



Goods Left Behind Policy

April 2023

Women's Housing Limited acknowledges the Traditional Aboriginal Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, their communities and cultures, and the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country.

Document information

Title: Goods Left Behind Policy

Owner: Lindy Parker

Version: 5

Endorsed by: Judy Line

Issue date: 13 April 2023

Review date: 13 April 2025

Revision History

| Issue date | Version | Revision description |
|-------------|---------|---|
| June 2017 | 2 | Policy expanded to include greater detail for staff. |
| August 2019 | 3 | Reviewed to update position titles. |
| August 2021 | 4 | Revised to align with <i>Rental Tenancies Amendment Act 2018</i> . |
| March 2023 | 5 | Revised to exclude internal procedural information and align to CHIA Vic template |

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1. Purpose

WHL occasionally encounters goods left behind by renters who have vacated properties without meeting their obligations to restore the property to its original condition. This policy details how WHL will manage goods left behind in line with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (“RTA”), Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 (“RT Regs”) and any associated Director’s Guidelines.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all properties managed by WHL. All items left at a property or in the common area of a property after the tenancy has ended are classed as ‘goods left behind.’

3. General information about goods left behind

Renters have an obligation under the RTA to leave their property in a reasonably clean condition at the end of the tenancy. The property should be in the same condition as when the renter moved in with the exception of fair wear and tear. This includes removing all belongings and rubbish.

WHL aims to avoid the need to handle goods left behind wherever possible by ensuring that all renters are aware of their duty to remove all items from the property at the end of their tenancy so that the property can be re-let to an eligible housing applicant as soon as possible.

Where goods are left behind, WHL aims to alert the previous renter so that they can collect their goods as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Where goods must be stored or disposed of, WHL will do so in line with all relevant requirements under the RTA.

4. Inspecting goods left behind

Tenancy Officers will inspect vacated properties within 24 hours of receipt of keys or VCAT declaration of abandonment. If there are goods left behind, Tenancy Officers will use take a non-stop video of the property to document any remaining items.

Illicit goods will be reported to the police. All goods will then be handled in accordance with section 5 of this policy.

5. How goods left behind will be handled

Goods left behind will be stored and disposed of in line with the following table:

| Items | Storage and Disposal | Costs |
|--|---|---|
| Goods of monetary value (including abandoned vehicles) | All reasonable steps will be made to inform the renter via the Consumer Affairs Prescribed Form. The goods will then be stored for 14 days before being disposed of. | The former renter may incur a fee if the goods prevent the property from being re-let to another renter |
| Personal documents | All reasonable steps will be made to inform the renter via the Consumer Affairs Prescribed Form. The goods will be stored for | The former renter may incur a fee for the reasonable costs relating to the notification, removal and storage of the documents |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | 90 days before being disposed of. | |
| Prescribed items (urns containing human remains, specialised medical devices, medals and trophies) | All reasonable steps will be made to inform the renter via the Consumer Affairs Prescribed Form. The goods will then be stored for 14 days before being disposed of. | The former renter may incur a fee if the goods prevent the property from being re-let to another renter |
| Goods of no monetary value not listed above | The goods will be immediately disposed of | The former renter may incur a fee for the removal and disposal of the goods |
| Abandoned pets | Local council will be contacted to pick up the pet | Former renter to liaise with local council regarding any fees |

In circumstances of personal or financial hardship and where the leaving of goods at the property was beyond the control of the former renter, WHL will consider all relevant circumstance and may waive the fees that would normally be incurred. WHL will especially consider family violence implications and a cultural safety lens when determining this point.

6. Notification

WHL utilise the Consumer Affairs Victoria Prescribed Form to notify former renters of goods left behind after they have vacated. WHL will use the forwarding address and/or email address that the former renter has provided to make this notification. WHL will also attempt to contact support workers, next of kin and emergency contacts where consent has been required.

WHL may contact renters via telephone calls, SMS and/or email during this process.

7. Goods left in common areas

Goods must not be left in common areas without the consent of WHL and this is a breach of the Residential Rental Agreement. WHL will attempt to contact the owner where possible and may issue a Breach Notice if the behaviour is ongoing. This may result in further VCAT action permitting disposal of the goods.

8. Legislation

This policy implements the obligations of WHL under

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 (Vic)

The relevant rights and duties regarding goods left behind are outlined in part 9 of the RTA and clause 93 of the RT Regs.

Former renters are empowered by the RTA to make applications to VCAT regarding disputes about goods left behind.

9. Related policies

- Ending Long Term Tenancies Policy
- Ending THM Tenancies Policy
- Inspections Policy
- Managing Hoarding and Squalor Policy
- OH&S Policy
- Privacy & Confidentiality Policy