are acknowledged within five business days, with an expected resolution date communicated where possible, and resolved within sixty days. Processes are reviewed at least every two years, and comprehensive records are maintained for a minimum of five years in accordance with legislative requirements.

3. Scope & Applicability

This policy and procedure applies to all employees working in CHL Retirement Living.

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5. Guiding Principles

CHL is committed to facilitating the management of feedback and complaints in a manner consistent with the principles of natural justice and equity of access.

CHL will ensure that residents and/or their authorised representatives:

- a) Are aware that feedback and complaints are welcome.
- b) Can provide feedback or make a complaint anonymously.
- c) Are regularly encouraged to provide feedback about the quality of service they receive.
- d) Are aware of how they can provide feedback or make a complaint.
- e) Feel safe and comfortable raising a concern or making a complaint without fear from reprisal.
- f) Irrespective of their culture, language or ability, can make a complaint easily, and are supported and assisted in doing so.
- g) Can escalate their complaint if they are not satisfied with the initial resolution; and
- h) Are made aware of and provided access to external services to assist them with making a complaint or providing feedback.

CHL will ensure that:

- a) The complaint resolution process is accessible, confidential, fair, timely and transparent.
- b) A collaborative approach is used with complainants in the resolution of their complaint to ensure that their needs and expectations are recognised and addressed.
- c) Complainants can have an open and honest discussion with a nominated workforce member (open disclosure) if something has gone wrong that could harm, or has harmed someone; and
- d) Feedback and complaints data are monitored and analysed to inform continuous improvement.

A conflict of interest in complaint and feedback management arises when a Village employee has a personal interest or connection to the issue, the individuals involved, or the potential outcome, in a way that could compromise, or be perceived to compromise their ability to handle the matter fairly, impartially, and in the best interests of residents. If a conflict of interest (perceived or actual) arises, it is expected that that it is declared, so the complaint can be managed by an impartial party.

6. Promoting and Encouraging Feedback and Complaints

CHL will ensure that information about feedback and complaints is promoted:

- a) On CHL's website
- b) On noticeboards at each Retirement Living Village
- c) In CHL publicity information
- d) During individual discussions with residents and/or authorised representatives
- e) During regular meetings with residents
- f) At organised feedback sessions with residents; and

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- g) During annual resident satisfaction surveys.

Members of the workforce that work directly with residents must:

- Regularly ask residents if they wish to provide any feedback or make a complaint
- Provide easy access to the 'feedback and complaints' form
- Provide any necessary assistance to a person to give feedback or make a complaint
- Offer residents opportunities to complete surveys; and
- Inform residents of external complaints services.

7. Defining Feedback, Complaints and Disputes

Feedback: is a valuable and critical tool in assessing consumer confidence, satisfaction, and safety in the delivery of CHL services. Feedback can be delivered via a variety of means and it may be complimentary about staff and/or service delivery, or it may be of a nature where areas for improvement are identified. Generally, feedback is information used for continuous improvement. Feedback will be recorded in accordance with complaints and feedback procedures of the relevant business area.

A complaint: is an expression of dissatisfaction made to and about CHL that is related to its products, services, staff, or the handling of a complaint. If a verbal complaint is received, the person receiving the complaint must ensure that they have fully understood and captured the particulars of the complaint. When a complaint is made, CHL will seek to resolve the issues raised and may respond in writing to the complainant. Opportunities for continuous improvement will be captured in plans of continuous improvement.

Dispute: A dispute is a disagreement or conflict between two or more parties—such as residents, or between a resident and Catholic Healthcare Limited (CHL)—that cannot be resolved through normal communication or complaint handling.

A dispute typically arises when parties have opposing views or interests regarding village operations, services, policies, or decisions, and require formal intervention, mediation, or escalation to reach a resolution.

Disputes may include, but are not limited to:

- Conflicts between residents over shared spaces, amenities, or village rules.
- Disagreements between a resident and CHL regarding the interpretation or application of contracts, policies, or service delivery.
- Ongoing issues that remain unresolved after initial complaint handling and require further mediation or escalation (internally or externally).

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8. Managing Feedback, Complaints and Internal Disputes

All complaints and feedback must be recorded in ERICS.

