



Dispute Resolution Policy

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a clear, fair, and accessible process for resolving complaints and disputes between residents and the operator, in accordance with the Retirement Villages Amendment Act 2025 (commencing 1 May 2026) and the Retirement Villages Regulations 2026.

The 2025 reforms introduce a strengthened rights-based framework, standardised processes, and enhanced consumer protections, including improved dispute resolution pathways.

2. Guiding Principles

All dispute handling must reflect the new legislative standards:

- Respect, dignity, and fairness in all interactions.
 - Resident-centred decision-making, consistent with the strengthened protections under the 2025 reforms.
 - Transparency and accountability in operator conduct.
 - Early and informal resolution wherever possible.
 - No detriment to residents for raising concerns.
 - Confidentiality and secure record-keeping.
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3. Scope

This policy applies to all disputes relating to:

- Village operations, services, and management
- Fees, charges, exit entitlements, and financial matters
- Maintenance, repairs, and capital works
- Behavioural or interpersonal issues
- Rights and obligations under residence or management contracts
- Any matter arising under the 2025 Act or 2026 Regulations

4. Internal Dispute Resolution (IDR) Process

The 2026 Regulations require operators to maintain a formal IDR system and a complaints register.

Step 1 – Informal Resolution

Residents are encouraged to raise concerns directly with staff or the village manager who must attempt prompt, informal resolution.

Step 2 – Written Complaint

If unresolved, the resident may lodge a formal written or verbal complaint.

The operator must:

- acknowledge receipt
- record the complaint in the complaints register
- investigate the matter
- provide a written response within a reasonable timeframe

Step 3 – Internal Review

If the resident is dissatisfied, the complaint may be escalated to:

- the chairman and/or the board, or
- the village's Residents Committee,

The operator may offer mediation where appropriate – for example if the dispute is between two residents.

5. External Dispute Resolution

If internal processes do not resolve the matter, residents may seek the assistance of :

1. Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) – guidance and dispute assistance
<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/resolving-disputes-in-your-retirement-village>
2. Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria - Mediation services
<https://www.vic.gov.au/dispute-settlement-centre-victoria>
3. Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)
<https://www.vcat.vic.gov.au/>

6. Record-Keeping Requirements

Under the 2026 Regulations, operators must:

- maintain a complaint and dispute register
 - record outcomes and actions taken
 - comply with annual dispute notification obligations to CAV from 1 May 2026
 - retain records securely and confidentially
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7. Resident Support

Residents may seek support from:

- family, advocates, or legal representatives
- community legal centres
- seniors' advocacy organisations

Operators must not obstruct or discourage residents from obtaining support.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if legislative changes occur, including the introduction of the mandatory Code of Practice expected later in 2026.
