DISPUTE RESOLUTION & COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

(Updated in line with current legislation and regulatory requirements)

Introduction

All residents of Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd are governed and protected by the *Retirement Villages Act 1986 (Vic)* and associated Regulations.

In accordance with these requirements, Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd maintains an internal dispute resolution and complaints handling process to ensure that all concerns are managed in a fair, respectful, and timely manner.

Residents are encouraged to raise any concerns with Management in the first instance so that issues may be addressed promptly and effectively. However, residents are not required to use the internal process and may seek assistance from external dispute resolution bodies at any time.

External options include Consumer Affairs Victoria, the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), and any applicable government conciliation services.

Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd is committed to open communication and transparency in the handling of complaints. All complaints received by the Operator (or its nominated contact person) will be recorded and a summary will be presented at the Annual Meeting. This summary will include the number and general nature of complaints, actions taken, outcomes achieved, and any changes made in response, while maintaining the confidentiality of all parties involved.

For the purposes of Dispute Resolution & Complaints Handling Policy:

- **Management** means the Operator and its authorised representatives, employees, agents and contractors involved in the management or operation of the Village, including but not limited to the Village Manager.
- **Operator** means the entity responsible for the management and operation of the Village – Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd
- **Proprietor** means the owner of the Village – Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd.
- **Resident** includes a person occupying a Unit under a residence right.
- **Village** means Blue Hills Rise / Blue Hills Residences and includes all Units, apartments, common areas, communal facilities, roadways and grounds.

Statement of Commitment

Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd, as Proprietor and Operator, together with its authorised representatives, are committed to maintaining a respectful, safe and well-managed community.

All complaints and disputes will be handled respectfully, professionally and diligently, recognising that timely resolution is important. Complaints and disputes are viewed as an opportunity to improve and strengthen the Blue Hills Rise community and living environment.

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the internal dispute resolution procedures for Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd in accordance with the **Retirement Villages Act 1986 (Vic)** and associated Regulations.

Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd is committed to ensuring all complaints and disputes are managed:

- Fairly
- Promptly
- Respectfully
- Transparently

Residents are encouraged to raise concerns, and will not be discouraged or disadvantaged for doing so.

2. Availability of This Policy

This policy is:

- Available to all residents and prospective residents
- Available at the village office upon request
- Written in plain English
- Available in alternative formats if required

3. What is a Complaint or Dispute?

A complaint or dispute is any expression of dissatisfaction relating to:

- Management decisions or actions
- Managements failure to make a decision or take agreed action on a timely and effective basis
- Services provided within the village
- Behaviour of another resident

Maintenance requests should be reported separately but may become a complaint if not addressed within a reasonable timeframe.

4. Guiding Principles

Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd will ensure that:

- Complaints may be made **verbally or in writing**
- Residents may have a **support person or representative present**
- Complaints are handled **confidentially**
- Complaints are handled **free of charge**
- Residents are **not discouraged** from making complaints
- Residents are **not disadvantaged** for making complaints

The operator (or its nominated contact person) will not:

- Take retaliatory action against a resident
- Deter or prevent a complaint from being made

5. Complaint Contacts Persons

Primary Contact Person (for the purposes of the Regulations):

Name: Jodie Mitchell – Director **Telephone number:** 0407 791 214

Postal address: 125 Berwick-Cranbourne Road, Cranbourne East

Email address: JodiemMitchell@gmail.com

Alternative Contact Person:

Name: Sharon Smith – Director **Telephone number:** 0407 791 217

Postal address: 125 Berwick-Cranbourne Road, Cranbourne East

Email address:

6. Internal Dispute Resolution Process

Step 1 – Lodging a Complaint

A complaint may be made:

- In person
- By phone
- In writing

Residents may request an appointment during business hours (Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm).

Step 2 – Acknowledgement

The operator (or its nominated contact person) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint **as soon as practicable** and arrange a meeting if appropriate.

Step 3 – Initial Meeting

The meeting will:

- Be conducted in a **private and confidential setting**
- Allow the resident to bring a **support person or representative**
- Allow Management to have a representative present

The following information will be recorded:

- Resident name and address
- Date and time of meeting
- Persons present
- Nature of the complaint
- Agreed actions or strategies
- Follow-up timeframe

A copy of the record will be provided to the resident.