Persons should be informed of the difference between providing feedback (information used for continuous improvement and making a complaint (a matter requiring resolution).

Persons that provide feedback will not receive a response unless they specifically request it.

If a person provides negative feedback and seeks a response, confirmation should be sought to confirm if the person wishes for their feedback to be treated as a complaint.

All feedback/complaints and internal disputes must be:

- a) Acknowledged in writing within 5 working days; and
- b) Managed within 60 days including providing written confirmation of the resolution of the dispute.
- c) An expected resolution date communicated where possible.

Feedback and complaints data will be analysed for commonalities and trends. The Senior Manager of Retirement Living will provide a report of trended feedback to the Senior Manager of Customer Experience and the Chief Communities Officer for consideration in continuous improvement activities.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Chief Executive Officer** is responsible for:

- a) Encouraging an environment where complaints and feedback is encouraged and welcomed.
- b) Ensuring an effective feedback and complaint management system and governance system is in place.
- c) Ensuring that feedback and complaints data is used to inform the planning and implementation of improvement activities for Retirement Living.

The **Chief Communities Officer**, is responsible for ensuring that:

- a) Feedback and complaints management processes are complied with across Retirement Living.
- b) Feedback and complaints data are monitored.
- c) Trended feedback and complaint data are collated and analysed monthly.
- d) Serious systemic issues are immediately identified and rectified.
- e) Appropriate actions are taken to implement continuous improvement across Retirement Living.

Senior Manager, Retirement Living is responsible for ensuring that:

- a) managing complaints escalated from the Village Manager.
- b) Management of all external complaints.

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- c) Notification to CHL Legal Department (where required).

Retirement Village Managers are responsible for:

- receiving and logging all feedback, complaints and disputes in **ERICS** and attempting to resolve them at first instance.
- In the event a complaint cannot be resolved by the Retirement Village Manager the complaint should be escalated to the Senior Manager, Retirement Living.

Administration Co-Ordinator:

- Will act under the instruction of the Village Manager during the Complaint/Dispute resolution process.

Maintenance Co-Ordinator:

- Will act under the instruction of the Village Manager during the Complaint/Dispute resolution process.

10. Open, confidential and anonymous complaints

Open complaints: are where the identity and contact details of the complainant is known. When internal open complaints are received, CHL will keep the complainant informed of the progress of the complaint and the complainant will be able to provide CHL with further information.

Anonymous complaints are those where the complainant does not reveal their identity.

Confidential complaints: are where the identity of the complainant is known, but the complainant wishes for their identity to be kept confidential. In such circumstances CHL does not reveal the complainant's name.

Anonymous and confidential complaints can be difficult to progress when a complaint is made against an aged care workers member. The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness generally require a respondent to know the identity of a complainant for the purposes of a comprehensive and relevant response.

Complainants' right to confidentiality must not be overridden, unless authorised by CHL's Chief Legal Counsel.

11. Principles of Complaint Management

CHL Complaints Management is based on the following 7 principles:

- Commitment:** We are committed to resolving complaints and have a culture that informs consumers of their rights to complain and how to complain. We value complaints and recognise them as being an integral part of our ongoing drive for continuous improvement and strengthened safety and quality.

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- **Accessibility:** We will ensure that the complaint process is easily accessible to all consumers with clear information on how to lodge a complaint and support for those who need it. We will also involve consumers in the resolution of their complaints.
- **Transparency:** Maintain an open and transparent process where complainants are informed of the steps involved in resolving the complaint and the expected timeframes for resolution.
- **Confidentiality:** Complaint information will be handled according to privacy laws and CHL's Privacy Policy. Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis with relevant personnel.
- **Responsiveness:** We will acknowledge and address complaints promptly and demonstrate our commitment to resolve issues in a timely manner and prevent escalation. This includes meeting all regulatory reporting requirements.
- **Accountability:** We are accountable for our decision making and complaint handling performance. We provide clearly articulated reasons for our decisions.
- **Continuous improvement:** CHL will share the lessons learned from complaints across the organisation to prevent harm and strengthen quality.

