

Affordable Housing

Overview

This policy explains how we will manage affordable housing and meet our responsibilities under law, other rules and our agreements.

Scope

This policy applies to SGCH Victoria and its subsidiaries (we, our and us).

Definitions

Affordable housing

Affordable housing is made available to households that meet specific program eligibility criteria, typically based on income. The rent is discounted at 74.9% or less of the market rent.

Market rent

Market rent is the rent that would be charged for the property if the rent wasn't discounted.

Guiding principles

- We will aim to reduce levels of housing stress by providing discounted rental accommodation to people on very low to moderate incomes who may otherwise have difficulties securing and maintaining housing, priced so renters are able to meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transport, medical care and education.
- We will manage our affordable housing in line with the relevant laws, guidelines and agreements:
 - *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (Vic)
 - *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic)
 - *Housing Act 1983* (Vic)
 - Australian Tax Office requirements for the GST free supply of long-term rental accommodation
 - Our agreements with the owners of affordable housing such as councils and developers
 - Contractual requirements

Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria applies to affordable housing:

- The primary renter on the rental agreement must be at least 18 years old
- The household must be able to take care of the property and follow the rules of the lease
- The household's income must be within the income thresholds (as shown in the latest income tables), with some or all of income derived from paid employment

- The primary renter on the rental agreement must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident
- The primary renter on the rental agreement must live in Victoria at the time of application
- No one in the household can own or have a financial interest in any residential or commercial property, except in rare cases, like when they have a very small or non-controlling share

Other requirements

Other requirements may apply depending on the program, which will be communicated to applicants. These may include:

- Connection to the area: Applicants might need to show that they have a connection to the area where the housing is located. This may include family, social supports, education, training, or work in the area.
- Cohorts: Some programs may prioritise applications to specific groups (e.g., Aboriginal Victorians, victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, young people, older women, families, or key workers).
- Current employment: There may be requirements which prevent our employees, employees of the property owners, and their families from applying for housing. For properties that we own, or programs that allow employees to be housed, we may offer housing to employees if they meet the eligibility criteria and if it is approved by our CEO.

Assessment of applications

We will review information provided to us to assess if a person is eligible for housing. If an application is missing information, we will contact the person and tell them what they need to provide to complete their application and by when. We cannot review an application until we have all the required information. If we do not receive this information by the date provided, we will close the application.

If someone provides information that is false or incorrect, this could impact their eligibility and we will take them off our waiting list and explain why.

The information and evidence submitted with the application should outline why affordable housing will be of benefit to the household.

Allocations to vacant properties

We will allocate properties to people who meet the eligibility criteria.

We need to ensure that the program can keep operating and that rent is affordable for renters. To do this, we will assess whether a person can pay the rent before we offer them housing.

Property offers

When we make an offer, we will:

- Ensure that the type and location of the property meets their needs. We will use information that people give us to work out if a property is suitable.
- Give people 24 hours to think about an offer

- Explain the lease term, continued eligibility requirements, and any specific property information
- Explain any relevant rules applying to the property.

Start of Rental Agreement

When a person accepts an offer, we will ask them to sign a rental agreement. We will offer an initial rental agreement of 12 months. The person must sign a rental agreement within 3 business days of accepting the offer unless we agree otherwise.

Before a rental agreement can be arranged, the person will need to be able to pay 2 weeks rent and, in most cases, 4 weeks bond, when they sign their rental agreement. Bonds will be managed in line with our legal duties. In some circumstances, the relevant Lead or Head Of Region may accept that a bond will not be paid.

Rent

Rent is usually 74.9% of the market rent.

We will inform people of the percentage of market rent they have to pay when we offer them a property.

Renters can pay rent each week or fortnight, as long as it is paid on time.

During the Rental Agreement

Review of market rent

We will review the market rent every year and any other time required in line with agreements or contractual requirements. If the market rent is going to change, we will inform our renters in line with our legal duties.

