Policy Title: Retirement Village Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedure

1. Older Person Outcome

To ensure residents can resolve concerns early and fairly, with minimal stress, so they feel supported, respected, and confident in their ability to enjoy their home and community.

2. Organisation Statement

This policy and procedure establish a fair, transparent, and accessible process for resolving disputes or complaints arising within the retirement village, in accordance with the Retirement Villages Act 1986 (Vic), Retirement Villages Amendment Act 2025, and the Retirement Villages Regulations 2026 (Vic).

3. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to disputes or complaints involving:

- Residents and the village operator or manager
- Residents and other residents
- Village services, feed, facilities, or village rules
- Conduct affecting the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of residents

Urgent health or safety matters will be acted upon immediately and may bypass some steps of this procedure where required by law.

This policy and procedure further apply to everyone in the workplace. For the purposes of this policy and procedure, employees shall include:

- Every MLH employee.
- Volunteers.
- Work experience students.
- Contractors/sub-contractors and any of their employees whilst engaged in work for MLH.

- Consultants or consultants' employees whilst on MLH's work; and Agents whilst acting on behalf of MLH.

4. Principles

All disputes will be managed in accordance with the following principles:

- Respect, dignity, and autonomy of residents
- Procedural fairness and natural justice
- Early, low-stress resolution where possible
- Good faith participation by all parties
- Confidentiality and privacy

5. Procedures

Step 1 – Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, the issue should first be addressed informally by:

- Discussing the matter directly with the other party or
- Raising the issue with the Site Manager for informal assistance.

The Site Manager may:

- Clarify contractual or village rule requirements
- Facilitate a discussion between the parties
- Propose practical or interim solutions
- Document the dispute and informal assistance in the Retirement Village Dispute Resolution Form and Retirement Village Complaints and Dispute Register

Many disputes are resolved at this stage, consistent with the objective of early resolution.

Step 2 – Formal Internal Complaint

If the matter is not resolved informally, a resident may lodge a formal complaint.

The complaint or dispute should be made in writing to the Site Manager as a primary contact person, or the Complaints and Resolution Officer as a secondary contact person via email, letter, or via the ILU Feedback Form. Should a written complaint or dispute not be possible, it can be made verbally to the Site Manager via phone or meeting. The information provided should include:

- A description of the issue
- Relevant dates and facts
- The outcome sought

The operator will:

- Acknowledge the complaint or dispute as soon as practicable, but within 7 days
- Investigate the matter fairly and thoroughly
- Document the complaint or dispute in the Retirement Village Dispute Resolution Form and Retirement Village Complaints and Dispute Register
- Provide a written response within 21 days, or as soon as practicable if more time is required

Step 3 – Internal Review

If the resident is dissatisfied with the initial outcome they may request an internal review by a senior representative of the operator not previously involved.

The request must be made in writing within 14 days of receiving the decision. A written determination will be issued following the review.

Step 4 – Government Complaints and Conciliation Service

If the dispute remains unresolved, either party may refer the matter to the Retirement Villages Complaints and Conciliation Service, administered by the Department of Government Services.

- The service is free of charge
- It aims to resolve disputes through assisted conciliation at the earliest opportunity
- Participation is encouraged before progressing to formal proceedings

Step 5 – Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VACT)

If conciliation does not resolve the dispute, or if the dispute involves

- termination of a residence contract,
- significant financial matters, or
- serious breaches of the Act or Regulations

a party may apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for determination.

Nothing in this policy and procedure limits a resident's right to seek independent legal advice or apply directly to VCAT where permitted by law.

Protection from Victimisation

A resident must not be subjected to harassment, discrimination, or unfavourable treatment because they have raised a complaint or participated in a dispute resolution process in good faith.

Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- Disputes will be handled confidentially where possible
- Records will be securely kept for seven years, and made available to regulators in compliance with the Act and Regulations
- Personal information will be managed in accordance with privacy laws

7. Breach of Policy

A breach of the above obligations (including where allegations of relevant unlawful conduct have been substantiated) may lead to:

The employee being subject to disciplinary action, up to and including summary dismissal, in accordance with MLH's disciplinary process.
Termination of the engagement of any other employee, or cessation in the provide services to MLH.

10. Related Documents

- Retirement Village Dispute Resolution Form
- Retirement Village Complaints and Dispute Register
- ILU Feedback Form

13. Evaluation and Review

Reviews will be undertaken every 3 years or where the need arises, or where there are material changes in relevant industrial instruments or legislation.

14. Contact Details

Primary Contact	Alternative Contact
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Document Information

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