



ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA

Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) Overarching Policy Statement

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy Statement, is to provide a statement of principles that govern the way Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) conducts business and delivers housing services to Aboriginal people. It outlines the key standards and values, and the operating environment that form the contextual framework within which all AHV policies and processes are developed, reviewed and implemented.

AHV's three key policy categories are:

Operational – housing service delivery, (allocations, tenancy, wellbeing programs, rental arrears and other tenancy breach management, and maintenance services).

Governance – strategic positioning, risk management, legislative compliance, finance, and accountability and performance.

Management – human resources (staff recruitment, retention, employment conditions and performance management), privacy, communication and consultation, administrative processes.

2. Organisational context

AHV is a not-for-profit registered Housing Association and the largest non-government Aboriginal housing organisation in Australia.

We are an independent Aboriginal community organisation that provides culturally safe, affordable and secure housing to over 4,000 low income Aboriginal Victorians in over 1600 properties across the State.

AHV is a proud agency: proud of the history and culture of the Aboriginal peoples of Victoria; proud of the Aboriginal people of Victoria who we serve; and proud of our unique identity and heritage.

AHV is governed by its Board of Directors. The Board sets the strategic directions of the organisation and monitors progress towards achievement of strategic objectives. The AHV Board also has responsibility for the governance, and financial and strategic oversight of AHV's activities. The AHV Board is the authorising body for new and/or revised AHV policies.

Relevant AHV values that underpin our policies include:

Respect and support for Aboriginal identity and culture and for our renters and stakeholders

Integrity, trust and honesty in all our business activities

Collaborative relationships with our community, renters, government and stakeholders

Kindness, compassion, courtesy and dignity in our relationships with our clients, our stakeholders and with each other.

Relevant AHV strategic objectives are to:

- Provide efficient and effective housing services for Aboriginal people;

- Develop constructive and mutually beneficial partnerships and relationships with the housing, community and corporate sectors;
- Develop best practice community and tenancy engagement;
- Advocate for, influence and deliver improvements in Aboriginal housing and other outcomes;
- Maintain high standards of accountability, probity and transparency to renters, clients, the Aboriginal community, government and the public.

3. Cultural statement

The First Nations peoples of Australia have the oldest continuous cultures in the world. AHV celebrates and takes pride in the rich and spiritual culture, values and practices of Australia's First Nations people. We celebrate the significant contribution made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture to the enrichment of Victorian society, and, we acknowledge and respect the special place of Victorian traditional owners as Victoria's First Nations peoples.

As an Aboriginal Community Organisation we acknowledge that our legitimacy is derived from the strong relationships we have with Victoria's Aboriginal communities and our success is through achievement of our shared vision and aspirations.

Our vision is that **Aboriginal Victorians secure appropriate, affordable housing as a pathway to better lives and stronger communities.**

We believe that achievement of our vision is through the provision of housing services which enhance the dignity of our clients and renters and which respects and celebrates their cultural beliefs, values and practices.

Our policies and procedures are designed so that our practice and service delivery is in accord with this cultural statement.

4. Policy context

AHV delivers its services and functions within the legal context of a number of relevant Acts and Regulations. These include:

- company limited by guarantee and established under the *Corporations Act 2001*;
- registration as a housing agency under the *Housing Act 1983*;
- registration as a charity under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*;
- delivery of tenancy management services under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*;
- financial management and reporting under the *Financial Management Act 1994*;
- delivery of asset management services in line with the *Building Code of Australia and Building Regulations 2006*;

- provision of a safe and supportive working environment in line with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

In addition to legislative compliance, other principles and standards, along with our organisational values form the basis of the contextual framework that guides AHV's policy development, delivery and review functions:

Relevant principles and standards include:

- principles of Aboriginal self-determination;
- Housing Registrar's Regulatory Framework, including principles of good regulation, and performance standards and intervention guidelines;
- principles for effective consultation; meaningful and respectful engagement with our clients and stakeholders that informs policy development and review;
- governance models, such as the principles and recommendations of the Australian Stock Exchange Corporate Governance Council;
- Australian accounting standards;
- AHV's Codes of Conduct and organisational structure;
- Guidelines for content accessibility (policies in plain English and in publicly accessible format).

5. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff and Board Directors have responsibilities in the development and delivery of AHV's policies and procedures. Responsibilities of specific officers are outlined below:

All staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an understanding of, and compliance with AHV policies in the conduct of their day-to-day activities • Participate in the review and updating of policies.
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers recommendations from the organisation on policy development and review • Approves new and revised policies for implementation.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures managers uphold AHV policies. • Participates in the review and updating of policies • Approves new and revised procedures.
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a lead role in the development, implementation and review of AHV policies relating to financial management and reporting.
Director Aboriginal Housing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a lead role in the development, implementation and review of AHV policies relating to tenancy management services, including allocations, arrears management and wellbeing services.
Director Assets and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a lead role in the development, implementation and review of AHV policies relating to asset management

	including development pipeline and new construction, property maintenance and repairs, and housing standards
Director Strategy and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a lead role in the coordination of policy development, implementation, review and monitoring/reporting activities, including oversight of progress of the Policy and Procedures review schedule. • Ensures consistency in format and accessibility of policies for AHV staff, clients and the community. • Lead role in the development of communication, community engagement, complaints, risk management and governance policies. • Development of policy formatting standards • Development, implementation and maintenance of Policy Directory.
Manager, Human Resources and Organisational Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a lead role in the development, implementation and review of AHV policies relating to human resource management and administration.
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff uphold AHV policies. • Participate in the review and updating of policies.

6. Definitions

These following definitions relate to tenancy and property management service delivery and may need to be revised/adapted for business policies, such as finance and human resources.

Aboriginal person	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person
After hours emergency and maintenance service	Outsourced service contracted by AHV to deliver after hours call centre services, for urgent/emergency repairs that need to be actioned immediately. Any non-urgent repair requests are referred to AHV for action during business hours.
Agreement to fence	A legal agreement between adjoining property owners or occupiers to replace all or part of an adjoining fence.
Appeal	Any expressed dissatisfaction by clients or their advocates in respect of a decision made by AHV.
Assessable income	Income received by all household members that is used to calculate the rent payable and repayment agreements for the household.
ATO benchmark	Benchmark market values for the supply of long-term accommodation, as determined by the Australian Taxation Office.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC)	Commonwealth statutory authority responsible for the enforcement of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 and a range of additional legislation, promoting competition, fair trading and regulating national infrastructure.
Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)	Australia's corporate, markets and financial services regulator.
Breach of duty notice	A legal notice served on a renter, to inform them that their behaviour has caused them to breach one of more of their duties as a renter under the terms of their Residential Rental Agreement.
Centrelink	Payments and services delivered through the Commonwealth Department of Social Security.
Centrepay	Centrelink Rent Deduction Service. Rent payments are deducted automatically from the renter's Centrelink payment.
Client	A current or prospective renter or service user of AHV.
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)	An income supplement paid in addition to the pension, allowance or benefit of eligible income support recipients who rent in the private rental market. Renters in the community housing sector, including AHV renters are eligible for CRA.
Complaint	A registered expression of dissatisfaction with AHV, lodged by a complainant or their representative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • made verbally (including by phone), in writing or anonymously; and • related to a specific risk, episode, occurrence or failure in the provision of a service that has resulted in an impact on an individual or group.
Compliance order	A VCAT order directing a party to restrain any action in breach of the tenancy agreement or the RTA, or require any action in the performance of a tenancy agreement or of duties under the RTA.
Condition Report (CR)	Before a renter enters into occupation of rented premises, a residential rental provider must give the renter 2 copies of a condition report signed by or on behalf of the residential rental provider, specifying the state of repair and general condition of the premises on the day specified in the report. A condition report must be in the prescribed form.
Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV)	Victorian government consumer affairs regulator. Provides advice to AHV in relation to storage of goods left in vacant AHV properties by former renters.
Dangerous behaviour	Behaviour of a renter, household member or a renter's visitor that by act or omission endangers the safety of occupiers of neighbouring premises.

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)	The Victorian State Government authority responsible for the planning, funding and delivery of a range of public health, housing and community services. DFFH also manages the Victorian Housing Register.
Director of Consumer Affairs (DCA)	Chief executive of Consumer Affairs Victoria. Renters may seek an investigation by the DCA if they consider a current or proposed rent to be excessive.
Enduring power of attorney (EPA)	The representative (attorney) under an EPA is appointed by the person to be represented (donor) at a stage where they are competent to make that decision.
Eviction	The process of terminating a tenancy after a Warrant of Possession has been obtained. The Warrant of Possession is executed by the police. AHV reluctantly initiates this action as a last resort only, when all other efforts to resolve the rental arrears and/or other tenancy breach issues with renters, have failed.
Fair wear and tear	The gradual and expected deterioration of fixtures and fittings caused by usage over time.
Family Violence Protection Act 2008	Victorian legislation which aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximise safety for children and adults who have experienced family violence; and • prevent and reduce family violence to the greatest extent possible; and • promote the accountability of perpetrators of family violence for their actions.
Fences Act 1968 (FA)	The Fences Act outlines rules about respective responsibilities for costs for a dividing fence. It includes the type of fence to be built, notices required and dispute resolution.
Hearing withdrawn	A scheduled hearing at VCAT that has been withdrawn by the party who made the application.
Homes Victoria	Homes Victoria work across government, industry and the social housing and homelessness service sectors to provide stable and secure homes.
Housing Act 1983	Victorian legislation governing the administration of social housing services, including the provision of housing stock and the financial framework for the social housing sector.
Housing Registrar	The Housing Registrar is a business unit within the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance. It supports the Registrar of Housing Agencies legislative role and focuses on registration and regulation of rental housing agencies to serve the housing needs of low income Victorians.

