

Establishing & Maintaining Tenancies Policy		Document #: CEH 021	Print Date: 15/03/19
		Prepared by: GM BDSO	Date Prepared: 25/2/2019
Effective Date: December 2018	Revision: 2.0	Review by: Manager HR	Date Reviewed: 25/2/2019
Compliance: This policy aligns with Standard 1.2, 1.3, 3.4 & 4.1 of the National Community Housing Standards		Approved by: ED CatholicCare Tasmania	Date Approved: December 2018

We are tenant-focused and actively work with tenants to establish and maintain successful tenancies. To this end, we have documented tenancy management procedures that are consistent with relevant legislation and our organisational aims.

Establishing tenancies

We provide clear information to ensure tenants understand their rights and responsibilities. This includes expectations under both the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* and our own policies and procedures. We provide this advice before a lease agreement is signed.

When establishing a tenancy, we take the tenant through our lease agreement and explain the major clauses to them. These include the length and type of tenancy agreement and the processes around eviction. We provide information about:

- bonds (if they are collected);
- rent payment, rent methods and rent arrears;
- our approach to property improvements and repairs;
- procedures for reporting repairs;
- maintenance the tenant is responsible for;
- how to manage neighbourhood disputes and conflict.

At this time, we will also provide tenants with information about:

- our services and procedures for housing management;
- how to contact the organisation;
- how to engage with us through meetings and surveys;
- how to access advice and advocacy services.

We will make all of this information accessible for tenants and facilitate translation if required.

We ensure that condition reports are completed prior to occupancy and we provide the tenant with a completed and signed copy of the report. We document any repairs that are needed and advise timeframes for completion of these works.

Managing security deposit/bonds

Where bonds are collected, we will advise tenants how much bond will need to be paid at the start of the tenancy and how it needs to be lodged.

Rent management

We have affordable rent benchmarks, a rent setting policy for each type of social and affordable housing we manage, and documented methods for calculating the rent payable. We provide Tenants with an explanation of how their rent is calculated. We offer a range of rent payment methods, described in the lease agreement, on our website and in our Tenant Handbook.

We have a procedure for managing rental arrears. We establish realistic repayment arrangements with each tenant if required. We encourage tenants to give early notice of financial difficulties and we make referrals (with the tenant's permission) to organisations who can assist with budgeting or financial counselling.

We have a procedure for conducting rental and income reviews. We conduct rent reviews annually, or upon advice that the tenant's circumstances have changed. We inform tenants what they need to provide and give adequate notice of a change in rent, consistent with the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*.

Addressing disputes between tenants and neighbours

We are committed to working with tenants to achieve successful and long-term tenancies and more broadly, building positive and sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. We support tenants to respect that every tenant has the right to live peacefully in their home.

We expect and will support tenants to follow the conditions outlined in their lease agreement. This includes being responsible for their own behaviour and the behaviour of visitors and occupants at their property so that neighbours are not unreasonably disturbed.

We encourage tenants to try to solve issues with neighbours by talking with them directly or through a mediator. We will not get involved in this process as an advocate or third party.

As outlined in the lease agreement, our properties cannot be used for any illegal purposes and if we believe this is the case, we will refer the matter to Tasmania Police.

The changing needs of tenants

We will respond to the changing housing needs of tenants fairly and flexibly, within our capacity and in a manner that is consistent with legislation, eligibility criteria and our allocation procedures.

We will work with tenants who are experiencing domestic violence, or whose relationships have broken down, to find appropriate housing solutions. For existing tenants who want to transfer homes within our property portfolio, we will consider changes in a tenant's housing need, (including those that are identified and raised by external support agencies working with the tenant), relative to the availability of alternate housing and our waiting lists.

For those tenants whose circumstances change through illness or injury, we will endeavour to provide support to assist them to maintain their tenancy and so remain in their home. This may include arranging adaptations to the property itself or assisting the tenant to access home modification services and funding or, facilitating access to support services that provide in-home care. Where maintaining the tenancy is not an option, we will work with other support services and agencies to try and find alternative accommodation.

Our aim is to ensure the most effective use of each property, aligned to the changing needs of tenants.

We will seek to limit under occupancy issues where they occur.

Access to services

We offer applicants and tenants, as far as possible, opportunities to access a range of services appropriate to their needs, including access to relevant support to help manage and maintain their tenancy. Our written and online sources of information will be current, accessible, and user-friendly and reflect our commitment to ensuring equitable access to our activities and services.

Our primary office located at Bridgewater is open business hours Monday-Friday and is wheel chair accessible. An emergency maintenance phone response operates after-hours including weekends.

We aim to provide services that are culturally appropriate to our potential and current service users by accessing resources from, and consulting with, other relevant organisations and agencies. Our positive working relationships with other agencies can help tenants access a full range of support options. With the tenant's agreement, we will make a referral to another agency where the tenant would benefit from additional support in order to remain housed.

References

This policy aligns with Standard 1.2, 1.3, 3.4 and 4.1 of the National Community Housing Standards

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and clients of the following entities:

- CatholicCare Tasmania Affordable Housing
- Centacare Evolve Housing

Associated Documents:

- Complaints & Appeals Policy and Procedures
- Tenant Handbook
- Tenancy Agreement

Policy Review

This policy and related procedure will be reviewed on a 24 month cycle, unless there are legislative, policy, or other organisational changes that instigate an earlier review. The responsibility for the development, amendment and review of policies and procedures rests with the subject matter experts, with the support of the Quality Systems Coordinator.

The most current version of this Policy is available from Domus; changes to the Policy will be communicated via Domus and staff meetings.

Changes to this policy will prompt an update to the Centacare Evolve Tenancy Policy page accessed at www.centacareevolve.com.au to be actioned within one week of any change.