

Independent Living

Retirement village dispute resolution policy

Purpose

Royal Freemasons is committed to providing a safe, respectful and well-managed community. This procedure explains how village disputes are raised, managed and resolved fairly, promptly, and transparently. This procedure does not limit a resident's right to seek external conciliation or apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Royal Freemasons are required to establish and maintain a procedure for dealing with village disputes under the *Retirement Villages Act 1986 (Vic)* (the Act).

This procedure explains:

- how a resident can inform Royal Freemasons of a village dispute
- steps out how we will manage a dispute once we are informed
- what protection applies to a resident who gives notice of a village dispute
- how a resident can seek external advice or conciliation.

This procedure has been prepared to comply with Part 6D of the Act. It does not replace or limit any rights a resident has under the Act, the Retirement Villages Regulations, any other law, or any agreement between Royal Freemasons and the residents.

Royal Freemasons will manage disputes based on accessibility, natural justice, timeliness, confidentiality, and a commitment to no victimisation.

Statement of commitment

Royal Freemasons is committed to resolving disputes early, respectfully and fairly, and ensuring residents feel safe to raise concerns without fear of disadvantage.

This procedure will be made available to residents on our website and provide a copy to residents (upon their request) within two business days.

Scope

This procedure applies to all residents of Royal Freemasons retirement villages and to Royal Freemasons management, staff, contractors and representatives. It applies to disputes between a resident and Royal Freemasons, disputes between residents, and disputes arising during or after residency.

This policy relates to both Residential Tenancies and Retirement Villages operated by Royal Freemasons and covers annual inspections and inspections undertaken for other purposes.

This policy applies to all Royal Freemasons retirement villages including:



Boyd Court



Jacaranda Court



Banksia Court



Acacia Court



Murray Gardens Court



Goulburn Court

Contacts for the village

Primary Contact Person

 Jenni Dickson
*General Manager
Community & ILU's*

 1300 176 925

 ilus@royalfreemasons.org.au

Alternative Contact Person

 Melanie McNamara
Executive Officer

 1300 176 925

 ilus@royalfreemasons.org.au

Definitions

Term	Definition
Village dispute	A village dispute is a genuine disagreement that has not been resolved informally and relates to: • the control, management or administration of Royal Freemasons • a decision, action or failure to act by management • fees, charges, services, facilities, maintenance or repairs • compliance with contracts, by-laws or policies • a dispute between residents affecting another resident's use, enjoyment, or wellbeing. Village disputes may include but are not limited to: • noise complaints • unkept properties • car parking • use of resources within a facility • interpersonal dispute between residents • residents' pets • contractual disputes • charges and exit fees • information and privacy • repairs and maintenance • capital plan. The following do not of themselves constitute a village dispute: • general inquiries • simple service requests • matters resolved informally • requests without ongoing disagreement • criminal or police matters, legal proceedings, or matters outside Royal Freemasons' control.

Term	Definition
Conciliation	Conciliation is a voluntary, confidential, and informal process in which a neutral third party (the conciliator) helps conflicting parties resolve their dispute. The goal is to avoid formal court proceedings or tribunals by encouraging communication, identifying key issues, and exploring mutually agreeable outcomes.
Retirement village regulations	Retirement village regulations are state-specific laws that govern the operation, financial management, contracts, and dispute resolution for seniors housing. These regulations cover standardised contracts, timelines for exit payouts, and clear delineation of maintenance responsibilities between the operator and residents.
Retirement Village Act 1986	<i>The Retirement Village Act 1986</i> outlines state and territory-specific laws in Australia that govern the establishment, operation, and management of retirement villages, as well as the rights and obligations of residents and operators.

Policy

How can a notice of dispute be given?

A resident who is involved in a village dispute may give notice of a dispute and this can be given to:

- the primary contact person identified under contact persons for the village
- the alternate contact person identified in contact persons for the village.

Notice of dispute can be given in the following ways:

- by phone or in person, describing the dispute to one of the contacts listed in 'Contacts for the village'.
- in writing by post, email or handing a comment to one of the contacts listed in 'Contacts for the village'.

