

**Policy name:** Allocation of Long Term Housing

**Approved by:** Chief Executive Officer

**Date effective:** May 2019

**Due to be reviewed:** May 2022

## Section 1 – Introduction

### PURPOSE

This policy establishes VincentCare Community Housing's (VCCH) approach to:

- eligibility for its long-term rental housing programs;
- the prioritisation and allocation of vacant properties in its long-term rental housing portfolio; and
- successful and sustainable tenancies and communities through appropriate matching of applicants to properties.

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; 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 – eligibility for housing

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.

### **Approach to allocation**

VincentCare Community Housing will allocate long-term housing to eligible applicants in a manner which:

- is fair, transparent and equitable;
- relieves households from housing stress;
- is in accordance with its contractual, legal and regulatory obligations; and
- supports the financial viability of VincentCare Community Housing's long term housing programs.

VincentCare Community Housing is committed to promoting a successful and sustainable tenancy when matching applicants to its properties. This means that VincentCare Community Housing will allocate housing in a way that:

- gives appropriate priority to households in need of housing assistance;
- considers the health, safety and support needs of applicants;
- matches individual housing needs with available properties; and
- supports sustainable and harmonious communities.

### **Eligibility for housing**

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

DHHS has established common eligibility criteria for the VHR that are set out in the Eligibility Criteria Operational Guidelines. The VHR's eligibility criteria apply to all long-term housing owned, managed or controlled by VincentCare Community Housing in Victoria.

All applicants with a current VHR application are taken by VincentCare Community Housing to 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 then 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.

### **Additional requirements for eligibility for long-term housing**

In addition to meeting the VHR eligibility criteria, to be eligible for long-term housing with VincentCare Community Housing, an applicant must:

- able to live independently
- be willing to repay recent previous debt with VincentCare Community Housing over time and demonstrate how the prospective tenant will avoid falling into debt again if accepted for long term housing

### **Specific requirements for particular long-term housing programs**

VincentCare Community Housing has some long-term rental housing programs where additional eligibility criteria apply, along with the general eligibility criteria. 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

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.

### **Approach to allocation**

#### **Allocations Target - Victorian Housing Register**

Under the VHR's allocations framework, VincentCare Community Housing is required to meet an annual Priority Allocations Target. This requires VincentCare Community Housing to allocate 75% of vacancies in Targeted Social Housing to Priority Access applicants in each financial year. As not all of VincentCare Community Housing's properties are Targeted Social Housing, this Target is adjusted so that VincentCare Community Housing can make allocations across its portfolio in order to meet the Target.

VincentCare Community Housing will implement procedures to monitor its performance against the Priority Allocations Target regularly to ensure that VincentCare Community Housing complies with its obligations.

#### **Sourcing applicants**

VincentCare Community Housing will in the first instance seek suitable applicants from the VHR. Where a suitable applicant being considered for a vacancy does not have a current VHR application but is eligible for social housing under the VHR and suitable for that vacancy, then VincentCare Community Housing will ensure that such applicants complete a VHR application at the time of making an offer of housing.

#### **Nomination rights**

Where nomination rights apply, VincentCare Community Housing will:

- establish appropriate arrangements in protocol agreements with referral agencies who have responsibility for nominating applicants for vacancies, to ensure timely and appropriate referrals; and
- require that referral agencies nominate applicants who have a current VHR Priority Access application.

### **Other legal requirements**

VincentCare Community Housing will ensure in making any allocation that it complies with any other legal requirements concerning eligibility for housing or allocation of housing.

### **Promoting successful and sustainable tenancies**

VincentCare Community Housing is committed to treating all applicants fairly and will not unlawfully discriminate against any potential applicant or applicant.

VincentCare Community Housing will assess all applicants before making an offer of housing to determine suitability for a particular vacancy (and eligibility if the applicant does not currently have a VHR application). If VincentCare Community Housing declines to offer an applicant housing, it will inform the applicant accordingly.

### **Matching households to the right house**

In allocating housing, VincentCare Community Housing will also have regard to the VHR operational guideline, *Clients with Special Accommodation Requirements*.

VincentCare Community Housing will match applicants to properties so that an allocation:

- is the right size for the applicant's household;
- is in an area consistent with the applicant's needs;
- assists the applicant to access employment or any support services that they need;
- makes the best use of housing stock owned or managed by VincentCare Community Housing;
- encourages a sustainable tenancy; and
- meets any particular expressed needs of the applicant so far as they are known, such as modifications for people with a physical disability or mobility impairment, availability of car parking or room for carers.

VincentCare Community Housing aims to make sure that properties with specific features that are in high demand and short supply are only allocated to those applicants who need them, including:

- properties that are suitable for older people
- properties that have been built or modified to meet the needs of people with a disability;
- properties on the ground floor,
- properties with level access; or
- properties with a yard/garden.

VincentCare Community Housing will ask applicants to provide reasonable evidence to substantiate any particular requirements, if this is not contained in a VHR application.

### **Supporting sustainable and harmonious communities**

VincentCare Community Housing may, to the extent necessary, adopt different strategies in allocation in response to:

- a high concentration of public and community housing stock in a particular area;
- a high concentration of tenants with multiple health, social or economic issues in a particular area or building;
- existing tenancy management issues (or a potential for them to develop);
- existing neighbourhood tensions or disputes which may be exacerbated if allocations are not sensitively handled; and
- a mismatch of supply and demand making the property hard to let.

### Section 3 – Procedures

Allocation procedures are in line with the Victorian Housing Register operational guidelines.

### Section 4 – References

#### Definitions

<b>Applicant</b>	means a person who has applied for housing via the VHR or, where permitted by this policy, directly to VincentCare Community Housing
<b>DHHS</b>	means the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
<b>Director of Housing</b>	means the Victorian government statutory authority that owns all public housing land in Victoria and which is the principal funding body for community housing
<b>Nomination rights</b>	means arrangements between VincentCare Community Housing and third party support providers where the support provider nominates applicants for certain vacant properties
<b>Priority Access</b>	Applicants on the VHR who have been assessed as having a priority housing need. The Priority Access Categories are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emergency Management Housing</li><li>• Priority Transfers</li><li>• Homeless with Support</li><li>• Supported Housing</li><li>• Temporary Absence</li><li>• Special Housing Needs</li><li>• Special Housing Needs (Aged 55 years and over)</li></ul>
<b>Public housing</b>	Housing owned and managed by DHHS
<b>Targeted Social Housing</b>	The properties that are considered Targeted Social Housing under agreements between VincentCare Community Housing and the Director of Housing.
<b>Transitional Housing</b>	means the Victorian Government program to provide housing on a short-term basis to people at risk of homelessness seeking long term housing options
<b>VHR</b>	The Victorian Housing Register, the statewide common application for people seeking public housing and community housing

## Related policies

Policy name	Description
Arrears management and hardship	<a href="https://vincentcare.org.au/">https://vincentcare.org.au/</a>
Rent setting	<a href="https://vincentcare.org.au/">https://vincentcare.org.au/</a>
Tenant transfer and succession	<a href="https://vincentcare.org.au/">https://vincentcare.org.au/</a>

## 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

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

## Change history

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