12. Privacy and Confidentiality

The person receiving the complaint shall not disclose information obtained, except for necessary administrative or supervisory/escalation purposes or for the purposes of obtaining advice, without consent of the complainant or when required or permitted by law.

CHL will handle all complaints in compliance with relevant privacy and other laws, and all complaint information must be treated as 'confidential'. Except to the extent necessary, a complainant's identity and personal details will be restricted to Aged Care Workers.

Only de-identified complaint data will be used for continuous improvement activities and education purposes.

CHL complaints are recorded in ERICS. These applications are secure and access to the complaints data is restricted to Aged Care Workers. Paper based complaint forms and supporting information must be maintained in secured storage.

Personally identifiable information about any individual raising a complaint should only be disclosed or used in compliance with the [CHL Privacy Policy](#).

A privacy complaint may be lodged by an individual who believes that CHL has mishandled their personal information. If you receive a privacy complaint, please refer it to the Privacy Officer. The Privacy Officer will lodge all privacy complaints in ERICS and manage them. The privacy officer can be contacted via privacy@chcs.com.au.

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13. Escalation Internally

If the Retirement Village Manager is unable to resolve a complaint with the complainant, it must be referred to the Senior Manager, Retirement Living, for resolution.

The Senior Manager, Retirement Living, will attempt to resolve the complaint or dispute with the interested parties. If a resolution is not forthcoming, the complaint will be escalated to the Chief Communities Officer for review and resolution. If Chief Communities Officer is unable to resolve the matter, the dispute will escalate to an external complaints service.

14. External Escalation

If a dispute cannot be resolved internally between the resident and CHL, the dispute may be escalated to the mediation service operated by NSW Fair Trading.

For disputes that cannot be resolved by mediation or should be escalated to the relevant tribunal within the timeframes prescribed in the Act and Regulations.

If a dispute cannot be resolved by NSW Fair Trading or resolution is prescribed by the Retirement Villages Act to be via the Tribunal, a resident may make an application to the Tribunal.

15. Continuous Improvement

CHL acknowledges that feedback and complaint data can provide a snapshot of existing weaknesses.

Feedback and complaint data will be regularly collated and analysed by the Senior Manager, Retirement Living.

Reports on feedback and complaints will include:

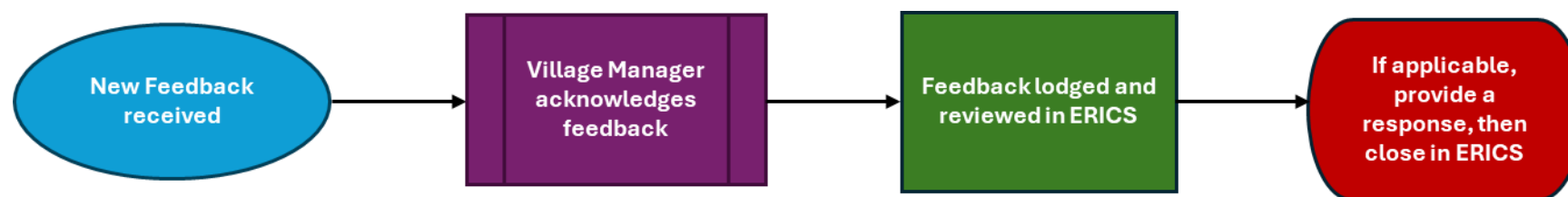
- a) the number of complaints about a matter
- b) geographic distribution of complaints
- c) any increase or decrease in complaints over time; and
- d) de-identified complainant data.

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16. Complaint Handling and Resolution Procedure