How will the dispute be managed?

- Following receipt of a village dispute Royal Freemasons will create a written record of the dispute in accordance with the regulations and provide a copy of the record to the resident who has made the dispute.

- Royal Freemasons will acknowledge receipt of the dispute and confirm to the resident/s who will be managing the dispute.
- Discuss the dispute with the resident and clarify issues regarding the dispute including any expected outcomes from the dispute. Royal Freemasons will gather any further supporting information from the resident/s.
- Investigate the subject of the dispute and speak with other people who may be able to provide information about the dispute.
- In the case of a resident-to-resident dispute, invite each of them to describe their issue and, where appropriate and with consent, facilitate a discussion between them to resolve the dispute.
- Royal Freemasons will make recommendations about the outcome of the dispute.
- Royal Freemasons will keep the residents informed of the dispute process and work to resolve the dispute in a timely, impartial and respectful manner.

What is conciliation and who can apply?

- The Victorian Government provides a specialist conciliation service for residents and operators of retirement villages to help manage disputes fairly if the dispute is unable to be managed.
- Both residents and operators can apply for assistance with a village dispute to VicAssist Retirement Villages: vic.gov.au/retirement-village-dispute-help or phone 1300 528 994 for conciliation if:
 - you have received all or part of your exit entitlement
 - you are willing to provide information required for conciliation
 - you have not had conciliation for this dispute
 - parties have made a reasonable effort to resolve the dispute
 - a likely resolution can be reached through conciliation
 - parties are acting in good faith.
- Exclusions to conciliation include:
 - prior conciliation
 - dispute is outside the definition of a village dispute
 - parties are unwilling to provide sufficient information for conciliation to occur
 - is vexatious, frivolous or substantial.

Can I go to VCAT?

- A resident, the operator or the proprietor, can also apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (also known as VCAT) in relation to a village of dispute.

- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) can be contacted on **1300 018 228** (Monday - Friday, 9am - 4:30pm). VCAT address is 308 La Trobe Street, Melbourne VIC 3000.

What is the timeframe to manage disputes?

- Royal Freemasons will attempt to resolve concerns informally and promptly, usually within 72 hours.
- If unresolved, the matter is formally recorded, investigated, and managed in accordance with the regulations and Royal Freemasons will provide a written decision, reasons, actions, and timeframes.

How will residents be protected?

We will not take any action in relation to a village dispute that might reasonably be regarded as:

- deterring a person from giving notice of the dispute or
- causing detriment to a resident because that resident, or another resident, has given or proposes to give notice of the dispute.

How will we manage your confidentiality and records?

- We will only use or disclose information relating to a village dispute as permitted by the Act and the Regulations. That includes giving information to the Director of Consumer Affairs Victoria so that the Director can carry out their functions, duties and powers under the Act.
- We will keep a record of all village disputes we have been given notice of, including records of any outcome achieved and any action taken in relation to each dispute. These records will be maintained in accordance with the Act, the Regulations, and in accordance with our privacy obligations.

Can I be represented?

Residents who are a party to a village dispute can be represented by another person such as a family member, friend, advocate or legal representative when dealing with the dispute.

Can I seek external advice?

Residents may contact Consumer Affairs Victoria if a dispute cannot be resolved internally. The contact details are:

Consumer Affairs Victoria — Retirement Villages

1300 55 81 81 GPO Box 123,
Melbourne VIC 3001 [www.
consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)

How are village disputes reported to residents?

At the annual general meeting (AGM) at the village, disputes will be reported without identifying the parties involved.

The following will be reported on at the AGM for the period covering the AGM:

- number and nature of village disputes
- outcome of each dispute and any action taken
- improvements or changes made because of a dispute.

This will also be reported to Consumer Affairs two weeks following the AGM.

Related documents

- *Retirement Villages Regulations 2026*
- *Retirement Villages Act 1986*
- *Retirement Villages Amendment Act 2025*

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years or earlier if required by legislative, operational or organisational changes.

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be publicly available on the Royal Freemasons website.