

Policy Name: Transitional Housing

Approved by: Chief Executive Officer

Date effective: May 2019

Due to be reviewed: May 2022

Section 1 – Introduction

PURPOSE

This policy and procedure relates to properties that are provided by VincentCare Community Housing (VCCH) on a short to medium term basis. These properties are linked to an expectation that all tenants will work on their identified support needs and a plan for long term housing options; in addition to the usual lease arrangements and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

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.

SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to all tenants managed by VCCH under the THM program and VCCH staff involved in property and tenancy management.

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 this policy no longer complies with the requirements of the organisation.

Section 2 – Policy Statement

Transitional Housing is funded by the Victorian Government as part of its response to people who are experiencing homelessness. VCCH's THM program offers a period of affordable, and stable housing to enable people to eventually find long term housing. It also allows tenants the opportunity to engage with a support worker to address any concerns that are affecting their lives. These concerns may have impacted on their ability to sustain secure housing in the past.

VCCH as a registered housing agency manages its THM program with the objective of assisting people experiencing homelessness to find secure housing in the future through assisting tenants to recognise and address issues in their lives which inhibit their capacities to secure stable long term accommodation.



THM properties are provided on a short to medium term basis and are linked to support assistance for tenants with an expectation that all THM tenants will cooperate with support assistance services and work towards identifying support needs and identifying long term housing options inclusive of usual lease arrangements and tenant responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA).

Guiding principles/approach

The THM program aims to assist tenants by providing safe, secure and affordable transitional housing. All tenants complete an assessment through an access point or support agency utilising set criteria, to establish their eligibility for transitional housing and their individual housing needs.

Transitional housing refers to a supportive – yet temporary – type of accommodation that is intended to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing by offering structure and support to develop life skills, and in some cases enable participation in education and training.

VCCH's Tenancy and Property Management Team provide transitional housing on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The THM program essentially manages all transitional property matters such as ensuring that the housing stock is maintained to a community standard. The THM program coordinates the administration of THM tenancies and properties with a view to maximising a successful experience for tenants alongside addressing their barriers to securing and maintaining long-term housing.

Transitional housing is generally for a limited time period. The length of stay will depend on individual circumstances. Transitional housing provides people with help after a crisis such as homelessness, a housing breakdown or family violence.

The following will apply with regard to the THM program:

- THM tenants will be eligible to apply for rebated market rent
- The National Privacy Principles as set out in the Privacy Act 1988 will apply to all THM tenants
- Tenants will be required to sign 'authority forms' allowing VCCH to access certain personal information enabling VCCH to fulfil its role as landlord as well as ensuring progress towards the achievement of long term housing
- Where possible, VCCH will seek to resolve any tenant complaints expeditiously and in an informal way by discussing the matter promptly and pro-actively with the tenant and their support workers. VCCH will endeavour to resolve complaints within 30 days
- As Landlord, VCCH staff will carry out routine property inspections as prescribed under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA)
- If transitional housing properties are not kept adequately as prescribed under the RTA VCCH may issue a 'Breach of Duty' notice to the tenant
- If a tenant does not rectify a breach as detailed in a Breach of Duty notice then VCCH can apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for further action
- Tenants must remove all belongings and leave the property in a clean condition when vacating transitional properties
- If a tenant is residing in a transitional property with 'common areas' tenants are subject to the provisions under the Subdivisions Act 1988 which essentially prescribe that tenant's must not cause a nuisance or cause disruption on or to common areas

- Transitional housing tenants must uphold the right to quiet enjoyment for neighbours as per the RTA
- VCCH is responsible for arranging urgent and non-urgent maintenance repairs for transitional properties
- An urgent 24 hour after hours maintenance service will be available to THM tenants as prescribed by the RTA
- All THM tenants must have a housing exit plan and actively work with support to address issues that inhibit them, such as paying off community housing arrears
- All THM tenants must have a housing exit plan and actively work with support to address issues that inhibit this, such as paying off previous public or community housing rent arrears
- Tenants are expected to accept appropriate long term housing offers in accordance with their exit plan.

COMMUNICATION

VCCH will provide clear information to tenants on this policy and procedure. In addition VCCH will ensure that all new transitional housing tenants receive a copy of the Transitional Housing welcome pack which elaborates more fully on many of the matters contained in this policy.

Section 3 – Procedures

The following key procedures will apply to VCCH transitional housing:

- Tenants must complete a transitional housing application form facilitated by their support worker
- Tenants will sign a lease with VCCH at the commencement of any transitional housing tenancy
- VCCH will provide tenants with the Consumer Affairs Victoria 'Renting a Home' Booklet which outlines rights and responsibilities under the RTA
- Tenants are required to be two weeks in advance with their rent
- Tenants will be responsible for payment of utility charges – gas, water electric and phone during their transitional housing tenancy unless a utility fee is charged
- VCCH will purchase any required furniture and whitegoods prior to a tenant occupying a transitional housing property and these items must remain at the property unless otherwise agreed
- VCCH will be responsible for any required property maintenance and will undertake such works expeditiously
- Tenants may be responsible for the cost of repairing any damages to the property proven to have been caused by tenant negligence
- Tenants are expected to participate in regular lease reviews with the VCCH and support service
- Tenants are expected to provide fourteen days' notice of their intention to vacate
- Rent will be charged until the property keys are returned.

Section 4 – References

Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
OoH	Office of Housing
RTA	Residential Tenancies Act
THM	Transitional Housing Management

Related External References

Name	Link
Housing and Support Partnership Agreement	http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content/2/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/
Homelessness Assistance Guidelines	https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/201705/Homelessness-Services-Guidelines-and-Conditions-of-Funding-May-2014.pdf

Related policies

Policy name	Description
VCCH Transitional Housing Management Procedure Manual	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH THM Property Allocation Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH THN Property Management Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH Transitional Housing Management Program	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH Maintenance and Repairs Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH Complaints and Appeals Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au
VCCH Evictions Policy	https://vincentcare.org.au

Legislation and standards

This policy implements the obligations of VincentCare Community Housing under:

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies

Section 5 – Governance

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on the VincentCare Community Housing website

<https://vincentcare.org.au>

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)