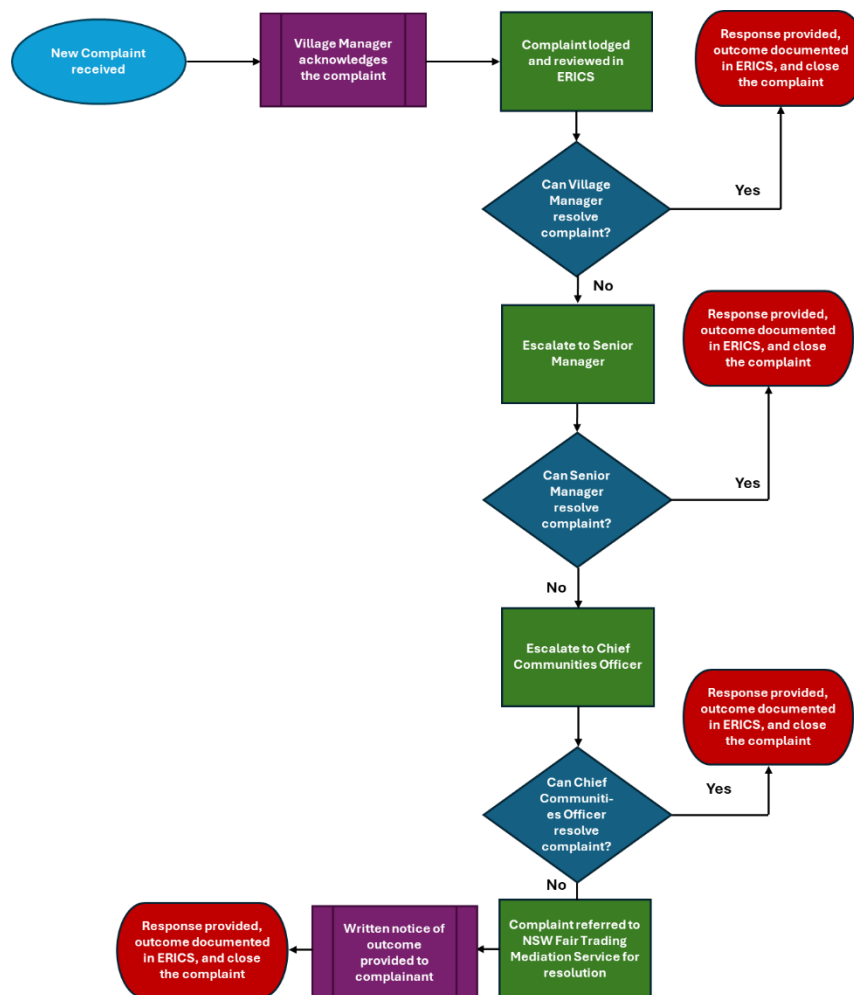
16.1 Feedback:



