

Transitional Housing Management Policy (Vic.) (Version 3.0)

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1. Introduction

Community Housing (Vic.) Ltd. (CHVL) manages two of the regional Transitional Housing Management (THM) programs delivered across Victoria. These are in the Eastern Region (Box Hill) and Gippsland (Morwell and Bairnsdale). The THM program is a Victorian Government initiative to assist individuals and families in housing crisis as a result of homelessness or impending homelessness, with the provision of short to medium term housing. The THM program is coordinated with the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and together they make up the Victorian Homelessness Service System.

2. Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide information relating to how the Transitional Housing Management is delivered by CHVL.

3. Principles

The Transitional Housing Management function incorporates tenancy and stock management responsibilities with the aim of ensuring that:

- Those most in need have access to transitional housing stock (through allocation by Local Area Service Networks and nominating agencies)
- Renters are supported to sustain their tenancies (in collaboration with Support Workers)

- Renters are afforded appropriate rights in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) and government policy
- Properties are maintained to an appropriate standard

3.1. ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Term/ Abbrev.	Meaning
CHVL	Community Housing (Vic) Limited
DFFH	Department of Family, Fairness and Housing
HAP	Homelessness Assistance Program
LASN	Local Area Service Network
RTA	Residential Tenancies Act
THM	Transitional Housing Management

3.2. ACCESS

CHVL provides access to homelessness services, including transitional housing, guided by the principles set out in the Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines. These include:

- **User rights policy.** For example, “Ensuring the fundamental principles of social justice are applied to homelessness assistance service provision, including human rights, access and equity, dignity, respect and individually responsive service provision”
- **Culturally appropriate service provision.** “Homelessness services must be delivered in a manner that is accessible and appropriate to people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Information should be presented to renters in a form that is easily understood and responsive to diversity”
- **Sexual/ gender diversity awareness.** “... homelessness services will be inclusive of all people who are homeless or at risk, regardless of cultural background, income status, sexual and/or gender identities”

3.3. ALLOCATION

Allocation of transitional housing is undertaken by the Senior workers of the THM programs with referrals received from the Regional Entry points through the Vacancy Management System (VMS) managed through the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) and/or specialist support providers, formal joined-up housing and support pathways initiatives and agreements.

3.4. CUSTOMER’S RIGHT TO USE AN ADVOCATE

CHVL supports and encourages all people presenting for a service to use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf. This may include family members, carers, significant others and/or an independent advocate. Chosen advocates may be present during sign ups, VCAT action, housing reviews, complaints or any other communication between the customer and the service.

3.5. COMPLAINTS

Where a customer expresses that they are dissatisfied with the service they have been provided and the options offered to them by CHVL, the process for providing feedback or making a complaint will be outlined to them.

Complaints about renter/s behaviour or notifications of possible breaches of duty may come to the attention of CHVL via a neighbour complaint, the support worker/support agency or other external agency including DFFH or through a property inspection. In most cases these issues can be resolved informally by discussing them with the renter in conjunction with their support worker. However some issues may require a more formal process as prescribed by the Residential Tenancies Act.

3.6. RENT CALCULATION

CHVL calculates rent as follows:

- Renters and all household members over 18 years of age are charged 25% of the household's assessable income (e.g. payment or allowance) and 15% of Family Tax Benefit A & B if the renter has children.
- Renters who are working will have an average income calculated from their last 13 weeks of payslips.
- Renters aged 15-17 years are charged \$15 per week if receiving an independent rate of Centrelink benefit or \$7 per week if on the dependent rate. Renters under 18 years of age who receive a part benefit due to wages from part time work, or those with dependants are assessed as per criteria for non-youth households. 16 and 17 year olds as part of a family are not charged rent.
- It is expected renters and household members to access all Centrelink benefits and pensions available to them. Where a household is not accessing a Centrelink benefit or pension they are entitled to receive, CHVL will assess their rebate eligibility as if they are receiving this income. This is called imputation of income.
- Where a renter is paying arrears in addition to rent, the total amount should not exceed 30% of their income.

For further information on the DFFH rent policy, including a list of assessable and non-assessable incomes, refer to the Rental Rebate manual on the DFFH website <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/rent-setting-and-rebate-operational-guidelines>

3.7. HOUSING REVIEWS AND EXIT PLANNING

Housing reviews are necessary due to the nature of transitional housing – that is, the provision of time-limited housing as a transition from homelessness to long term, stable housing. The Homelessness Assistance Program (HAP) guidelines advise that transitional tenancies can be from three months up to 18 months (where required for young people), and crisis accommodation tenancies for much shorter periods of time. They also state that periods should be flexible to ensure renters are able to establish secure housing.

- During their tenancy, renters are required to work towards long-term housing; this may involve:
 - Working with their support worker to develop and implement an exit plan, outlining their housing goal and the steps required to reach that goal
 - Actively seeking long term housing (e.g. applying for early housing or private rental and accepting a suitable offer of housing)
 - Addressing issues that may present a barrier to obtaining long term housing (e.g. DFFH debts)
 - Addressing support issues that may have contributed to their homelessness
- Housing reviews are undertaken regularly to discuss the renter's exit plan and how they are working towards securing long-term housing. Renters who are deemed to be making insufficient efforts to secure long term housing or who are no longer eligible for transitional housing (e.g. they have not applied for housing, they have not accepted a suitable offer of housing, they are not engaging with their support worker or not repaying DFFH debts), may be issued with a Notice to Vacate of the Rental Agreement. After this time and where issues occur during the tenancy, they should be addressed under the appropriate section of the Victorian Tenancy Manual.
- CHL believes that renters have the right to make decisions in relation to their own housing outcomes. CHL will explain to renters at sign up and during their tenancy, the requirements of renters in transitional housing and the consequences of certain decisions. Regardless of their actual decision, their choices will be respected.
- Give renters the opportunity to discuss their anticipated housing outcome and the progress they have made to achieve it and raise any issues they have in relation to their tenancy.

- Give housing officers the opportunity to reinforce the conditions of the tenancy, to discuss any tenancy issues (e.g. rent arrears, complaints or maintenance) and highlight what the renter is doing well.
- Review the renter's anticipated housing outcome and their progress towards it; and reinforce the consequences (by way of Notice to Vacate) of not accepting a valid housing offer (either private rental or public housing)
- Reinforce the partnership between the renter, support agency and CHVL and the consequences of the renter not engaging with support, which is that they will no longer be eligible for transitional housing and will be issued a Notice to Vacate.

4. Putting these principles into practice

This policy provides the overarching principles that guide how the Transitional Housing Management program is provided by CHVL. This is supported by the Transitional Management Procedures Manual.

5. Related legislation, industry frameworks and standards, CHL policy and procedures

5.1. EXTERNAL LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORKS

Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding
Human Services Standards
Children Youth and Families Act 2005 and Disability Act 2006
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding
Human Services Standards

5.2. CHL RELATED POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Customer Participation Policy
Child Safety Policy and Procedures
Duty of Care Policy
Establishing and Supporting Tenancies Policy
Safety and Critical Incident Management Procedure
Information Management Policy
Child Safe Policy and Procedure
Working with Communities
Linking Customers to Support Policy
Charter of Human Rights Policy and Procedure

6. Monitoring and review

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

Review history

Document reference	Date and version	Reason for review	Review frequency	Reviewer	Approver
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