

## Hardship Policy

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### Introduction

Veteran Housing Australia (VHA) has developed a Hardship Policy to assist clients through periods where their circumstances may change and/or who have additional costs associated with their health, disability, remote locations and/or other circumstances that have impact on their cost of living and capacity to sustain their tenancy and/or meet their obligations to VHA.

### Aim

This policy aims to support clients of VHA who are having difficulty meeting their obligations to VHA and/or sustaining their tenancy, due to changing life circumstances.

### Principles of VHA Hardship Policy

#### HARDSHIP

Hardship is where unforeseen events occur that fundamentally place a client's tenancy at risk due to the excessive burden involved. Whilst VHA understands the contractual arrangement entered into with a tenant, VHA will negotiate arrangements to reasonably allow for the consequences of the event, such as the creation of payment plans and/or arrears management plans. Clients experiencing hardship are encouraged to discuss this with their Housing Officer to identify how VHA can respond.

#### TENANCIES AT RISK

The pricing of VHA rents is a core element of its mission to assist Veterans who are experiencing housing stress to access secure housing so that they can establish a safe and stable base from which to thrive. VHA understands that life circumstances can change and have significant effects on a client's ability to sustain their housing. In such cases VHA staff will enact the VHA Sustaining Tenancies Policy to support the client with their obligations and/or tenancy.

#### ASSISTANCE FOR TENANTS IN TEMPORARY ALTERNATIVE RESIDENCES

VHA is aware that from time-to-time clients are required to spend time away from their primary place of residence for health and/or other reasons. VHA will always comply with program and or contractual obligations in regard to the reduction of rents in specific circumstances.

Outside of its contractual and/or program obligations, VHA will assist clients who are admitted to supported accommodation facilities for a period of 4 weeks or more where they are required to pay a service fee to the accommodation provider that is equivalent to their regular rental charge, by reducing their rent to a nominal amount of \$20 per week for the duration of their residence in the supported accommodation facility.

Clients will be required to submit a formal letter from the supported accommodation provider specifying the amount of service fee, the length of stay and the dates of residence to their VHA Housing Officer.

#### ASSISTANCE FOR TENANTS INCARCERATED FOR SHORT PERIODS

VHA is aware that from time-to-time it may have clients who become incarcerated for short periods. VHA will always comply with program and or contractual obligations regarding the reduction of rents in specific circumstances.

Outside of its contractual and/or program obligations, VHA will assist clients who are incarcerated for a period of 3 months or less where they are not likely to be reincarcerated in the 3 months following the sentence can apply to have their rent reduced to a nominal amount. If approved, VHA will reduce their rent to a nominal amount of \$20 per week for the duration of their 3 month or less period of incarceration.

Clients will be required to submit formal documentation confirming the length of the sentence and anticipated dates they will be absent from the property to their VHA Housing Officer.

#### ASSISTANCE FOR IMPACTS OF COMMUNITY CRISIS/EMERGENCY

VHA is committed to assisting its clients to sustain their tenancies during times of emergency and/or crisis, such as but not limited to, bushfires, floods, and pandemics. VHA is aware that such situations may affect its clients' ability to meet their financial obligations in relation to the payment of their rent and/or other payable tenancy charges.

VHA will consider its capacity to assist clients during such times and may introduce practices that assist clients to sustain their tenancies during difficult times, such as postponing or cancelling rent reviews and/or putting a moratorium on rent increases for a certain period of time.

Clients will be notified in writing by VHA of any decisions it may make during such situations and encourages its clients to speak with their VHA Housing Officer if they are affected by such an event.

#### CLIENT FEEDBACK AND APPEAL OF DECISIONS

VHA welcomes its clients to query any decisions it makes and/or ask questions about our work practices. If a client wishes to provide feedback to VHA and/or believes a decision made by VHA is incorrect, they can lodge client feedback and/or an appeal using the VHA Client Feedback Policy or the VHA Appeals Policy.

## Related legislation

### EXTERNAL LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORKS

<b>National Community Housing Standards: Standard 1.2; Establishing and Maintaining Tenancies; Section 3 - Tenants Rights and Participation</b>
<b>Department of Human Services Standards: Section 1 - Empowerment</b>
<b>Housing Assistance Act 1996 (COM)</b>
<b>Housing Act 1983 (VIC)</b>
<b>Housing Act 2003 (QLD)</b>
<b>State Residential Tenancy and Rooming Acts (NSW, QLD, VIC, WA, TAS and SA)</b>
<b>The National Affordable Housing Agreement</b>
<b>OOH, Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines and Conditions Funding 2006-2009 (VIC)</b>
<b>Consumer Charter for Community Managed Housing and Homelessness Services</b>
<b>Western Australian Community Housing Regulatory Framework - Performance Outcome 1 - Tenant and housing services</b>
<b>National Regulatory Code</b>
<b>Victorian Regulatory Framework</b>
<b>The Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter Act 2006 (VIC)</b>
<b>Queensland Human Rights Act 2019</b>

### VHA RELATED POLICIES AND PROCESSES

<b>VHA Client Promise</b>
<b>VHA Client Feedback Policy</b>
<b>VHA Appeals Policy</b>