Step 4 – Response and Action

The operator (or its nominated contact person) will:

- Begin action within a reasonable timeframe (generally within 72 hours)
- Work with the resident to resolve the issue

If the complaint is not resolved within 72 hours:

- A complaint file (electronic or physical) will be established as soon as practicable after a complaint is received.
- The resident will receive written confirmation outlining:
    - The complaint
    - Actions proposed
    - Next steps
    - Expected timeframes

Step 5 – Ongoing Communication

The Operator (or its nominated contact person) will:

- Keep the resident informed of progress
- Provide updates at reasonable intervals
- Arrange follow-up discussions as required
- Provide written confirmation of the outcome or resolution of the complaint or dispute, including details of any actions agreed or undertaken
- Where a complaint or dispute cannot be resolved internally, advise the resident that they may apply to VicAssist Retirement Villages for conciliation assistance and/or seek independent legal or professional advice

Step 6 – Resolution

A complaint is considered resolved when:

- Both parties agree on the outcome; or
- No further action is required

The operator (or its nominated contact person) will notify the resident as soon as practicable if the complaint:

- has been resolved, or
- cannot be resolved, including reasons and available next steps.

The operator (or its nominated contact person) will not resolve a complaint without the **consent of the resident**, or all parties in the case of a resident-to-resident dispute.

Where a complaint is not resolved within 72 hours, the record will include:

- the reasons the complaint remains unresolved
- actions that will be taken to progress the matter

Step 7 – If You Are Not Satisfied

Residents may seek external assistance at any time and are not required to complete the internal process.

External options include:

Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV)
Phone: 1300 55 81 81
Website: www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV)
Phone: 1300 372 888

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

VicAssist Retirement Villages Conciliation Service

7. Resident-to-Resident Disputes

Residents may choose to:

- Attempt to resolve the issue directly
- Refer the matter to the Operator (this process will apply)
- Refer the matter to the Residents Committee, Management Advisory Committee or other relevant resident representative body (if applicable at the time the complaint or dispute is being considered).
- Contact Consumer Affairs Victoria directly

Only one process should be active at a time unless formally withdrawn.

8. Record Keeping Requirements

Where a complaint is not resolved immediately, the Operator will maintain a record including:

- Date received
- How the complaint was made (verbal or written)
- Details of the complaint
- Actions taken
- The outcome or resolution sought by the resident (where known)
- Outcome or current status
- Any supporting documentation

Copies of correspondence and documentation relating to the complaint will be retained in the complaint file.

Each complaint will have a separate file.

Records will be retained for a minimum of **seven (7) years**.

The Complaint file retained by operator

Management must not take any action that:

- Deters a person from making a complaint
- Causes detriment to a resident for making a complaint

9. Annual Reporting

A summary of complaints will be presented at the Annual Meeting, including:

- Number of complaints
- Nature of complaints
- Actions taken
- Outcomes
- Any changes implemented as a result

All reporting will protect the identity of residents.

The operator of Blue Hills Residences Pty Ltd is responsible for ensuring compliance with the *Retirement Villages Act 1986 (Vic)* and associated Regulations.

Where required, the operator will provide information to Consumer Affairs Victoria, including but not limited to:

- Complaint and dispute records
- Details of actions taken in response to complaints
- Policies and procedures relating to dispute resolution
- Any supporting documentation relevant to an investigation or enquiry
- A copy of the Annual Dispute Report within 14 days following the Annual Meeting, submitted via the myCAV portal

The operator will comply with any lawful request, investigation, or direction issued by Consumer Affairs Victoria or any other authorised regulatory body.

Where a complaint or series of complaints indicates a systemic issue, a serious concern, or a potential breach of legislation, the operator will take appropriate action to address the matter and may notify Consumer Affairs Victoria where required.

If a complaint is escalated externally, the operator will:

- Cooperate fully with the relevant authority
- Provide requested information within required timeframes
- Participate in any dispute resolution or conciliation process

Nothing in this policy limits a resident's right to seek assistance from external dispute resolution bodies at any time.

10. Confidentiality and Privacy

All complaints will be handled confidentially and in accordance with privacy obligations.

Information will only be shared where necessary to resolve the complaint.

11. Continuous Improvement

Complaint information will be used to:

- Identify recurring issues
- Improve services and processes
- Enhance resident satisfaction

COMPLAINT FORM (Resident Use)

You can print this or make it fillable.

BLUE HILLS RESIDENCES

COMPLAINT / DISPUTE FORM

Resident Details

Name: _____

Address / Unit Number: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Representative (if applicable)

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Contact Details: _____

Complaint Details

Date complaint lodged: _____

How is this complaint being made?

☐ In person

☐ Phone

☐ Written

Please describe your complaint (include as much detail as possible):

Outcome Sought (IMPORTANT)

What would you like to happen to resolve this issue?

Supporting Information

Have you attached any supporting documents?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please list:

Signature

Signature: _____
Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

Received by (Primary / Alternative Contact): _____

Date received: _____

Complaint file created: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Follow-up date scheduled: _____