

Mission Australia Housing (Victoria) Limited

Policy and Procedures Manual: VIC

Changing Needs of Tenants

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1.3 Changing Needs of Tenants

1. Document Overview

Mission Australia Housing understands that the needs of tenants will change throughout their tenancy and household size and composition may also fluctuate. Mission Australia Housing aims to respond efficiently to changes in household circumstances, by providing appropriate accommodation options that matches the needs of tenants and by supporting tenants throughout any changes.

This policy aims to provide information to tenants, staff members of Mission Australia Housing and all relevant stakeholders on:

- The transfer policy at Mission Australia Housing
- The reasons tenants may be required to transfer
- What Mission Australia Housing considers to be under and over occupancy of properties
- How to apply for Mutual Exchange
- How to apply for Succession of Tenancy, including eligibility criteria
- Issuing Notices to Vacate to tenants in line with the Residential Tenancy Agreement
- Details of costs associated with transferring properties
- What decisions tenants can appeal about

2. General Principles of Changing Needs of Tenants Policy

- To work within and promote the values of Mission Australia: Compassion, Integrity, Respect, Perseverance and Celebration
- To ensure all tenants are housed in appropriate accommodation that matches their household needs
- To ensure that all Notices to Vacate issued by Mission Australia Housing comply with the Victorian Residential Tenancy Act 1997
- To provide support and information for tenants who require a transfer
- To be understanding to the changing needs of households
- To respond quickly and appropriately to urgent requests for a transfer
- To ensure decisions made relating to transfers or succession of tenancy are made fairly and consistently
- To use Mission Australia Housing resources efficiently and effectively
- To provide a transfer process based upon a needs-based analysis of tenants
- To respond quickly and with sensitivity to situations involving domestic violence

1.3.1 Transfer Policy

1. Purpose

Housing provided through Mission Australia Housing is a scarce resource and vacant properties are offered to clients on a needs basis. This policy ensures that a fair system is in place when offering properties to transfer applicants and waiting list applicants and that Mission Australia Housing is able to find tenants for its properties in the shortest possible time so that properties are not left vacant.

2. Policy

Tenants may request a transfer from one property to another for a number of reasons. These reasons can include (but are not limited to):

- Household size has changed
- Tenant needs a modified property (and current property is not suitable to be modified)
- Tenant requires ongoing support in a specific location
- Family breakdown
- Property needs no longer meet the needs of the tenant
- Distance from employment
- Harassment or abuse issues in current property or location
- Domestic violence
- Distance from medical facilities

Mission Australia Housing may also require a tenant or household to transfer for a number of reasons. This is discussed in detail in Section 1.3.2 Management Transfer Policy.

Mission Australia Housing is a limited resource and tenants need to understand that we may not be able to meet all of their housing needs and requests. Tenants requesting large properties (4 bedroom plus) or properties in areas where there is high demand or limited stock will be advised of the potential long waiting periods for a transfer and encouraged to contact other housing associations or Victorian Office of Housing to investigate alternate housing options. Housing Managers will provide details of these organisations and assistance as required.

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is a crime and all cases of domestic violence are taken very seriously at Mission Australia Housing and the victim's safety and the safety of any children is of the upmost importance to staff. DV victims will be considered a priority for transfers.

Where a domestic violence situation has occurred, Mission Australia Housing will either offer the victim alternate accommodation or if necessary, offer the perpetrator of the violence alternate accommodation to ensure that the victim can remain in the property if they request this.

Where the victim has chosen to be relocated and where a suitable, alternate property cannot be obtained immediately, Mission Australia Housing may choose to offer the tenant temporary accommodation until more suitable accommodation can be found.

3. Applicability

This policy and procedure applies to Mission Australia Housing - Victoria

4. Procedure

Applying for a Transfer

All Mission Australia Housing tenants can apply for a transfer, but their application may not be approved if:

- They have been in their current property less than 12 months
- They have transferred 2 or more times in the last 5 years (excluding forced transfers).
- They are in rental arrears or have an outstanding non-rent debt
- They are currently in breach of their tenancy agreement
- There are concerns about their ability to manage or maintain their tenancy
- They have not provided sufficient evidence to show that they need a transfer
- It is known that Mission Australia Housing will not be able to satisfy the tenants housing needs

When applying for a transfer, tenants must complete a Transfer Application Form and provide evidence as to why they require a transfer. Applications for transfer will not be accepted unless all supporting documentation and evidence is attached.

