

**Customer Service  
Charter  
Women's Housing  
Limited**

## Document information

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## **1. Our Purpose**

The purpose of this Charter is to demonstrate and articulate the deep commitment of Women's Housing to providing the highest possible quality services for its clients and stakeholders

## **2. Our Vision**

All women in our communities will have safe, secure, affordable housing choices

## **3. Our Mission**

To be a leading provider of specialist housing services for women who are disadvantaged in the housing market

We are committed to

- The rights of all women and children to live free from the threat of family violence and the threat of homelessness that inevitably accompanies this behaviour.
- Increasing the supply and access to affordable quality housing for women.
- Providing professional and responsive tenancy management.
- Producing lasting and sustainable solutions for our clients.
- Building inclusive and communities in which all tenants can feel valued and involved.
- Innovative solutions and partnerships

## **4. Services Principles**

Women's Housing Limited is committed to the following principles in all that it does:

- Safe and secure housing is a right afforded to all women.
- Service provision will be culturally appropriate and accessible to all women
- Self determination, respect and dignity underpins all service delivery activities
- A feminist philosophical framework that acknowledges the need for gender specific housing.
- Collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders on issues of strategic importance to homeless women.
- Transparent accountability in effective and efficient operations.
- Commitment to continuous quality improvement.

## **5. Rights of Tenants and other Service Users**

WHL will steadfastly uphold the rights of tenants and other service users to:

- High quality and professional services which are responsive to the individual needs of homeless women of all ages and backgrounds and their children.
- Opportunities for participation in decision-making affecting their lives.
- Services that are non-judgmental promote women's autonomy and self-determination.
- Assessment, information and referral practices which are appropriate to their needs.
- Clear, accurate and accessible information about our service expectations, rules or conditions.
- A grievance procedure that is transparent, empowering and effective.
- Housing free from verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
- Provide feedback on their experience of using this service.

- Timely and accurate response to all enquiries.

*We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria and pay our respect to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future.*

## **6. Client Consultation**

We welcome and encourage client participation in decision making and seek to consult and obtain feedback through

- annual surveys, joint property inspections and exit interviews
- organised forums, meetings and events
- the operations of WHL Owners Corporation Groups, and
- feedback from WHL staff and tenant support agencies

Responding to and analysing complaints is a significant source of feedback and we have instituted a complaints process that is intended to encourage and enable clients to fully disclose any concerns they might have about our behaviour or decisions.

## **7. Our commitment to you**

Your feedback and views are important to us.

- Engage and communicate with your Tenancy Worker
- Know your rights
- Be forthright and not afraid to complain...we want to hear
- Keep us informed of your circumstances...if you are experiencing financial or other difficulties, we want to help
- Get involved with our group and community activities
- Make a suggestion...it does not have to be a complaint

## **8. Our Obligations & what you can expect**

We are legally obliged to comply with legislation relating to housing, privacy, human rights, community safety and more. The Victorian Housing Act and the Residential Tenancies Act are highly influential.

In addition there are National and Victorian Regulatory Codes that set out the service standards that we are expected to reach.

These are all designed to guarantee tenants a quality of housing service and a standard of living that are fundamental to a secure, sustainable and rewarding life.

### **8.1 Respect & self determination**

We will

- Acknowledge the value and dignity of each person, and their right to be treated with understanding, empathy and courtesy.
- Recognise the unique life experience of every individual.
- Respect the culture and beliefs of all clients and explore diversity as an opportunity for learning and growth.
- Abide by the Victorian Charter of Human Rights.

## **8.2 Openness & Communication**

We will

- Promote open discussion, engage with the strengths of clients, share our expertise, knowledge and information for the full benefit of clients.
- Listen to diverse opinions, perspectives and choices, to enable meaningful communication.
- Ensure information is accurate, accessible and understandable and provided in a way that enables clients to make well informed decisions.
- Respond to enquiries in a timely and culturally appropriate manner.
- Provide an interpreter service.

## **8.3 Fairness & Justice**

We will

- Create egalitarian policies based upon principles of equality, understanding and valuing of human rights.
- Validate women's experiences and advocate for women in the housing arena.
- Ensure all service allocation processes are fair and based on client need.
- Identify and break down any barriers to access for individuals and groups.
- Respond to complaints in a fair and transparent manner.
- Adhere to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Housing Act.

## **8.4 Integrity**

We will

- Operate within an ethical and moral framework that inspires trust and confidence in our organisation.
- Pursue our goals through sound planning, decisions and actions, with transparency and accountability.
- Provide training to our staff to operate effectively across all of the challenges of the organisation.
- Pursue continuous improvement.

