Financial Hardship Policy

This policy and related procedures are applicable to the CHL group of companies (CHL) in Australia, including: Community Housing Ltd, Community Housing (Vic) Ltd, Community Housing Investment (VIC) Ltd, Community Housing (Tas) Ltd, Community Housing (Qld) Ltd, Community Housing (WA) Ltd, Community Housing Investment (WA) Ltd, Community Housing (SA) Ltd, Community Housing Investment (QLD) Ltd, Community Housing Investment (NSW) Ltd, Community Housing Investment (NT) Ltd, Community Housing (Subi East) Ltd, Community Housing (Homes For Regions) Ltd, Building Communities Housing Ltd and any other entities within CHL which adopt this policy.

Purpose and scope

This policy defines Community Housing Limited's (CHL) approach to assisting tenants who are experiencing significant financial hardship.

This policy applies to all tenancies managed by CHL.

This policy does not apply to financial hardship due to being absent from the property which is managed in accordance with the *Temporary Absence Policy*.

This policy does not apply to the management of rent and non-rent arrears which are managed in accordance with the *Payment and Arrears Policy*.

Definitions

Financial Hardship: Hardship is where unforeseen events occur that fundamentally place a tenancy at risk due to an unavoidable change in a tenant's financial position and an inability to pay agreed rent.

Reduced rent: temporary adjustment to the amount of rent payable by a tenant, approved by CHL in response to demonstrated financial hardship or exceptional circumstances.

Tenant: For the purpose of this policy, tenant is used as a general term and includes Renter in Victoria.

For further definitions, please refer to the Definitions Register.

Policy statements

1. Principles

1.1. CHL ensures rents remain affordable by setting the rent payable based on the applicable rent model for the property. Where circumstances change and there is an ongoing reduction in household income, tenants may seek a rent review in line with the *Rent Setting and Reviews Policy*.

1.2. In applying this policy, CHL will:

- treat tenants experiencing financial hardship with dignity and sensitivity
- implement early intervention strategies as an initial response wherever possible to rectify any issues or concerns in accordance with the *Sustaining Tenancies Policy*
- deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis ensuring consistent, fair and accountable processes are followed
- give proper consideration to the tenant's human rights
- apply this policy in a culturally safe, trauma-informed and accessible manner that supports equitable access to assistance
- ensure all our legal, regulatory and contractual obligations are met.

2. Financial hardship

2.1. Financial hardship occurs when a tenant's circumstances change and they are unable to pay their rent without impacting on their ability to meet basic living needs. This can be due to:

- unavoidable and significant new or increased expenses e.g. urgent health and/or care costs
- family and domestic violence – refer to the *Domestic and Family Violence Policy*
- natural disasters e.g. bushfires or floods
- temporary or unexpected loss of income (where rent model is not income based)
- Other significant and unexpected financial circumstances.

This document is uncontrolled when printed.

Community Housing Ltd owns the copyright to this material. No part of this document may be reproduced or reused for any commercial purposes whatsoever, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of Community Housing Limited, except in the case of brief quotations and certain other non-commercial uses. For permission requests, submit request addressed "Attention: Public Relations Department Community Housing Ltd" [info@chl.org.au].

3. Support and referrals

3.1. Tenants will be supported to engage appropriate services that can assist to stabilise their financial circumstances i.e. financial counselling, financial aid services.

3.2. Tenants will be provided with information on government rebates and incentives where applicable, as well as low or no interest loans.

3.3. CHL will work with tenants to ensure they are receiving any commonwealth benefits that they may be eligible for e.g. commonwealth rent assistance, concession cards.

4. Rent Reductions

4.1. CHL may consider a temporary rent reduction only where significant and extenuating circumstances apply, and financial hardship has been demonstrated.

4.2. Tenants seeking a rent reduction for financial hardship must provide adequate documentation that shows how the hardship occurred, how the hardship impacts their ability to pay rent, when the hardship began, and how long it is expected to continue.

- CHL may accept alternative forms of evidence where standard documentation is unavailable due to vulnerability, family violence, homelessness risk, health issues, or other exceptional circumstances.

4.3. All financial hardship requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate manager based on the information and evidence provided.

- Consideration will be given to the individual circumstances, human rights, and consequences for the household resulting from the outcome.

4.4. Where significant financial hardship has been established, CHL may reduce rental payments for an agreed period.

- Referrals to specialist agencies or hardship programs will be considered and explored prior to providing a reduction in rent.
- Rent may be temporarily reduced to a minimum amount of $20p.w. – approved in accordance with relevant delegations and program requirements.
- Tenants will be advised in writing of the commencement and duration of the reduced rent period.
- Prior to expiry of a hardship arrangement, CHL may review the tenant's circumstances and determine whether the arrangement should continue, be amended or cease.

4.5. Tenants will only be eligible to receive a rent reduction for financial hardship once during their tenancy.

- Exceptions may apply in significant and extenuating circumstances – as determined, and approved, by the relevant manager in consideration of the length of tenancy tenure and information and evidence provided.

5. Feedback and appeals

5.1. Tenants have the right to lodge a service complaint or request an appeal of a decision made by CHL relating to rent reduction requests, in accordance with the *Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy*.

Accountability

Chief Operations Officer – accountable for authorising submission to the Executive Team for final policy endorsement by the Chief Executive Officer.

National Operations Manager – responsible for reviewing and maintaining the policy, overseeing its effective implementation and providing advice.

This document is uncontrolled when printed.

Community Housing Ltd owns the copyright to this material. No part of this document may be reproduced or reused for any commercial purposes whatsoever, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of Community Housing Limited, except in the case of brief quotations and certain other non-commercial uses. For permission requests, submit request addressed "Attention: Public Relations Department Community Housing Ltd" [info@chl.org.au].

All Senior Leaders/Managers – responsible for demonstrating visible leadership and commitment to this policy, implementing this policy within their area of responsibility, promoting compliance, supporting employees to understand and meet policy requirements, monitoring compliance, and taking appropriate action where issues or breaches are identified.

All Employees – responsible for complying with this policy, understanding and meeting its requirements, actively supporting its implementation, and contributing to the achievement of its objectives. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Related documents

- Domestic and Family Violence Policy
- Feedback, Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Financial Hardship Policy
- Payment and Arrears Policy
- Succession of Tenancy Policy
- Temporary Absence Policy

Legislation

Applicable legislation, regulatory requirements and standards are maintained within CHL's Legislative and Regulatory Obligations Register.

Approved by

Approved by Alicia Follent, Acting Chief Executive Officer on 16/09/2026.

This document is uncontrolled when printed.

Community Housing Ltd owns the copyright to this material. No part of this document may be reproduced or reused for any commercial purposes whatsoever, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of Community Housing Limited, except in the case of brief quotations and certain other non-commercial uses. For permission requests, submit request addressed "Attention: Public Relations Department Community Housing Ltd" [info@chl.org.au].