Once an application for transfer has been received, a Housing Manager will process the application and make a recommendation for it to be approved or declined. In most cases, the Housing Manager will make an appointment to inspect the tenant's current property to ensure there are no issues relating to the tenants ability to maintain a property and to discuss the reasons for the transfer request in more detail. The Senior Housing Manager will then review the application and the recommendation by the Housing Manager and make a final decision. A letter will be sent to the tenant advising of the outcome.

Tenant's that have been approved for a transfer will go onto the transfer waiting list which is managed in the same way as the general waiting list. Tenants that have been declined a transfer will be provided with information as to why their application was declined and information on Mission Australia Housing's Appeals Policy.

Priority Transfers

A priority transfer is a tenant who is considered to have an urgent need to transfer. These tenants will be placed at the top of the waiting list for re-housing. A priority transfer may be required due to:

- The property is a leasehold property and Mission Australia Housing has been issued a Termination Notice by the landlord
- Domestic violence
- Severe overcrowding
- "At Risk" tenants
- Serious neighbourhood harassment or disputes
- Medical grounds
- Major damage to a property or urgent maintenance work is required

In serious cases and where suitable, permanent accommodation cannot be obtained quickly, Mission Australia Housing may offer to house the tenant/s in short term accommodation until a more suitable property can be located. We may also seek to rehouse the tenant in another community housing organisation if appropriate.

Applicants who are applying for a priority transfer must supply evidence to show why they require an urgent transfer. This evidence may include:

- Police Reports
- Apprehended Violence Order (AVO)
- Occupational Therapists Report
- Letters from support workers or specialists

Where the transfer request is due to neighbourhood disputes, and it is safe to do so, tenants will be asked to attempt mediation to resolve the issue before being approved for a transfer. The table below provides details of what evidence tenants will need to supply to be eligible for a priority transfer.

Table 1 Priority Housing Criteria and Evidence Required

Situation	Description	Evidence Required
Termination by Private Landlord	Property is a leasehold property and MAH have been issued a TN for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property is being sold • 60 day no grounds 	Termination Notice received from landlord or real estate agent.
Severe Overcrowding	May include situations such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single person or couple is sharing a room with one or more children over the age of 12 months • 3 or more children are sharing a bedroom • The lounge room is being used as a bedroom by 1 or more people 	Sever over occupancy will be considered when the situation for the occurrence of overcrowding relates to all permanent household members and approved additional occupants and not guests or unauthorised occupants.
At Risk Tenants	At risk tenants may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence • Child abuse or neglect • Assault • Sexual Assault • Neglect • Threatening behaviour • Severe bullying 	Tenants will need to provide evidence to show that the risk is serious and ongoing and is affected by their property location. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Police reports • A current Intervention Order • A letter from the Victorian Child Protective Services • Letters from support agencies, counsellors and specialists • Report or assessment from a medical practitioner or health professional • Current reports or letters from a School Principal or School Counsellor

Neighbourhood harassments or disputes	<p>Harassment refers to a wide range of offensive behaviour. It refers to unacceptable behaviours that are threatening or disturbing. Harassment may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal abuse • Threats • Intimidating behaviour • Vilification • Property damage 	<p>The tenant will need provide evidence of harassment by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Police reports • Evidence to show that mediation has been attempted • Letters or reports from a specialist doctor, mental health case worker or support worker • Letters from neighbours confirming the harassment • A diary of the ongoing incidents that have occurred
Medical Grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The medical condition and/or disability is permanent or likely to be permanent • Household members no longer have the ability to access necessary medical and/or therapeutic services from their current property. • Limited mobility • Unable to manage stairs due to medical condition or disability • Relocation will assist in the management of the medical condition and/or disability. • Medical services that are attended frequently are difficult to attend from current location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letter from a general practitioner or specialist doctor • Support letter from health worker such as a community nurse, occupational therapist or physiotherapist • Aged Care Assessment Team Report • Occupational Therapy Report • Medical Report • Letter from specialist detailing ongoing treatment needs
Family Breakdown	<p>If there is a serious breakdown in a family relationship, MAH will consider providing separate accommodation for the member who has left the property. Separation can include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divorce • Separation of a de facto couple • Irreconcilable problems between a parent and child or children (including adult child) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of a legal separation • Letters or reports from a support worker • Income Statement from Centrelink • Family Payment confirmation from Centrelink • Evidence of new residential address (e.g., driver's license, mobile phone bill, Centrelink income statement)

Offering a Property

When allocating a vacant or upcoming vacant property, Mission Australia Housing may first view the Transfer Waiting List for suitable applicants before viewing the General Waiting List. This is because in most circumstances offering a tenant who is on the Transfer List a new property, will still create a vacancy in their original property, thus we may be able to satisfy the housing needs of two households with one vacancy.

