



# MIA MIA Tenant Newsletter

March / April 2020 Edition



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@mollyhunt4food @senatorbriggs

## WE ARE WITH YOU DURING THIS HEALTH EMERGENCY

### A message from CEO Darren Smith:

The past weeks have been unprecedented as the world responds to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) is changing our operations and services to respond to the challenges ahead. We will continue to provide safe, secure and culturally appropriate housing to our community.

I would like to reassure you that the safety of tenants, their families, members of the Aboriginal community and our staff are paramount.

Anyone with concerns can call the Coronavirus hotline on **1800 675 398** (24 Hours) or visit the Victorian Government's website [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au)

As the Victorian Government requires us all to observe physical distancing to stop the spread of Coronavirus, we want to share information with you about how to access support if you need it and any changes to our services.

We have included additional information in this mail out. With the newsletter is a document from Gaaya Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) that has advice for Aboriginal communities on how to stay safe during the Coronavirus outbreak.

If your contact details have changed (mobile or email) now is the time to let us know your current contact details. Please feel free to call our head office **03 9403 2100** during business hours to check that we have your current contact details, or send us an email to [clientservices@ahvic.org.au](mailto:clientservices@ahvic.org.au) any time.

We are committed to supporting our tenant community during this difficult period. With physical distancing requirements in place we will rely on being able to contact with you via phone and email.

Our phone line **03 9403 2100** is still our central line for inbound calls and is available from 8.30 am - 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday. Press 1 for maintenance or 2 for tenancy enquiries. Please be patient as this number is expected to be busy over the coming weeks.

The after-hours maintenance number operates as usual. If a complete head office closure is required, we can continue to deliver our client services remotely, at this stage.

## STAY DEADLY, STAY DISTANT AND STAY INFORMED

We have received confirmation from the Victorian Government that housing and homelessness services are an essential service during this crisis. We remain operational to support you. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak we have made changes to our service delivery.

### Changes to how we work

- We have adopted physical distancing policies for the safety of all internal and external stakeholders:
- Reception at Head Office is only open for receipt of supplies at the current time.
- Client meetings are no longer being held at any AHV office. If you require AHV services or assistance, please contact us by phone or email. Please do not come to AHV offices, as the majority of our staff are working from home.
- No face to face meetings will be scheduled in our offices until physical distancing restrictions are lifted.
- Meetings are being conducted via telephone and video-conferencing.
- Any non-urgent face-to-face client contact has been postponed, including property inspections and home visits. Where possible, client contact will be by phone or digital tools.
- Where home visits must occur, AHV staff will maintain a physical distance of at least 1.5 meters.

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You can contact our teams directly on email [maintenance@ahvic.org.au](mailto:maintenance@ahvic.org.au) and [clientservices@ahvic.org.au](mailto:clientservices@ahvic.org.au).



Image Credit: @mollyhunt4food / @senatorbriggs

## OUR AIM IS TO MAKE SURE YOU GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

### Contact us if you are struggling to pay your rent.

No one should become homeless because of Coronavirus.

You may be aware that the government has announced that tenants cannot be evicted if they can point to the COVID 19 crisis as the cause of their financial stress. However, this does not mean that you can stop paying rent.

**Please contact us if you need assistance**, as we do not want our tenants to come out of this crisis with large debts that they will struggle to repay, and that may put their tenancies at risk in the future.

If you have recently lost your job, your income has reduced or you are experiencing financial difficulties, we urge you to reach out and contact us as soon as possible. You can speak to your housing officer or call us at head office. Our aim is to make sure you get the support you need.

Our Rent Review program remains operational. The Rent Review program ensures that social housing tenants only need to pay a fair and affordable amount for rent, based on household income. If your household income has reduced, you may be entitled to receive a reduction in the rent you pay.

If you or a household member lose your job or your income is reduced, you may be eligible for a reduction in rent. Please call us on **(03) 9403 2100 (press 2 to speak to our tenancy team)** or email [rentreview@ahvic.org.au](mailto:rentreview@ahvic.org.au) and ask for a Rent Review. Please be patient as this number is expected to be busy over the coming weeks.

### Support available if you are struggling to buy groceries.

The Victorian Government have announced a state food relief program to support people who are self-isolating due to COVID-19. If you have no access to food and essentials and no network of family or friends to help, you can contact this helpline on **1800 675 398** to be connected with services.

### Government assistance for those who have lost income or work.

Depending on your circumstances you may be eligible for extra assistance from the Australian Government. Please note, any payments that tenants and/or household members receive under the Federal COVID-19 stimulus package is not included in AHV rent calculations.

We strongly recommend that you visit [aus.gov.au/indigenous](https://www.aus.gov.au/indigenous) to learn more about available payments for Indigenous Australians affected by the coronavirus. If you cannot access the internet, please call **132 850**.



## CHANGES TO AHV SERVICES

### An update on our maintenance procedures

We have emergency maintenance processes in place to minimise the health and safety risks, to our tenants and contractors. Maintenance works are essential services. However, we have changed our maintenance request process to ensure we assess any risks for both tenants and contractors. Upon making a request, the current process will be explained.

As recommended by the Department of Health and Human Services, if you contact our client services, we may need to ask you, if you or a household member:

- Have been diagnosed with, or suspected to have coronavirus?
- Are experiencing any of the following symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, shortness of breath or breathing difficulties?
- Have been overseas in the past two weeks?
- Have been in contact with anyone who has returned from overseas in the past two weeks?
- Have been in contact with a person diagnosed with coronavirus?

Remember, if you don't feel well call your local Aboriginal or mainstream health service to make an appointment, or call the Coronavirus hotline on **1800 675 398** (24 Hours).



### How to stay informed of changes to AHV during the Coronavirus outbreak

Due to the fast-paced nature of the Coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing changes, you can keep up to date with changes to AHV services by:

Checking our website, visit this page [www.ahvic.org.au/communications-and-resources/coronavirus](http://www.ahvic.org.au/communications-and-resources/coronavirus)

Following us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/AboriginalHousingVictoria/](https://www.facebook.com/AboriginalHousingVictoria/)

Calling us on **03 9403 2100** or calling your Housing Officer

Please don't forget to update your contact details with us in the event we need to call or text you. We will continue to send our newsletter and communications by post.

Visit our website [www.ahvic.org.au](http://www.ahvic.org.au) Follow us on Facebook @AboriginalHousingVictoria

Questions? ☎ **(03) 9403 2100** ✉ [clientservices@ahvic.org.au](mailto:clientservices@ahvic.org.au)

Maintenance requests? ☎ **(03) 9403 2100** ✉ [maintenance@ahvic.org.au](mailto:maintenance@ahvic.org.au)

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