HOUSING**PLUS**

SUSTAINING TENANCIES POLICY

January 2025, Version: FINAL

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1   Purpose and Objective

This Policy outlines how Housing Plus will identify and respond to support our tenants and/or their household members to meet their tenancy obligations and guides effective responses to tenants with complex needs.

2   Scope

a.   This policy applies to all Housing Plus' and its subsidiaries' employees, management and other stakeholders including volunteers.

b.   This policy applies to all Housing Plus tenants and applicants.

c.   This policy describes the organisation's objectives and policies regarding tenancy sustainment.

3   References

3.1   Legislation

- NSW Housing Act 2001
- NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992

3.2   Policies

- Housing Plus Customer Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy
- Housing Plus Rent Management Policy
- Housing Plus Allocations Policy
- Housing Plus Eligibility Policy
- Housing Plus Affordable Housing Policy
- Housing Plus Responding to Domestic and Family Violence Policy
- Housing Plus Children and Young People at Risk Policy
- Housing Plus Ending a Tenancy Policy
- Housing Plus Starting a Tenancy Policy
- Housing Plus Occupancy Policy

4   Definitions

Term: Company

Definition: Housing Plus, ABN 83 147 459 461, and all of its related and associated entities

Term: Employee

Definition: An individual who is directly engaged and paid by the Company as an Employee

Term: Manager

Definition: An Employee who has direct reports (includes Executive, Senior Management and Team Leaders). In situations involving volunteers, 'Manager' refers to the Volunteer Supervisor

Term: Executive

Definition: A member of the Executive team

Term: Volunteer or Other Stakeholders

Definition: Collectively refers to any individual(s) who is not an Employee but who carries out work (whether paid or unpaid) for the Company, including (but not limited to) work as a volunteer, contractor, secondee, consultant or subcontractor, labour hire company, an apprentice or trainee, and a student gaining work experience.

Term: Work Environment

Definition: Includes but is not limited to:
- During and outside normal working hours.
- All functions, events and places which are work related (e.g. Including working from home under the flexible work policy, work lunches, conferences, Christmas parties and client functions).
- During the recruitment process, any environment which has sufficient connection to employment; decisions about promotions and other career opportunities, or in the termination of employment.
- In the course of providing goods and services.

Term: At risk tenancy

Definition: A tenancy that is at risk of failure due to breaches of the rental agreement.

Term: Complex needs

Definition: A framework for understanding multiple, interlocking needs that span health and social issues. People with complex needs may have to negotiate a number of different issues in their life, for example learning disability, mental health problems, substance abuse. They may also ne living in deprived circumstances and lack access to suitable housing or meaningful daily activity.

The following needs are considered as having a compounding affect: mental illness, substance misuse, hoarding, discrimination based on ethnicity, sexuality, domestic and family violence, history of homelessness, poverty, and history of involvement with the criminal justice system.

Term: Early intervention

Definition: Identifying and providing effective early support to individuals who are at risk of poor outcomes.

Term: Person-centred

Definition: An approach that respects and response to the preferences, needs and values of an individual.

Term: Trauma informed care

Definition: Recognises the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role trauma may play in an individual's life.

Term: Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF)

Definition: SAHF is an initiative funded by the NSW Government that provides access to social and affordable homes together with coordinated access to tailored support services that empower people to improve their lives and achieve greater security and independence.

Term: SAHF Outcomes Measurement Framework

Definition: Outlines the range of target outcomes for tenant and household members living in properties funded under the SAHF. It is aligned to the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework.

5   Responsibilities

5.1 Executive

a.   Ensure adequate resources are provided to implement and support this policy.
b.   Manage the implementation of and adherence to this policy.
c.   Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

5.2 Management

a.   Ensure that all Employees and Other Stakeholders are aware this policy and understand their obligations.
b.   Ensure effective implementation of and adherence to this policy.
c.   Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

5.3 Employees, Volunteers and other Stakeholders

a.   Understand and comply with this policy.
b.   Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

6   Policy

Housing Plus is committed to developing policies, procedures, and work practices that support tenants in sustaining their tenancies. Housing Plus recognises the importance of effective tenancy management in providing homes and communities where people aspire to live and understands that well-managed tenancies can have a positive impact on the wider community.

6.1   Appropriate property allocations

Housing Plus believes that sustainable tenancies are created by allocating the right property to the right tenants where complex needs have been identified for the applicant. As set out in the *Allocations Policy*, Housing Plus will ensure that all new tenants are allocated properties that maximise the opportunity to create a sustainable tenancy. This includes contacting the applicant's support provider in relation to any proposed offer to the applicant where the applicant has provided appropriate consent.