Immediate Notice to Vacate	A legal notice served on a renter, in circumstances where the renter's behaviour is endangering neighbouring occupiers or has caused deliberate and significant damage to AHV premises.
Legal action	Where AHV makes application to VCAT to seek a determination relating to rent arrears, TRMC or other tenancy breaches.
Legal agreement	A VCAT order directing the renter to repay rental arrears in regular instalments.
Legal personal representative	A legal personal representative of the deceased sole renter is the executor of the deceased renter's will to whom probate is granted; or if there is no will, the administrator to whom letters of administration have been granted.
Local agreement	A local agreement between AHV and a renter to pay rental arrears or Renter Responsibility Maintenance Compensation in instalments.
Maintenance	All actions necessary to retain the asset as near as practicable to its original condition. (This excludes rehabilitation or renewal). Maintenance does not increase the service potential of the asset or keep it in its original condition; it slows down deterioration and delays when rehabilitation or replacement will be necessary.
Market rent	Rent assessment based on rents for properties in the same location and of similar size in the private rental market.
Maximum rent	The maximum rent charged by AHV. This will be either the market rent or 75% of the published ATO benchmark, whichever is lower. To maintain their GST-free charitable status, rents charges by registered agencies must not exceed 75 percent of the relevant ATO benchmark.
Mediation	A form of dispute resolution in which an impartial third-party facilitates communication and negotiation between parties in a dispute. Parties to the dispute retain control over their dispute and take responsibility for the outcome.
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	Federal government program providing funding for support and services to Australians aged under 65, who have permanent and significant disabilities.
Next of kin	Family member identified by a renter as their closest relative and who may act on their behalf.
Non-assessable income	Specific purpose payments received by household members that are not included when calculating the rent payable and repayment agreements.
Non-standard fixtures (NSF)	Non-standard fittings and fixtures in AHV managed and owned properties, including ceiling fans, blinds and curtains. AHV retains and maintains NSFs

	when the item is assessed to be in good condition and its retention will add value and amenity to the property.
Notice of Repairs Section 79(2) of the RTA	A notice sent to the renter that sets out details and costs of repairs. It informs the renter that they are liable for the costs and that failure to pay may result in AHV making an application to VCAT to seek an Order for Compensation.
Not on Schedule (NOS)	Works that are not specifically identified within the Schedule of Rates, and not appropriately raised as work orders using the Schedule of Rates.
Notice to Fence	Formal notice served to an adjoining property under the <i>Fences Act 1968</i> for the repair/replacement of a party fence.
Notice to vacate (NTV)	A legal notice to the renter to vacate the rented premises, issued by a rental provider.
Nuisance behaviour	Behaviour that unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or privacy of an occupier(s) in neighbouring premises.
Order for Possession (OP)	An order granted by VCAT giving the rental provider the right to obtain a warrant to evict the occupants and regain possession of the property. The order is valid for a six month period.
Order for Possession Agreement	A rental arrears repayment plan negotiated between AHV and a renter after an OP has been granted for the property.
Order of Abandonment	A VCAT order declaring a rental property to be abandoned.
Property Condition Assessments (PCA)	Property inspections undertaken by AHV asset and technical staff to gather detailed data on the condition of all properties. This data informs the planning of maintenance and capital expenditure programs.
Protected person	As defined under the Family Violence Protection Act 2008: a person who is protected by a family violence intervention order or a family violence safety notice
Reasonably clean condition	When a property is free from rubbish and all internal appliances, fittings and surfaces are clean.
Registered housing agencies	Housing associations and providers regulated by the Housing Registrar.
Reletting standard	Property is safe, secure, in a reasonably clean condition and in good repair.
Rental arrears	Unpaid rent owing to AHV.
Rental subsidy or rebate	The gap between the maximum rent of an AHV property and the actual rent charged for households eligible for reduced or subsidised rents.