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16.2 Complaint

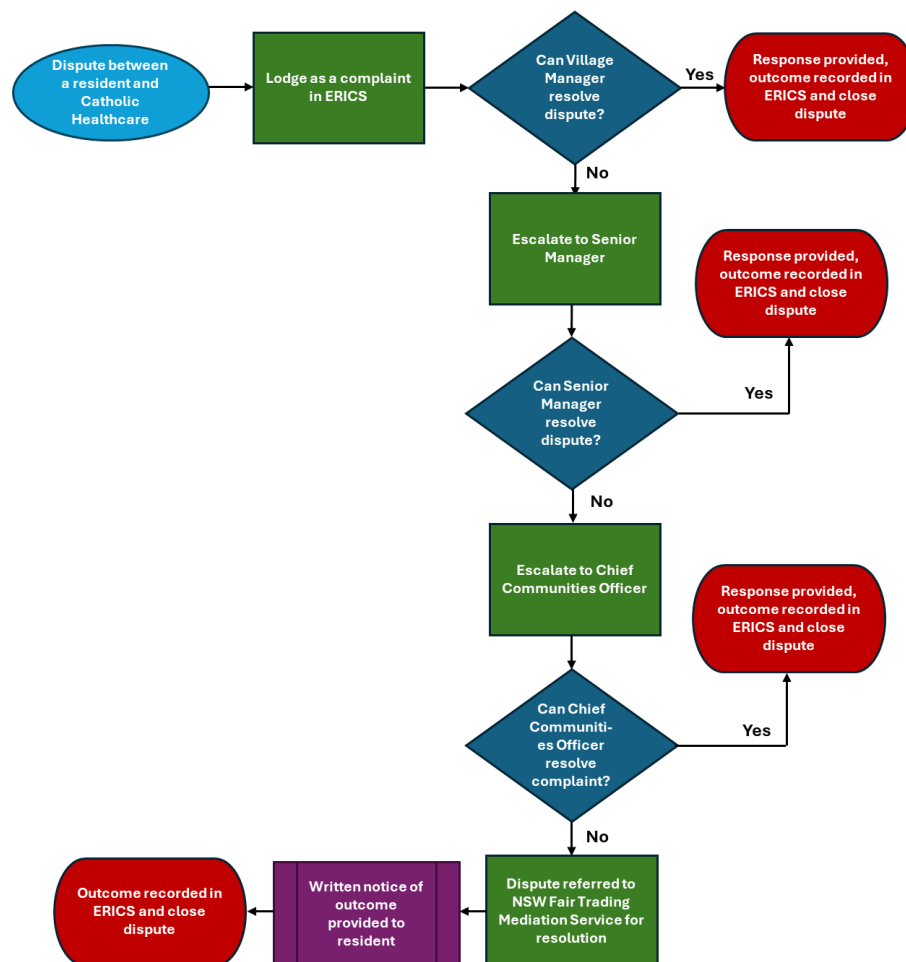


**For disputes that cannot be resolved by Fair Trading, an application may be made to the CIVIL and Administrative Tribunal*

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16.3 Dispute between a resident and Catholic Healthcare

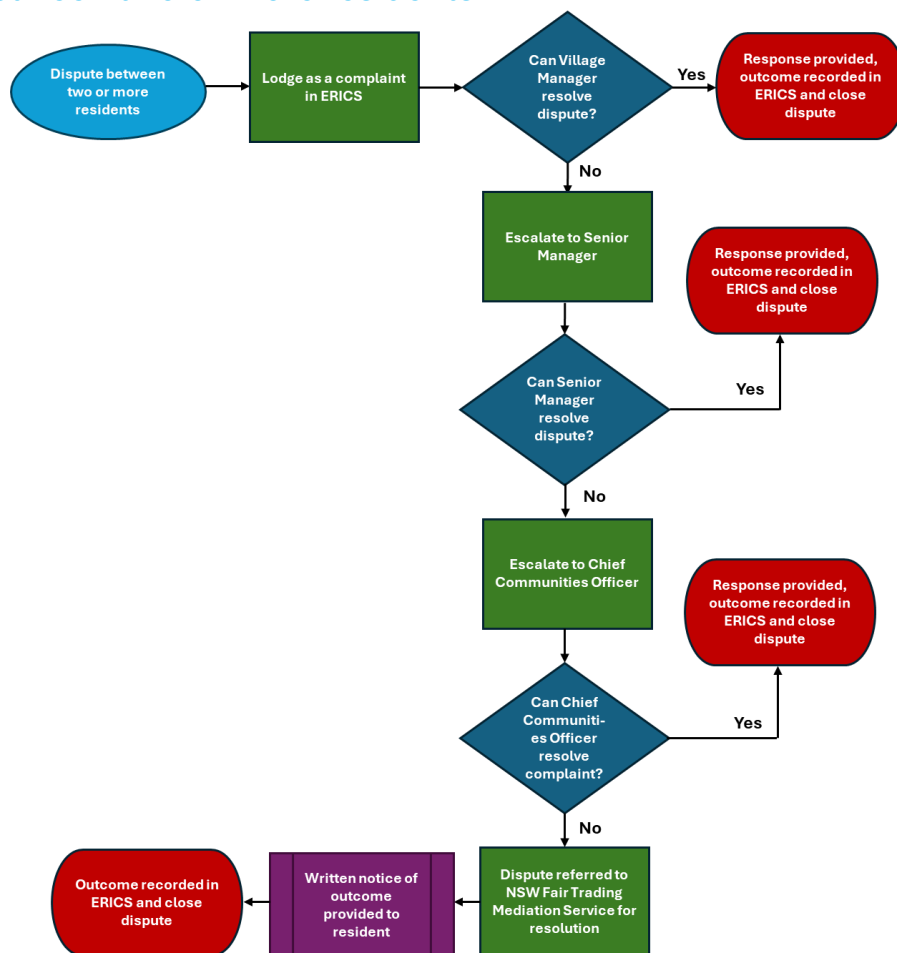


**For disputes that cannot be resolved by Fair Training, an application may be made to the CIVIL and Administrative Tribunal*

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16.4 Dispute between two or more residents



**For disputes that cannot be resolved by Fair Training, an application may be made to the CIVIL and Administrative Tribunal*

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17. Disputes between Residents

Any disputes between residents should be documented either by the resident(s) themselves or through a statement provided to the Village Manager.