# **9. Your Obligations**

## **9.1 Respect & self determination**

We expect you to:

- Treat staff and other residents with courtesy and respect
- Respect the rights of neighbours
- Abide by the terms of your tenancy or residency agreement
- Take personal responsibility for your actions

## **9.2 Openness & Communication**

We expect you to:

- Be honest and thorough when providing necessary personal information and interacting with staff
- Notify us promptly of any illegal or damage activity occurring within your property
- Notify us of any changes to your personal circumstances that may affect your tenancy
- To respond to requests for contact and keep appointments

### **9.3 Fairness & Justice**

We expect you to:

- Be honest in your dealings with us
- Provide accurate information
- To support the rights of other tenants, residents and neighbours
- Abide by the law and tenancy agreements

### **9.4 Integrity**

We expect you to:

- Do everything in your power to provide a safe home environment
- Provide reasonable access to staff and contractors
- Ensure that staff and contractors treat you in a respectful and lawful manner
- Complain if you think a complaint is justified

## **10. Our Service Standards and Benchmarks**

### **10.1 Meeting & responding to client needs**

- Our office is open 9 to 5, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays)
- We provide an after hours service for emergency repairs
- We will respond to phone calls and emails promptly and courteously
- We will aim to acknowledge and/or respond to all general calls within one day
- Where appropriate we will engage fully with telephone clients immediately or within one day to address their needs and resolve their issues immediately
- We will offer free interpreter services
- We will keep all appointments
- If appointments cannot be kept, we will ensure prior notice is given if possible
- We will maintain privacy and confidentiality (in accord with our written and available policy)
- We will give you access to your personal information that we hold
- We will work cooperatively with your advocate or support worker
- All of your concerns will be listened to and responded to

### **10.2 Tenancy Management**

- We will allocate housing fairly and objectively (in accord with our written and publicly available allocation policies)
- We will ensure that all rentable properties are in a rentable condition standard in line with applicable law and regulations and our own standards and policies
- We aim to minimise vacancy periods at all times
- At the beginning of a tenancy, we will provide you with a comprehensive sign up information package, designed to inform you of your rights and responsibilities and a range of other practical information to assist the establishment of your tenancy.
- A single Tenancy Worker will be allocated to you to assist with your tenancy
- Your Tenancy Worker will assist with initial condition reports and be available, where practicable, to assist and advise you on a daily basis
- The Tenancy Worker will contact all new tenants within four weeks of moving into property.
- With the appropriate notice, the Tenancy Worker will inspect your home at least once a year, to discuss any issues.

### **10.3 Repairs and Maintenance**

WHL has three different types of housing programs.

We will respond to maintenance requests in a timely manner. Repairs will be prioritised according to the urgency and type of maintenance as defined in the RTA.

There are different categories of maintenance:

- Urgent Repairs , for occasions where a property becomes unsafe, 100% will be attended and resolved within 24 hours
- Priority Repairs –90% will be attended to within 7 days;
- Non-urgent Repairs – 90% will be completed within 14 days;

Contractors will be required to show identification before entering your home.

We will conduct a Property Condition Surveys every three years to routinely assess the condition and maintenance requirements of your property.

### **10.4 Ending Tenancies**

WHL is committed to wherever possible sustaining the viability of its tenancies through positive tenant support and early intervention.

We acknowledge the personal and financial vulnerability of many of our clients and that these vulnerabilities can result in tenancies being placed at risk.

We are committed to ensuring, through this policy and others, that all of our tenants are enabled every opportunity to sustain their tenancies

We will also apply the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA 1997) fairly and accurately and strive to protect the legal rights of residents at all times.

Every effort within reason will be made to give tenants every opportunity to remain in their homes

### **10.5 Rent Setting & Review**

We will:

- Clearly advise all tenants about how their rent is calculated and reviewed
- Assist and support tenants experiencing financial or other hardship
- Provide accurate and up to date rental statements
- Provide timely and early intervention to assist tenants to manage rental payments and repayment agreements

## **11. Complaints & Appeals**

We accept and treat complaints and appeals as a form of constructive feedback and an opportunity to improve the quality of our service.

We recognise that you often will sometimes feel reluctant to exercise your rights and make a complaint.

A fundamental feature of our approach is to ensure that firstly you know your rights; and secondly that you feel enabled to raise issues and matters of complaint with WHL staff

WHL will endeavour to ensure your concerns can be frankly discussed and resolved in a mutually agreed and timely manner.

In the complaints and appeals process we will:

- Provide information to clients and tenants about their rights and how to make complaints, compliments and appeals;
- Ensure a fair, speedy and effective resolution of complaints and appeals;
- Acknowledge the rights of tenants and other members of the public to lodge a complaint or appeal with or about WHL, free from any threat of retribution or adverse consequences;
- Positively assist complainants;
- Provide a designated Complaints Officer who will manage the complaints process;
- Record all complaints in a Complaints Register; and
- Protect privacy and confidentiality.