

# BUCKLAND RETIREMENT VILLAGE

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

The recent changes to the *Retirement Villages Act 1999* required Buckland to review its complaints management procedures and a decision has been made in accord with the requirement of this legislation to now introduce this revised policy for the retirement village residents.

The Buckland residential aged care facility will continue to use the long standing and well liked simple 'Customer Liaison Service' to manage complaints, suggestions and praise/compliments.

The *Retirement Village Amendment Act 2018* outlined (as part of several new reforms) a Code of Conduct to be implemented in retirement villages.

The objectives of these rules of conduct are as follows:

- a) To establish the standards of conduct and behaviour that are expected of operators and their staff in relation to the management and operation of a retirement village, including a knowledge of relevant laws,
- b) To encourage higher standards of customer service to ensure that residents and prospective residents are treated with respect, dignity and fairness, and improving awareness of elder abuse,
- c) to promote fair, honest, transparent and ethical practices for the marketing and promotion of residential premises in retirement villages,
- d) to establish minimum standards for operators in the handling of complaints and the resolution of disputes in a retirement villages,
- e) to establish minimum training and competency standards for operators and their staff and ensure the effective oversight and supervision of staff.

Buckland is committed to the upholding of the above objectives.

### OVERVIEW

Buckland is required to ensure complaint and internal dispute resolution processes are prepared and maintained.

This policy and process is not an alternative to the Buckland forms currently used to lodge requests for maintenance, etc. But for complaints that are believed to require a formal process rather than the general day to day manner in which the current Village Administration Officer deals with matters as they arise.

The following outlines Buckland's Policy with respect to how it has developed and implemented actions to address complaints and internal disputes.

Complaints can be made by residents or persons acting on their behalf.

## BUCKLAND'S COMMITMENT

- Buckland will proactively, respectfully and cooperatively manage complaints made by prospective residents, current residents and former residents.
- Buckland will maintain a complaints management system that is resident-focused and provides for continual review and monitoring.
- Buckland will advise residents that they have a right to refer a complaint to other avenues such as a relevant state regulatory authority.
- As a part of the complaints management system, Buckland will maintain clear written policies and procedures for handling and resolving complaints and disputes, which will also clearly identify Buckland's role in addressing resident-to-resident disputes. We will make these procedures available to residents and will ensure this provides a clear framework for all parties to participate in a process that aims to resolve issues without the need for external referral wherever possible. The procedure will include our full contact details.
- Buckland's procedures will assure residents that we will acknowledge a formal complaint, treat it confidentially and provide an initial response in writing as soon as possible. Where residents making a complaint tell us they are not satisfied with our response, we will not require them to write again to pursue the complaint through any escalation procedure. Buckland will maintain a complaints register where we record:
  - the names of the resident making the complaint;
  - key dates when we received;
  - acknowledged and responded to the complaint;
  - the substance of the complaint; and,
  - the person responsible for managing the complaint.
- Buckland will ensure all residents that deal directly with residents understand our commitment to resolving complaints and that they have suitable processes and capabilities for resolving complaints.
- Where possible and reasonable, Buckland will endeavour to resolve complaints at the village level within 15 working days of receiving the complaint (and which has sufficient details so as to understand the nature of the complaint). A resident may agree to a longer time frame to obtain information or undertake relevant investigation. If a later time is agreed upon, Buckland will keep the resident informed of progress on a regular basis.
- Buckland will follow a cascading complaints handling policy, which allows complaints to be escalated in a way that seeks to resolve them in a cost effective and efficient manner that is fair and reasonable to all parties. The escalation pathways will be detailed in writing in our policies, but this does not preclude the resident from pursuing their rights elsewhere. Also, this Code does not preclude Buckland from offering or maintaining additional complaints handling and dispute resolution processes. However, the escalation pathway would generally include the following;
  - The Village Administration Officer
  - A senior manager who has not been party to the initial complaint handling process
  - If deemed necessary, an external independent resolution service,
  - The relevant authority with legislative authority to consider the complaint.
- Buckland will co-operate with an independent mediator or any regulatory authority during any investigation and abide by any agreement we make.
- A resident may appoint a representative to act on their behalf. Buckland will respect and cooperate in the same way with an intermediary or representative acting on behalf of a resident as we would with the resident themselves.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS**

This complaint handling policy has been posted on the Notice Board in the JLK Centre and posted on the Buckland website. A copy of this policy is provided to each resident.

## **STAFF TRAINING**

All relevant retirement village staff have been provided with a copy of the policy and relevant staff trained in handling complaints and disputes.

