

Policy Name: Eligibility for Long Term Rental Housing

Approved by: Chief Executive Officer

Date effective: May 2019

Due to be reviewed: May 2022

Section 1 – Introduction

PURPOSE

This policy outlines VincentCare Community Housing's (VCCH) approach to eligibility for its long term rental housing programs.

VincentCare Victoria 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all long-term rental properties owned or managed by VincentCare Community Housing.

This policy does not apply to the following VincentCare Community Housing programs:

- Transitional housing properties managed by VincentCare Community Housing
- properties managed by VincentCare Community Housing on behalf of other property owners where the owner retains responsibility for determining rent; and
- temporary or crisis accommodation.

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 VincentCare becomes aware that this policy no longer complies with the requirements of the organisation.



Section 2 – Policy statement

Guiding principles – approach to eligibility

VincentCare Community Housing establishes eligibility criteria for long-term housing to fulfil its organisational mission of the provision of social housing that is affordable for people experiencing homelessness or disadvantage.

Accordingly, VincentCare Community Housing will:

- only allocate long-term housing to eligible applicants;
- communicate clearly to applicants and the community as to who is eligible for long-term housing with VincentCare Community Housing; and
- comply with its contractual, legal and regulatory obligations relating to eligibility for long-term housing.

Victorian Housing Register

VincentCare Community Housing participates in the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). The VHR is a common register for all applicants for public housing and community housing in Victoria.

DHHS has established common eligibility criteria for the VHR that are set out in the Eligibility Criteria Operational Guidelines <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility> . The VHR eligibility criteria apply to all properties owned or managed by VincentCare Community Housing in Victoria, other than those properties which VincentCare Community Housing and DHHS have agreed are outside the scope of the VHR.

All applicants with a current VHR application are taken by VincentCare Community Housing to have established that they meet the VHR eligibility criteria.

Applicants without a current VHR application can provide evidence to VincentCare Community Housing that establishes they meet the VHR eligibility criteria. VincentCare Community Housing will assist such applicants to make a VHR application either through referral to a suitable service or by assisting the applicant to lodge a VHR application.

General requirements for eligibility for long term housing

To be eligible for long-term housing with VincentCare Community Housing which is under the VHR, an applicant must:

- be able to live independently
- be willing to enter a debt repayment agreement (if previous debt exists) with VincentCare Community Housing and demonstrate how the prospective tenant will avoid falling into debt if accepted for long term housing

Specific requirements for particular long-term housing programs

VincentCare Community Housing has some particular long-term rental housing programs where additional eligibility criteria apply. This criteria is listed below and is also outlined the VincentCare Community Housing's Allocations Policy:

This can include, for example:

- being over the age of 55 to be eligible for regionally located Independent Living Units
- being over the age of 55 and eligible for a HomeCare Package, Commonwealth Home Support Program or the NDIS for Independent Living Units located at Ozanam House
- wishing to be part of a community, willing and keen to make a positive contribution in properties and units that have shared facilities (eg. kitchen or laundry)

- experiencing or experienced family violence which has led to a break down in housing for head leased funded properties

Eligibility for long-term housing programs outside the scope of the VHR

Where VincentCare Community Housing owns or manages housing under programs that are outside the scope of the VHR, then:

- VincentCare Community Housing will comply with any other legal or contractual obligations that apply to housing eligibility in that program; and
- VincentCare Community Housing may within the scope of such legal or contractual obligations:
 - elect to apply the general eligibility criteria as a generally accepted benchmark to establish that the applicant needs affordable housing; or
 - apply some other reasonable eligibility criteria that is consistent with VincentCare Community Housing's objectives and purpose.

VincentCare Community Housing recognises that different population groups are over represented in homelessness, however are under-represented in accessing homelessness support. Due to experiences of additional service barriers and discrimination (and consistent with VincentCare's diversity strategy) people from the LGBTIQ community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be prioritised for long term housing.

VincentCare Community Housing will communicate clearly with applicants and stakeholders as to the particular eligibility criteria that apply to that program.

Section 3 - Procedures

Procedures established by VincentCare Community Housing will include processes to ensure compliance with this policy, including to:

- assist people to apply for housing with VincentCare Community Housing; and
- identify the program and eligibility criteria that apply to a particular vacancy.

Section 4 - References

Definitions

In this policy:

Applicant	means a person who has applied for housing via the VHR or, where permitted by the Eligibility Policy, through MyGov, ad Designated Support Provider or directly to VincentCare Community Housing
Community housing	Housing owned or managed by a community housing organisation
DHHS	The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
General eligibility criteria	The eligibility criteria established by VincentCare Community Housing under the section of this policy entitled "General requirements for eligibility for long-term housing"
Public housing	Housing owned and managed by DHHS

Transitional Housing	means the Victorian Government program to provide housing on a short-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 housing and community housing
VHR eligibility criteria	The VHR's establish who is eligible for social housing. The VHR Eligibility Criteria relates to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income eligibility; • asset eligibility; • Australian Citizenship or permanent residency; and • Victorian residency.

Related policies

Policy name	Description
Arrears management and hardship	https://vincentcare.org.au
Rent setting	https://vincentcare.org.au
Tenant transfer and succession	https://vincentcare.org.au

Legislation and standards

This policy implements the obligations of VincentCare Community Housing under:

- Housing Act 1983 (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 5 – 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 publishing on the public VincentCare website• This policy is a compliance requirement for registered agency participation in the Victorian Housing Register (VHR)