The individual raising the dispute will be initially encouraged to see if a resolution may occur directly with the other party.

If direct resolution is not forthcoming, the Village Manager will then intervene and mediate where necessary to see if they can reach a successful outcome.

If there is still no successful outcome, an external mediator may be appointed, where appropriate, to help resolve the situation.

18. Disputes between Resident(s) and Catholic Healthcare

18.1 Types of disputes covered

- Disputes about operator compliance with contracts or legislation
- Issues with service provision, quality, or timeliness (e.g., maintenance, repairs)
- Concerns about fees, charges, or financial matters
- Disputes over interpretation or application of village rules or policies
- Complaints about staff conduct or professionalism
- Disputes regarding handling of previous complaints or disputes
- Disputes over management decisions affecting residents
- Issues with communication or transparency from management
- Disputes about access to support or representation (e.g., Residents Committee); and
- Any other issue a resident reasonably believes should be addressed by the operator.

Any disputes raised by a resident(s) should be documented by the resident(s) and provided to the Village Manager.

The individual raising the dispute will initially be encouraged to see if a resolution may be achieved by communicating directly with the Village Manager or with a representative from Catholic Healthcare

If direct resolution is not forthcoming, the dispute will be referred to the Mediation service offered by NSW Fair Trading.

If a dispute cannot be resolved by NSW Fair Trading or resolution is prescribed by the Retirement Villages Act to be via the Tribunal, a resident may make an application to the Tribunal.

18.2 Disputes/conflicts Catholic Healthcare will not be involved in

Criminal matters must be handled by police or emergency services, though CHL will assist, including in

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relation to the following matters:

- Theft, assault, harassment
- Serious safety incidents.

Family or Guardianship Disputes:

- Disagreements between a resident and their family
- Conflicts over guardianship, decision-making authority, or elder abuse concerns.

Home care services delivered by an external provider:

- Disagreements about medical treatment or healthcare staff
- Complaints about My Aged Care services.

13.4 Financial or Legal Matters Unrelated to the Village Contract:

- Pension, Centrelink, taxation, or estate issues
- Financial disputes between residents and external service providers
- Personal legal disputes (e.g., power-of-attorney conflicts, wills).

19. Record Keeping Requirements

Information related to all complaints, feedback and disputes must be logged in ERICS.

An annual report must be prepared by the Senior Manager, Retirement Living, noting the number of complaints and disputes handled each year.

These records must be kept for at least 5 years.

20. Review of Complaints

CHL will regularly review complaints received and logged on the complaints portal.

The following data will be analysed:

- number of matters handled
- complaint categories
- time taken to resolve issues
- repeat or recurring issues
- residents' satisfaction levels
- compliance breaches
- staff performance indicators.

Where data analysis identifies systemic or recurring issues, corrective and preventive actions will be developed. Policies and procedures will be updated accordingly.

Measures will include:

- root-cause analysis for recurring issues

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- updating procedures or forms
- adding staff training modules
- adjusting staffing or resources
- updating resident communications
- modifying service delivery.

21. Training

Employees must undergo the following training:

- Knowing how to handle unreasonable behaviour.
- Complaint handling and disputes.
- Spotting complaints early and knowing who to refer them to.

Review History

Date of update	Outline of change	SMEs Reviewed
1.9.25	Inclusion of Disputes that CHL will not be involved in	
1.9.25	Inclusion of review of complaints	

22. Related Policies & Documents

- Retirement Villages Regulation 2025 (NSW): Part 5 cl. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24.
- Retirement Villages Amendment (Rules of Conduct for Operators) Regulation 2019 (NSW)
- Retirement Living Code of Conduct 2018
- RL - Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions Form

23. Key words for search

Complaint, Feedback, Dispute resolution

- Knowing how to handle unreasonable behaviour.
- Complaint handling and disputes.
- Having clear authority and guidance for decisions.
- Spotting complaints early and knowing who to refer them to.

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