

Neighbours and Neighbour Complaints Policy

Policy Description

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

Scope

All renters, residents and staff of SouthEast Housing Co-operative under all relevant programs. The words 'renters' 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 renter named on the lease agreement.

Relevant policy statements and/or principles

Communication

SouthEast Housing Co-operative will ensure this policy is readily available to all renters and staff and residents. This policy will also be made available to neighbours who raise concerns or complaints about SouthEast Housing Co-operative renters.

Policy Principles

This policy outlines the process for managing complaints about antisocial behaviour of any SouthEast Housing Co-operative 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 Co-operative 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). Environment Protection Authority 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. 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 renters 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 Co-operative 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.

Procedures

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 Co-operative 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 Co-operative 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 Co-operative. Complaints about the way the neighbour nuisance complaints have been managed by SouthEast Housing Co-operative should also be dealt with under the SouthEast Housing Co-operative Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Complaints to SouthEast Housing Co-operative can be made via the telephone, in writing, or in person.

- SouthEast Housing Co-operative 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 renters and community housing generally.
- SouthEast Housing Co-operative 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 renter has a Support Agreement in place the support worker from that agency will be notified to support the renter.

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"> • Residential Tenancies Act 1997 • Housing Act 1983 (Vic) • Guidelines for Registered Housing Agencies published by DFFH • Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
Organisational Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Manual • Renter Damage Policy • Complaints and Appeals Policy

Policy Management

Policy owner (role title):	Board
Role responsible for implementing:	Board and CEO
Review arrangements:	Every 3 years via internal review
Next Review Date:	June 2027

Document History

Date	Controlled Version Number	Author	Approved by	Comment
24 June 2022	1.	S. Morrissey (CEO)	Board	Board approved version migrated for display on SEHC website
25 June 2024	2.	S. Morrissey (CEO)	Board	