

NEIGHBOURS

Statement of Policy

This policy establishes the approach of Eastcoast Housing 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.

This policy outlines the process for managing complaints about antisocial behaviour of any Eastcoast Housing resident.

Complaints about the way the neighbour nuisance complaints have been managed by Eastcoast Housing should be dealt with under the Complaints and/or Appeals policy.

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 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.

This policy applies to all residents and staff Eastcoast Housing under all relevant programs.

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1. How to be a good neighbour

1.1 Smile and a wave

It does not take much to be a good neighbour. A wave and a smile when you see your neighbour out and about or coming and going.

Even if it's not reciprocated. By doing it you become a safe person in their mind who they can approach if the need arises. You will be remembered for being the friendly person.

Too many people, especially the elderly, are lonely. Some do not have family living close by. Take the time to have a chat.

1.2 What to look out for?

Living next door to someone who likes to keep to themselves. That is their right. However, if you see that their letterbox becomes full and is overflowing and perhaps curtains remain drawn then this could mean there is a problem.

Go knock on their door. They might tell you to go away, but at least you know they are okay. If no-one answers and you are still worried call us at the office, especially if they are a renter of Eastcoast Housing.

2. Minimum expectations for being a good neighbour

2.1 Keep noise to a minimum

Eastcoast Housing 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). EPA 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 here. Local Government Websites also have information and list prohibited times for various noise types

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 Keep property clean and tidy

If a resident lives on an estate or in a block of units, Eastcoast Housing will look after shared areas, like stairways, lawns, gardens and other shared areas. Residents can help to keep things clean and tidy by putting rubbish and recycling in the bins provided and reporting faults and damages.

3. 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, Eastcoast Housing 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 Housing 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. We may also ask you to keep a nuisance and annoyance diary.
- If the problem relates to a breach of residency that is negatively affecting you, you can log a formal complaint as a neighbour nuisance complaint directly with Eastcoast Housing. Complaints about the way the neighbour nuisance complaints have also been managed by Eastcoast Housing should also be dealt with under the Complaints and/or Appeals policy. Complaints to Eastcoast Housing can be made via the telephone, in writing, in person or via the Eastcoast Housing website.
- Eastcoast Housing 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.

- Eastcoast Housing 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.

4. 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.

5. Legislation and standards

This policy implements the obligations of Eastcoast Housing under:

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Guidelines for Registered Housing Agencies published by DHHS
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies

6. Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on the Eastcoast Housing website www.eha.org.au/information

7. Acknowledgement

Eastcoast Housing acknowledges the policy work undertaken by CHIAVic, Launch Housing, Haven; Home, Safe, Housing Choices Australia and the Department of Health and Human Services in developing this policy template.