

Housing Allocation

June 2021



Document Information

Title: Housing Allocation Policy
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Version: 2
Endorsed by: Judy Line
Issue date: 24 June 2021
Review date: 24 June 2023

Revision History

Issue date	Version	Revision description
24 June 2019	1	Created for Web-site
24 June 2021	2	Reviewed to reflect changes to the Residential Tenancies Act.

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the arrangements for housing allocation within the Women's Housing Ltd (WHL) Housing Programs, including the Transitional Housing, Rooming House and Community Housing Programs. This policy reflects the context of the Victorian Housing Register (VHR).

2. Statement of Commitment

WHL is committed to enacting exemplary practice in relation to management of tenancies, and the support of renters.

Accordingly, WHL is committed to respecting and pursuing the rights of clients and to working diligently to facilitate stable housing and life outcomes for WHL renters.

WHL is therefore committed to producing successful and sustainable tenancies when allocating applicants to its properties. This means that WHL will allocate housing in a way that:

- is fair, transparent, non-discriminatory and based on a clearly defined process;
- matches individual housing needs with available properties;
- complies with contractual and regulatory obligations;
- ensures WHL remains financially viable; and
- supports sustainable and harmonious communities.

3. Scope

WHL provides tenancy and property management across several housing programs. These include:

- Transitional Housing Program (THM)
- Rooming House Program
- Community Housing Program (CHP)

4. Housing Programs

4.1 Transitional Housing

In accord with the general provisions of the THM program, WHL manages properties on behalf of the Office of Housing and provides transitional housing services for women who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or who are particularly disadvantaged in relation to housing.

The broad purpose of the program is to assist women in crisis to make the transition to longer term, secure and sustainable housing. This program provides short to medium term accommodation (usually between 6 months to 18 months) together with information and referral services and individual support where required. It acts as a steppingstone to more permanent housing in public, community or the private market.

WHL THM Housing is provided in accordance with the DHHS Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding, the Victorian Homelessness Support Program, the Residential Tenancies Act and the Housing Act 1983.

The THM program works within the DHHS Opening Doors system which aims to improve services to homeless people through a simplified structure of access points, centralised resource registers and service allocation, and improved client engagement practices.

Working in conjunction with external agencies, the WHL THM program allows women the opportunity of safe and affordable accommodation while long term housing options are pursued with the ongoing assistance of a support worker.

4.2 Rooming House Program

WHL manages three Rooming Houses in metropolitan Melbourne. Rooming Houses are located at Albion (men only), Mount Martha (mixed gender) and Berwick (mixed gender).

All applicants must be registered with the VHR. WHL draw applicants from the VHR. WHL also works with local partner agencies who refer suitable applicants to WHL.

4.3 Community Housing

WHL has a range of long-term housing options. This housing is targeted at single women and women and children. To qualify for this housing, women should be registered with the VHR. Community Housing is a long-term housing option. All vacancies for the Community Housing Program will be sourced from the VHR. WHL also works with local partner agencies who refer suitable applicants to WHL. All applicants must be registered with the VHR.

5. Victorian Housing Register (VHR)

The VHR is the tool used in allocating clients to WHL's long term housing: Rooming Housing and Community Housing Programs. WHL's long term housing allocations will operate within the framework of the VHR. The VHR consolidates all public and community housing applicants, including rooming houses, into a single register.

All prospective WHL renters will come from the VHR.

- All WHL long term clients will have to meet the eligibility requirements set out in the VHR – Eligibility Criteria Operational Guidelines (located on the VHR website).

Essentially all eligible applicants must live in Victoria and:

- be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia;
- meet the income and asset eligibility criteria;
- have an independent income; and
- not own a property in which they could live.

Within this overall eligible grouping the VHR has two categories:

- **Priority Access:** this is for people with very low income (eg Centrelink payments):
 - Who are homeless and receiving support, or
 - Are escaping or have escaped family violence, or
 - With a disability or significant support needs, or
 - With special housing needs.
- **Register of Interest:** for people of low to moderate income and cannot establish priority need.

Across this division WHL will still be able to apply additional eligibility criteria to meet our mission to target disadvantaged women in the housing market.

To provide flexibility, potential clients identified or selected by WHL will be able to retrospectively apply to be accepted on to the Register. This means that WHL will be able to utilise several sources for clients apart from the VHR. These, for example, could include:

- Partner/support organisations
- Applications through the WHL website

- The DHHS Resource Register
- The WHL THM program
- Private sector real estate agencies

6. WHL Long Term Allocation Criteria

Having regard to the requirements of the VHR, when selecting clients, WHL will also ensure that:

- applicants can afford the rental
- applicants can look after the property in accord with tenancy agreements
- properties are utilized according to Housing Size Guidelines
- client housing needs are matched with available properties and communities
- applicants can live in the property without support

Beyond these broad criteria, WHL will give preference to women who are or have been affected by family violence and/or are at risk of homelessness.

6.1 WHL Wait List Management

WHL does not maintain a wait list. All applicants come from the VHR.

7. Promoting successful and sustainable tenancies

WHL is committed to treating all applicants fairly and will not unlawfully discriminate against any potential applicant.

WHL will assess all applicants before making an offer of housing to determine suitability for a vacancy (and eligibility if the applicant does not currently have a VHR application). The assessment may include an interview and showing of property to ensure suitability to applicant.

If WHL declines to offer an applicant housing, it will inform the applicant accordingly.

8. Related Policies & other Documents

- WHL Privacy Policy
- WHL Conflict of Interest
- WHL Rent Setting and Review Policy
- WHL Vacant Maintenance Process
- DHHS Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding
- Victorian Housing Register – Eligibility Criteria Operational Guidelines
- VHR/CHFV information bulletin 12 April 2017.
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Organisations

9. Relevant Legislation

- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

10. Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on the WHL website www.womenshousing.com.au