



## Neighbours and Neighbour Complaints Policy

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### Policy Description:

This policy establishes the approach of SouthEast Housing Cooperative to create, foster and support positive relationships between our tenants/residents with neighbours and local communities. The policy intends to balance the rights of tenants with the rights of neighbours.

### Applies to:

All tenants, residents and staff of SouthEast Housing Cooperative under all relevant programs. The words ‘tenants’ and ‘residents’ and ‘occupiers’ are effectively interchangeable and refer generally to all those people in a property including guests and friends and family of the primary tenant named on the lease agreement.

### Definitions:


### Relevant policy statements and/or principles:

#### Communication

SouthEast Housing Cooperative will ensure this policy is readily available to all tenants and staff and residents. This policy will also be made available to neighbours and community members who raise concerns or complaints about SouthEast Housing Cooperative tenants.

#### Policy Principles

This policy outlines the process for managing complaints about antisocial behaviour of any SouthEast Housing Cooperative resident.

There is no precise definition of antisocial behaviour or neighbour nuisance. Broadly, it is acting in a way that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress to one or more people in a neighbouring household.

To be deemed antisocial behaviour, the behaviour must be persistent.

The term is used to describe actions that unreasonably interfere with or could interfere with a resident’s/occupier’s normal use and enjoyment of their home, garden or neighbourhood. The definition extends to behaviour that can create a nuisance or annoyance to another person connected with the property.

## Minimum expectations for being a good neighbour

- **Keep noise to a minimum**

SouthEast Housing Cooperative residents are requested to keep noise to a minimum, especially late at night and early in the morning. This includes music, human voices, construction, lawnmowers, air conditioners and vacuum cleaners (in apartments). EPA Victoria has a list of prohibited times for different noise types on their [website](#). They also have advice on how to deal with noisy neighbours [here](#). Local Government websites also have information and list prohibited times for various noise types.

- **Look after children and visitors**

Children have a right to play and be safe. Residents are requested to ensure children and visitors don't negatively impact on their neighbours.

- **Respect other people's privacy**

Residents are encouraged to develop friendly relationships/connections with neighbours, but also remind tenants and neighbours to be respectful of each other's privacy.

- **Keep property clean and tidy**

If a resident lives on an estate or in a block of units, SouthEast Housing Cooperative will meet its obligations under Owners Corporations rules to maintain shared areas such as stairways, lawns, gardens etc... Residents can help to keep things clean and tidy by putting rubbish and recycling in the bins provided and reporting faults and damage.

## Procedure:

### Procedure for dealing with neighbour related issues

- If you are experiencing any problems with your neighbour, it is very important that you calmly deal with it as soon as you can. Sometimes a dispute may occur because of a misunderstanding between you and your neighbour.
- Early action is encouraged for neighbours in dispute. Your first step should be to approach your neighbour to resolve the situation between yourselves.
- If you feel you cannot speak with your neighbour directly, SouthEast Housing Cooperative can assist you to manage that conversation, including how to explain the problem from your point of view, the impact that it is having on you and how it could be resolved.
- You can also ask about mediation where a trained and independent person can speak with you and your neighbour to discuss how to try to resolve the problem.
- Contact your SouthEast Housing Cooperative Tenancy Officer – they may ask you to keep a nuisance and annoyance diary. This is a document that records the date, time and details of any incident that occurs. If the problem relates to any type of harassment or abuse, we may refer you to specialised services that can offer you support and assistance.

- If the problem relates to a breach of tenancy that is negatively affecting you, you can log a formal complaint as a *neighbour nuisance complaint* directly with SouthEast Housing Cooperative. Complaints about the way the neighbour nuisance complaints have been managed by SouthEast Housing Cooperative should also be dealt with under the SouthEast Housing Cooperative Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure.
- SouthEast Housing Cooperative commits to building respectful, positive and constructive relationships with neighbours and, where the opportunity exists for neighbours to learn about our work, to contribute to an improved understanding of the issues that affect our tenants and community housing generally.
- SouthEast Housing Cooperative cannot take direct action where the problem in your neighbourhood or block of units involves criminal activity. You can report this directly to the police.

### **Support Workers**

If the affected tenant has a Support Agreement in place the support worker from that agency will be notified to support the tenant.

### **How to complain**

You may complain:

- in person
- via a representative or advocate
- in writing (hard copy or electronic)
- by telephone
- via the SouthEast Housing Co-operative website

Upon receipt of the complaint the formal process will begin. SouthEast Housing Co-operative encourages complaints to be made in writing as a way by which the issues can be most effectively identified and then resolved.

SouthEast Housing Co-operative will:

- acknowledge receipt of all complaints within five working days;
- advise the complainant of the process that SouthEast Housing Co-operative will follow; and
- take all reasonable steps to resolve such complaints within 30 days after the complaint is made.

### **Outcome of complaint**

Responses to complaints must:

- be in writing; and
- explain the outcome of the complaint and the reasons for SouthEast Housing Co-operative's decision.

## Acknowledgement:

SouthEast acknowledges the work of the Community Housing Industry Association (Victoria) and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing in developing this policy.

## Related Legislation, SEHC Documents and Other Documents:

Legislation / Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Residential Tenancies Act 1997</li><li>• Housing Act 1983 (Vic)</li><li>• Guidelines for Registered Housing Agencies published by DFFH</li><li>• Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies</li></ul>
Organisational Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SEHC Member Manual</li><li>• Tenant Damage Policy</li><li>• SEHC Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures</li></ul>
VHR Documents / Guidelines:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• VHR Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures</li><li>• VHR Eligibility for Long Term Housing Policy</li><li>• VHR Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy</li></ul>

## Policy Management:

Policy owner (role title):	Board
Role responsible for implementing:	Board and CEO
Review arrangements:	Every 24 months via internal review
Next Review Date:	June 2024

## Document History:

Date:	Controlled Version Number:	Author:	Approved by:	Comment:
24 June 2022	1.0	S. Morrissey (CEO)	Board	Board approved version migrated for display on SEHC website
28 Sept 2022	1.1	Sue Fettes	Board	Updated to include complaints process