

Hardship and Temporary Absence Policy

Version 5.0

This policy has been adopted by:

Name of Company	Adoption Date
Community Housing Ltd (CHL)	1 st April 2025
Community Housing (Vic.) Ltd (CHVL)	1 st April 2025
Community Housing (TAS) Ltd (CHTL)	1 st April 2025
Community Housing (QLD) Ltd (CHQL)	1 st April 2025
Community Housing (Subi East) Limited	1 st April 2025
Community Housing (Homes for Regions) Limited	1 st April 2025

And any other entities within CHL which adopt this policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community Housing Limited Group of Companies (CHL) has developed a Hardship Policy to assist customers through periods where their circumstances may change and/or who have additional costs associated with their health, disability, remote locations and/or other circumstances that have an impact on their cost of living and capacity to sustain their tenancy and/or meet their obligations to CHL.

Note: 'Customer' is a generic term used in this policy to refer to a renter or tenant (dependent on state legislation) in a CHL owned/managed property.

2. AIM

This policy aims to support customers of CHL who are having difficulty meeting their obligations to CHL in the short-term and/or sustaining their tenancy, due to changing life circumstances.

3. PRINCIPLES OF CHL HARDSHIP AND TEMPORARY ABSENCE POLICY

3.1. Hardship

Hardship is where unforeseen events occur that fundamentally place a customer's tenancy at risk due to the excessive burden involved. Whilst CHL understands the contractual arrangement entered into with a customer, CHL will negotiate arrangements to reasonably allow for the consequences of the event, such as the creation of payment plans and/or arrears management plans.

Customers experiencing hardship are encouraged to discuss this with their Housing Officer to identify how CHL can respond.

3.2. Tenancies at risk

CHL understands that life circumstances can change and have significant effects on a customer's ability to sustain their housing. In such cases CHL staff will enact the CHL Sustaining Tenancies Policy to support the customer with their obligations and/or tenancy.

3.3. Applying for assistance

3.3.1. Assistance for customers in temporary alternative residences

CHL is aware that from time-to-time customers are required to spend time away from their primary place of residence for health and/or other reasons. CHL will always comply with program and or contractual obligations regarding the reduction of rents in specific circumstances.

Outside of its contractual and/or program obligations, CHL will assist customers who are admitted to supported accommodation facilities for a period of 4 weeks or more where they are required to pay a service fee to the accommodation provider that is equivalent to or more than their regular rental charge, by reducing their rent to a nominal amount of \$20 per week for the duration of their residence in the supported accommodation facility.

Customers will be required to submit a formal letter from the supported accommodation provider specifying the amount of service fee, the length of stay (approval will not be provided for more than 3 months, unless by exception as directed by the State Manager) and the dates of residence to their CHL Housing Officer. Customers can expect a response to their application from CHL within 5 business days.

3.3.2. Assistance for customers incarcerated for short periods

CHL is aware that from time-to-time it may have customers who become incarcerated for short periods. CHL will always comply with program and or contractual obligations regarding the reduction of rents in specific circumstances.

Customers will be required to submit formal documentation confirming the length of the sentence and anticipated dates they will be absent from the property to their CHL Housing Officer.

Unless a program specific requirement exists (including an obligation to reduce rent where a customer is incarcerated), rent will continue to be charged at the deemed base rate during this period, i.e. a single person under 65yrs old would have an income deemed at Job Seeker rate plus optimised CRA.

3.3.3. Assistance for impacts of community crisis/emergency

CHL is committed to assisting its customers to sustain their tenancies during times of emergency and/or crisis, such as but not limited to, bushfires, floods, and pandemics. CHL is aware that such situations may affect its customers' ability to meet their financial obligations in relation to the payment of their rent and/or other payable tenancy charges.

CHL will consider its capacity to assist customers during such times and may introduce practices that assist customers to sustain their tenancies during difficult times, such as postponing or cancelling rent reviews and/or putting a moratorium on rent increases for a certain period of time.

Customers will be notified in writing by CHL of any decisions it may make during such situations and encourages its customers to speak with their CHL Housing Officer if they are affected by such an event.

3.4. Extended absence

If customers are going to be away from their homes for more than 8 weeks, they must inform their CHL Housing Officer. If a customer is away for longer than this period without approval, the property may appear 'abandoned' and CHL may take steps to regain possession of the property (please refer to CHL's Sustaining Tenancies Policy).

3.5. Customer feedback and appeal of decisions

CHL welcomes its customers to query any decisions it makes and/or ask questions about our work practices.

If a customer wishes to provide feedback to CHL and/or believes a decision made by CHL is incorrect, they can lodge customer feedback and/or an appeal using the CHL Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy or the CHL Appeals Policy.

4. RELATED RESOURCES

4.1. CHL Group References

Customer Promise
Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure
Appeals Policies and Procedures
Privacy Policy and Procedure
National Housing and Homelessness Policies and Procedures

4.2. External References

National Regulatory Community Housing Standards
Victorian Community Housing Regulatory Framework
Western Australian Community Housing Regulatory Framework
Housing Assistance Act 1996 (COM)
State Housing Acts (NSW 2001, NT 1982, QLD 2003, SA 1995, TAS 2022, VIC 1983, WA 1980)
State Residential Tenancy and Rooming Acts (NSW 2010, NT 1999, QLD 2008, SA 1995, TAS 1997, VIC 1997, WA 1987)
Community Housing Providers National Law Acts 2013 (NT, NSW, QLD, SA and TAS)
The National Affordable Housing Agreement
NRSCH National Regulatory Code
Consumer Charter for Community Managed Housing and Homelessness Services (VIC)
NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework
National Disability and Insurance Scheme Act 2013
NDIS Code of Conduct and Rules
The Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter Act 2006 (VIC)
Human Rights Act 2019 (QLD)
Privacy Act 1988 (COM)

5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is maintained and managed by the CHL Group's Chief Operations Officer.

This document should be reviewed and revised periodically and/or as required. The period between reviews must not exceed three years. This document remains valid until such time that a new version is published

Review History

Document reference	Date Approved	Version	Reason for review	Review frequency	Owner	Approver(s)
POLHOUAUSNATHA202505	1 st April 2025	5.0	Scheduled review*	Every three years	Chief Operations Officer	Executive Team
POLHOUAUSNATHAR202404	March 2024	4.2	Reformat	Existing	Chief Operations Officer	Executive
POLHOUAUSNATHAR202306	June 2023	4.1	NT Inclusion	Existing	National Operations Manager	Managing Director
POLHOUAUSNATHAR202204	August 2022	4.0	Scheduled review	Every two years	National Manager	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLHOUAUSNATHAR202003	May 2020	3.0	Scheduled review	Every two years	National Manager	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLHOUAUSNATHAR201702	July 2017	2.0	Scheduled review	Every two years	National Manager	Managing Director National Manager Operations

* Name updated from 'Hardship' to 'Hardship and Temporary Absence'.