

Policy Name: Maintenance and Repairs

Approved by: Chief Executive Officer

Date effective: May 2019

Due to be reviewed: May 2022

Section 1 – Introduction

PURPOSE

This policy and procedure ensures that Vincent Care Community Housing (VCCH) complies with its maintenance and repairs obligations under the Housing Registrar Performance Standards, Residential Tenancies Act 1997 and other associated standards, guidelines and agreements.

VCCH operates a diverse range of accommodation and support services for people experiencing disadvantage, and is committed to applying an appropriate duty of care to all people in contact with VincentCare services. This includes protecting people's personal and cultural safety regardless of ability, cultural background, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or religion. This policy supports these aspirations.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all properties owned or managed by VCCH and all staff involved in VCCH's housing programs.

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'tenant' is inclusive of the term resident.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy will be reviewed every three years. It will be modified or replaced whenever VCCH becomes aware that the policy no longer complies with the requirements of the organisation, or where impacting legislative, compliance and regulatory changes occur.

Section 2 – Policy statement

VCCH is committed to:

- ensuring that all its properties are maintained to an acceptable standard and that required property repairs are attended to speedily and efficiently;
- ensuring that it fulfils its duties as a landlord under the Residential Tenancies Act and has clearly defined planned and responsive maintenance arrangements;
- ensuring that VCCH complies with performance and legislative standards regarding property maintenance and repairs.



Guiding principles

Property maintenance programs, repair processes and systems involve planned and responsive maintenance programs.

VCCH is also required to participate in the long term and cyclical maintenance plans determined by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for DHHS owned properties managed by VCCH. DHHS is responsible for all costs associated with long term and cyclical maintenance.

VCCH's involvement in planned maintenance programs includes the following considerations:

2.1 Planned Maintenance

- Planned maintenance typically occurs every five to ten years and covers property maintenance, such as internal and external painting.
- Long-term maintenance covers the life cycle of the building and includes replacement of key components such as kitchens and bathrooms.

2.1.1 Fencing

- VCCH is responsible for negotiating with neighbouring property owners with regard to the need for repairs to or replacement of boundary fencing.
- VCCH will obtain two quotes from fencing contractors that are either approved by DHHS or are preferred suppliers of VCCH and provide to DHHS for action
- VCCH will encourage the neighbouring property owner/s to also obtain their own quotes.
- The cost of replacing party fencing is shared between DHHS and the neighbour/s.

2.1.2 Electrical Items

- Where VCCH provides electrical items, VCCH is responsible for their safety.
- VCCH does not provide electrical safety testing for electrical items owned by tenants.
- VCCH will operate a test and tagging schedule that ensures all VCCH-owned electrical items are tested at least every five years, and every two years for properties designated as rooming houses.
- Any electrical item owned by VCCH that fails its test and tag shall be replaced within seven working days.

2.1.3 Gutter Cleaning

- VCCH is responsible for gutter cleaning at both owned and leased properties.
- There are a number of properties whereby VCCH is not responsible for gutter cleaning, including:
 - Unit/s in a block which is managed by an Owner's Corporation; and,
 - Unit/s in a block where all other units are owned by DHHS
- Gutter cleaning is completed at a minimum annually and a number of properties will require more frequent cleaning, for example if the property is surrounded by large trees.

2.2 Responsive Maintenance and Repairs

VCCH is responsible for ensuring completion of responsive maintenance at properties in accordance with this policy. VCCH will manage responsive maintenance and repair requests as follows.

- Staff shall ensure repairs are completed within timeframes stipulated in the Residential Tenancies Act.
- VCCH shall pool property allowances to provide a flexible source of funding for responsive repairs and maintenance to accommodate the different levels required by the various properties.
- Staff shall arrange minor responsive repairs using VincentCare approved contractors.
- VCCH shall use the allocated property allowance for minor response repairs.
- If minor responsive repairs are not necessary to maintain the property at an acceptable standard, staff may use their discretion to place repairs on hold until the property is vacant, to prevent disruption to the tenant.
- Staff shall ask the tenant to sign written consent to provide their first name and telephone number to contractors in the event that repairs are required.
- Lack of consent may have a negative impact on the timeliness of completion of maintenance.
- VCCH shall provide tenants with easy-to-read and easy-to-follow instructions for ordering maintenance both during office hours and after hours.
- Staff shall instruct the tenant in how to fix minor problems, to allow them to experience minimal disruption to their tenancy, and reserve VCCH's resources.
- Staff shall ensure the tenant understands that they are not to attempt any repairs that may pose a risk to their safety.
- For continuous improvement purposes staff shall invite verbal feedback from the tenant on their satisfaction with contractor behaviour and the work completed.

Section 3 – References

Definitions

Applicant	means a person who has applied for housing via the VHR or, where permitted by this policy, directly to VincentCare Community Housing
DHHS	means the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
Director of Housing	means the Victorian government statutory authority that owns all public housing land in Victoria and which is the principal funding body for community housing
FSO	Field Services Officer from DHHS
HCC	means the Housing Call Centre, the DHHS agency responsible for maintenance of community managed properties
ILU's	Independent Living Units
LOC - 8	means asset management system
Minor Response Repairs	means repairs not normally covered by landlord responsibilities
OoH	Office of Housing

Property Allowance	Means funds provided by OoH to cover the cost of minor responsive repairs during VCCH's management of THM properties
Public housing	Housing owned and managed by DHHS
RTA	Residential Tenancies Act
Targeted Social Housing	The properties that are considered Targeted Social Housing under agreements between VCCH and the Director of Housing.
Test & Tag	means electrical safety testing and tagging undertaken by a licensed contractor
THM	Transitional Housing Management
Transitional Housing	means the Victorian Government program to provide housing on a short-medium term basis to people at risk of homelessness seeking long term housing options
VHR	The Victorian Housing Register, the statewide common application for people seeking public and community housing

Related policies and External Links

Policy name	Description
VCCH Housing allocation Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH Inspections Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH Complaints and Appeals Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH Tenant Damage Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines	https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201705/Homelessness-Services-Guidelines-and-Conditions-of-Funding-May-2014.pdf
Housing and Support Partnership Agreement	http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content2/c7/Housing%20and%20Support%20Partnership%20Agreement%20Nov%2011.pdf
Housing Registrar Performance Standards	http://www.housingregistrar.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/publications/performance-standards-and-evidence-guidelines/current-performance-standards.pdf
National Community Housing Standards	http://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/CHStandardsManual.pdf
Residential Tenancies Act 1997	http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/vic/consol_act/rta1997207/

Legislation and Standards

This policy implements the obligations of VincentCare Community Housing under:

- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Guidelines for Registered Housing Agencies published by Department of Health and Human Services DHHS
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on the VincentCare Community Housing website

<https://vincentcare.org.au>

Section 4 – Governance

Responsibility

Process Owner	General Manager Housing
Content Holder/s	Housing Program Managers
Recommending body	Quality Committee
Endorsed by	Chief Executive Officer

Change history

Version	Effective Date	Author	Change
1	May 2019	General Manager Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is a new policy for publication on VincentCare's website• This policy is a compliance requirement for registered agency participation in the Victorian Housing Register (VHR)