Rent increases

Rent can only be increased once in any 12-month period. Any rent increase will not exceed 74.9% market rent.

Eligibility reviews

We will assess each household's ongoing eligibility once every 12 months. This includes reviewing household income against the current income eligibility limits.

Ongoing eligibility rules

At each review, renters must meet these ongoing requirements:

1. Household income must stay within the income limits
2. The primary renter on the lease must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident
3. No household member can own or have an interest in any residential or commercial property, except in special cases (like owning a small, non-controlling share).

If the household remains eligible, they will be offered a new lease term.

Income over the income limit

If a household's income exceeds the ongoing eligibility limit, they must demonstrate that their income is back within the limit within 12-months.

Property transfers

Renters can apply for a transfer to other affordable housing properties if they meet the criteria for that program. Renters will need to submit a new application and provide current supporting documentation. We will manage transfers using the criteria for each program. This will be treated as a new application.

If the renter leaves the property permanently, remaining household members can apply for affordable housing if they meet the criteria for the program. If eligible, the household member may be able to remain in the same property.

Additional household members

Renters must ask for approval in writing if they want someone else to live in the property.

When we receive a request for someone else to live in the property, we will look at:

- Whether the household will still meet the rules for the program.
- Whether the property is suitable.

Ending a rental agreement

We might end the rental agreement if a renter breaks the rules of their rental agreement.

If we are going to end a rental agreement, we will make sure that we meet our legal duties. Renters can end their lease at any time during the term by giving us 28 days' written notice.

End of rental agreement charges, debt and rent arrears

If a renter leaves and owes us money, we will make a claim against their bond. We may apply for an order from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal ([VCAT](#)):

- If the renter disagrees with the claim for the bond
- If the money the renter owes us is more than the bond
- If the amount owed exceeds the bond amount by \$500 or more

If the amount owing is more than the VCAT limit, we might take other legal action (e.g., local court) to retrieve the amount owing.

Data collection and security

Renter information will be stored and protected in line with our Privacy Policy and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic). We will not sell a renter's personal information and will securely dispose of it when it is no longer needed for selecting renters or managing tenancies.

Financial hardship

Financial hardship occurs when a renter can't afford to pay their rent without it impacting their ability to cover basic living needs due to unexpected changes in their income. We will work with renters to provide support, which may include:

- Setting up a payment plan to manage overdue rent or debt
- Sharing information about government assistance programs, such as the Utility Relief Grants Scheme

- Referring the renter (with their consent) to charities that can provide financial advice, vouchers, or other support
- Assisting the renter in finding other suitable housing if they choose to move, including access to social housing within our portfolio if they have an approved application on the VHR.

Refer to our Financial Hardship Policy for more information.

Appeals and complaints

Applicants or renters can appeal decisions or make a complaint. Read our Appeals Policy or Complaints Policy for more information.

Relevant legislation, regulations or standards

- [Planning and Environment Act 1987 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Residential Tenancies Act 1997 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Housing Act 1983 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Australian Taxation Office](#)

Related documents/resources

- Policy: Privacy
- Policy: Appeals Complaints and Feedback
- Policy: Financial Hardship

Policy information

Version:	1
Approved:	February 2025
Reviewed:	February 2025
Review frequency:	24 Months
Responsible team/position:	Group Executive, Customers – Services
Transparency and accessibility	Available on our website

Appendix A

Summary of program eligibility and conditions

	Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF)	Properties developed under the Planning and Environmental Act
Income eligibility limits Melbourne FY 2023-24):	Single: \$71,579 Couple: \$107,368 Family: \$150,315	Single: \$73,530 Couple: \$110,300 Family: \$154,410
Ongoing eligibility income limits	Up to 125% of the current income eligibility limit	Current income eligibility limit
Rent	74.9% of market rent	74.9% of market rent
Lease term offered	12 months	12 months
Continued eligibility	Yes	Yes