Renter	The person(s) to whom premises are let under a residential rental agreement. References to the term “tenant” were replaced by “renter” in the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> , as part of the 1 July 2021 amendments.
Renter contact	Action taken by AHV to contact a renter either in person (i.e., home visit) or by phone or in writing. Efforts to make contact are recorded when the renter is not home or does not answer a phone call, e.g. a calling card left at the property or a voicemail message.
Repair	Action to restore an item to its previous condition after failure or damage.
Repair - Normal repairs	Maintenance works of a non-urgent nature. Good customer service requires that action on maintenance requests will occur with 14 days of the request being received, and in many cases works may be completed in that time period.
Repair - Priority repairs	Requires action within 7 calendar days as a delay may cause the further dysfunction of the appliance, fitting or surface resulting in the need for urgent repair.
Repair - Urgent repairs	As defined by the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a burst water service; or (b) a blocked or broken lavatory system; or (c) a serious roof leak; or (d) a gas leak; or (e) a dangerous electrical fault; or (f) flooding or serious flood damage; or (g) serious storm or fire damage; or (h) a failure or breakdown of any essential service or appliance provided for hot water, water, cooking, heating or laundering; or (i) a failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity or water supply to rented premises, or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ia) failure or breakdown of any cooling appliance or cooling service provided by a residential rental provider; or (ib) a failure to comply with any rental minimum standards; or (ic) a failure or breakdown of any safety-related devices, including a smoke alarm or pool fence; (j) an appliance, fitting or fixture provided by a rental provider that uses or supplies water and that is malfunctioning in a way that results or will result in a substantial amount of water being wasted, (k) any fault or damage that makes rented premises unsafe or insecure including— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a pest infestation; or (ii) the presence of mould or damp caused by or related to the building structure; or

	(l) a serious fault in a lift or staircase; or (m) any damage of a prescribed class.
Reportable event	An event that has or may have an adverse impact on an AHV's compliance with its performance standards, as set by the regulator, the Housing Registrar.
Residential Rental Agreement	An agreement signed between rental providers and renters at the commencement of the tenancy, which specifies terms and conditions in accordance with the RTA.
Residential Rental Provider or Rental Provider	The person or agency by whom premises are let under a Residential Tenancies Agreement. References to the term "landlord" were replaced by "residential rental provider" or "rental provider" in the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i> , as part of the 1 July 2021 amendments.
Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA)	Victorian legislation that outlines the respective rights and responsibilities of renters and rental providers in Victoria and prescribes the general provisions and terms of tenancy agreements.
Revised agreement	A local agreement between AHV and a renter; the terms of which have been renegotiated as a result of a change to household income.
Schedule of Rates (SOR)	The SOR is a standard list of description of works by items and costs, which form the basis of work orders for head contractors. The SOR may be applied to responsive, cyclical and vacant property maintenance and can be used to describe and inform the scope of works for a maintenance program.
SDM	AHV's housing services electronic record system.
Self-employed person	A person who does not work for a wage but has her/his own business or works as a contractor or sub-contractor.
Sole renter	The only renter of a rental property, having signed the Residential Rental Agreement . A sole renter may live alone or with a resident or other occupier.
Subsidised rent	Where the maximum rent of an AHV property is more than 25% of the household income, a reduced or subsidised rent is charged, based on household income.
Summary Offences Act 1966	Victorian legislation which includes wilful destruction and damage to property. AHV may take action under this Act in circumstances where squatters illegally enter properties.
Summons	A court order issued in proceedings requiring the person to whom it is directed to attend a court at a specified time and place, for the purpose of giving evidence and/or producing documents.

Tenant Related Maintenance Charge	Costs incurred by renters who have damages in their home requiring repair that do not relate to fair wear and tear.
Vacant property maintenance	Works undertaken at the time that a property becomes vacant to bring the property back to a reletting standard.
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)	The jurisdiction that includes the Residential Tenancy List.
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998	Victorian legislation to establish VCAT, which sets out its jurisdiction and functions.
VCAT Determination	The decision or order made by a Chairperson at VCAT (Residential Tenancies List), after hearing evidence regarding a tenancy matter. A copy of the determination/order is sent to both parties.
VCAT hearing	A proceeding conducted at VCAT involving the presentation of evidence. Because of this evidence, the VCAT Chairperson will make a determination on action to be taken by renters and/or landlords to address tenancy related issues.
Victorian Housing Register (VHR)	The state-wide common application for people seeking social housing that can be accessed via participating community housing agencies, DHHS, the mygov portal or designated support providers.
Warrant of Possession	A VCAT order authorising the police to terminate a tenancy and potentially evict renters from a property, if they are still in residence.

7. Policy Log

Policy history	Version	Policy creation date	Review date
New Policy Approved by the AHV Board on <i>(date TBC)</i> .	V1.0.	Implementation <i>date TBC</i>	April 2025