Housing Plus undertakes a risk assessment process for all priority housing applicants at the point of allocation to build a detailed profile of the risks an applicant might have in creating a sustainable tenancy. This assessment helps to determine appropriate referrals that could be made prior to the lease sign-up to assist the new tenant in preparing to move to their new accommodation and to maximise opportunities for a sustainable tenancy.

6.2   Lease sign up

Housing Plus recognises the personal, health, social and financial cost of a tenancy failure and that prevention strategies are more effective than reacting to issues once they develop.

Housing Plus provides clear and appropriate information to assist new tenants to understand their responsibilities as a tenant and their requirement to meet tenancy obligations such as payment of rent on time and being a good neighbour. Housing Plus helps tenants understand what they should do if they do experience difficulties sustaining their tenancy.

Housing Plus undertakes an early intervention approach through discussion with the tenant about possible support they might need and referral to relevant support services to assist the tenant in establishing a successful tenancy.

6.3   Tenancy management

Housing Plus aims to proactively identify vulnerable groups most at risk of tenancy failure to sustain tenancies. We do this by:
- Offering a home visit six weeks post sign up and an annual phone call during the tenancy to check in on wellbeing and identify any property or tenancy related concerns.
- Maintaining regular, personal and sustained contact with identified vulnerable households.

- Using every interaction with our tenants as a chance to understand their needs and sustain their tenancy.
- Making information available in a variety of formats and languages, where required
- Working effectively with specialist support agencies.
- Developing and supporting initiatives aimed at increasing the level of tenancy sustainment, based on an understanding of the reasons for tenancy failure, in collaboration with other services.
- Ongoing training and development opportunities for our employees.
- Reviewing and monitoring our service delivery responses based on best practice.
- Operating early intervention, trauma informed and person-centered practice frameworks.

Housing Plus understands that some tenants will need support for varying amounts of time to enable them to establish and sustain a tenancy. Housing Plus has a range of partnerships with local support services that enable a collaborative plan to be established with the tenant to support tenancy sustainment.

6.4 Supporting victim-survivors of domestic and family violence

Housing Plus recognises that domestic and family violence can happen to anyone, regardless of social background, disability, age, gender, religion, sexuality, or ethnicity.

For further information about how Housing Plus supports victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, please refer to the *Responding to Domestic and Family Violence Policy.*

6.5 SAHF Needs Assessments and Needs Reassessments

For tenancies managed under the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF), Housing Plus will assess the needs of each person in the household within 6 weeks of the following circumstances:
- Signing a tenancy agreement.
- A approval of an authorised household member.
- Any event that that has a significant impact on a tenant or household member's ability to progress towards the target outcomes of the SAHF Outcomes Measurement Framework.

The needs of each person in the household will then be reassessed every 12 months or as specified in their previous assessment. If a tenant or a household member accepts support, Housing Plus uses the information that is gathered from this assessment to prepare a support services plan.

6.6 Hardship

Financial hardship occurs when a tenant is unable to pay their rent, debt or water charges without impacting their ability to meet their basic living needs. This may be short or long term and be caused by health, unemployment or sudden major expenses.

Housing Plus works with tenants to manage their finances and meet their debt commitments. Housing Plus promotes a rent-first approach that focuses on providing early advice and support to ensure that tenants do not fall into arrears and that any enforcement action is proportionate.

Tenants are encouraged to contact Housing Plus if they are having trouble paying their rent, water or other debts. Strategies to assist tenants experiencing hardship and financial difficulties implemented by Housing Plus include:

- Checking the tenant is receiving the full amount of Commonwealth Rent Assistance that they are entitled to.
- Information and referral to appropriate financial counselling.
- Establishing realistic and achievable repayment plans including the involvement of other support workers/financial counsellors assisting to determine the amount the tenant can realistically afford.
- Providing information and referral to local brokerage programs if there are other non-rental aspects of the tenants' finances that could be addressed through brokerage.

7   Appeals and Reviews of Decisions

Decisions made under this policy can be reviewed or appealed. For more information, refer to the *Customer Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy*.

8   Document Control

8.1   Document History

Action	Responsible Person	Date
Created by	Lena Jenson Chris Maybin Harmony Meath Therese Short	June 2024
Reviewed by	Liz Stamatelos	December 2024
Approved By	Justin Cantelo	February 2025