## **REVIEW**

Buckland will review complaints lodged and resolved quarterly to ensure and confirm compliance with any agreed outcomes.

This policy will be reviewed and updated, where relevant, every two (2) years.

## **PROCESS FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT**

All residents of Buckland have a right to complain.

Residents may lodge multiple complaints.

Complaints are seen as indicators of matters within Buckland that are important to residents and need to be addressed and responded to.

Complaints will be treated with appropriate respect and importance and a complainant is not to be discouraged, penalised or negatively affected by raising a complaint.

All complaints are to be treated as confidential and private. Requests for anonymity will be respected unless the circumstances of the complaints handling process require disclosure and even then, will be disclosed to minimise the incidence and scope of disclosure.

The complaint system is accessible to any complainant and appropriate support be provided to any complainant.

All forms, information or materials required by a complainant to lodge a complaint will be provided to the complainant when requested in a timely manner.

Residents (or their representative) can make a complaint in writing by filling out the Complaints Form that is available from the Village Administrators Office.

Complaints may be in relation to internal disputes between a resident and Buckland or between two residents.

The handling of any complaint or dispute is as follows:

1. Buckland will meet with resident (or their representative) to discuss the details of the issue
2. Detailed notes will be taken, including;
  - a. Name of the resident and their unit/cottage details
  - b. Details of the representative if one is acting on behalf of a resident
  - c. Date of complaint

- d. Nature of issue / complaint
  - e. Notes of proposed / suggested course of action
  - f. Follow up on any actions taken
3. All issues / complaints must be made in writing and cannot be anonymous.

The internal process to manage a complaint is noted below;

1. Resident (or their representative) can lodge a complaint to the Village Administration Officer
2. If required or requested, can meet with the CEO
3. If no satisfactory resolution, referred to Resident Committee

## **COMPLAINT HANDLING AND INVESTIGATION FRAMEWORK**

Complaints are to be made in accordance with the complaints management system, using forms prescribed by Buckland for the notification of complaints.

All complaints will be treated with confidentiality and privacy and will be;

- Acknowledged as having been received.
- Investigated and where necessary supplemented by additional information
- Responded to in a timely manner, commensurate with the urgency and nature of complaint;
- Responded to in plain English
- Kept confidential / private

It is noted that no complaint can be allowed to impact the rights of other residents.

Complaints are also considered and addressed in accord with the rights of Buckland staff to work in a safe environment free from unacceptable risks, harassment and intimidation.

The circumstances supporting a complaint will be investigated in a manner to ensure:

- The relevant facts and issues are identified; and
- The principles of natural justice are applied to all parties to the complaint

The complainant and any Buckland staff involved in any complaint investigation will be made aware of the expectations of complaints management, including:

- The complaint process itself
- Who will be responsible for the coordination of the process;
- Expected time frames;
- The involvement of the complainant and Buckland staff in the process;
- The possible outcome and further avenues available should the complaint not be satisfactorily resolved;
- Keeping the matter confidential

## PROCESS

Figure 1: Escalation of complaint



The role of the Village Administration Officer is to record the details of the issue/complaint and if possible to address and resolve it at that level.

If the outcome / response to the complaint is not considered acceptable by the resident (or representative), the matter will be escalated to the CEO for further review and determination. The resident (or representative) will be consulted on the proposed response.

At that time if the resident (or representative) remain dissatisfied with the outcome and there is still no resolution the matter will be referred to the residents committee.

Any matters that cannot be resolved at the Buckland level after these levels of review and determination may be referred to external parties (e.g. NSW Fair Trading)

## TIMELINES

Buckland will provide a response within five (5) working days for the acknowledgement of complaints or internal disputes.

Management of the complaint or internal dispute (and setting out an expected resolution date, where possible) will be undertaken within 60 days.

Each complaint is logged and attached to the complainant file, where it is recorded permanently.

## RECORDING OF COMPLAINTS/DISPUTES

Buckland will keep a register of the following information about complaints and internal disputes that have been raised in the retirement village.

1. Details of each complaint or internal dispute, including the name and contact details of each resident concerned, and the date the complaint or internal dispute was raised,
2. Details of actions taken in response to each complaint or internal dispute, including the names and contact details of any staff involved in the handling of the complaint or internal dispute, and the date the action was taken.
3. Whether the complaint or internal dispute was resolved, withdrawn, referred or escalated or another outcome was achieved.
4. The number of complains or internal disputes handled each calendar year.
5. Outcomes of the complaint handling process will be recorded and confirmed between the complainant and Buckland.
6. Record/report on any mechanisms to identify areas of improvement in the operations.
7. These records will be kept on file for a period not less than seven (7) years.