For tenants who are on the transfer waiting list, they will be made up to two (2) reasonable offers of accommodation based upon the information that they have provided in the Transfer Application Form. Mission Australia Housing will use the Allocation of Housing Policy to match clients to properties (See Policy 1.1.6).

If both offers are refused then they will be taken off the transfer list. An offer is considered reasonable if it will meet the clients housing requirements such as location and size of property, based on the information that the applicant has provided in their transfer application.

Procedure for Offering a Property

- Where possible, Housing Managers will contact tenants by telephone to advise them of the initial offer of transfer of housing. During this phone call the Housing Manager will check with the tenant any relevant details to ensure that the tenant is still interested in a transfer, is still eligible for housing and that their housing needs or requirements have not changed.
- If the tenant no longer requires a transfer, or their details have changed and the offer is no longer suitable, the tenants transfer details will be updated on the tenancy database and they may also be withdrawn from the waiting list. If the applicant does not have a contact number or they are unable to be reached by phone then a letter will be sent to the tenant advising them to contact the office urgently to discuss their transfer application. Tenants who are sent a letter will have four (4) working days to contact the office to discuss the matter.
- Once contact is made with the tenant and it has been confirmed that they are still eligible for a transfer, they will be formally offered the property. This offer will be made verbally and also put in writing.
- The tenant is then required to view the property within 48 hours (2 working days) of being made the verbal offer.
- Tenants are required to view the property before they can accept a property and sign a lease.
- Once the tenant views the property they will be given 48 hours (2 working days) to make a decision to accept or decline the property. If a decision is not made within this timeframe and/or the applicant is not contactable, then it will be assumed that they have refused the offer of accommodation.
- All tenants who receive an offer of accommodation are required to complete an Offer Response Form (Offer Response Form) stating whether they have accepted or refused the offer and if they have refused the offer, detailing the reasons why.
- If the tenant accepts the property, a date and time will be organised for signing the lease.
- Tenants who have accepted an offer will be given a maximum of seven (7) days to sign the lease for the property.
- Once a lease is signed for the property, tenants will have 3 working days to remove all their belongings.
- Tenants who do not return the keys within this timeframe may be charged rent on both properties until the keys are returned.

Offering Leasehold Properties

In some instances, where there is a lack of appropriate, available properties at Mission Australia Housing and where funding permits, tenants who have been approved for a transfer may be eligible to look for a property through the private rental market.

Where this occurs eligible transfer applicants will be sent a letter advising that they have permission to look for a property through the private rental market and the procedure for this. The letter will stipulate:

- Local Government Areas the tenant can look for properties in
- The maximum number of bedroom allowed
- Maximum Weekly Rental that Mission Australia Housing can spend on a property (based on Victorian Office of Housing median rental figures)
- Information on the process of applying for private rental properties

Once the tenant finds a suitable property, they will be required to contact their Housing Manager with the details and they will submit an application to the landlord to rent the property. If the landlord accepts the application, Mission Australia Housing will sign a lease for the property.

Tenants will still be considered a tenant of Mission Australia Housing and will be required to sign a new lease. Rent will be calculated in the same way as it was at their previous property.

1.3.2 Management Transfer Policy

1. Purpose

This policy provides information on why Mission Australia Housing may require tenants to transfer properties.

2. Policy

Mission Australia Housing may require tenants to transfer from their property if:

- They are in a leasehold property and Mission Australia Housing have been issued a Termination Notice by the real estate agent
- They are in a capital property and Mission Australia Housing requires the property back to either carry out major renovations or upgrades
- MAH are required to sell the property or return it to the relevant State Housing Authority.
- Under or over occupancy (See under Occupancy Policy 1.3.3)

These transfers are called management transfers and Mission Australia Housing will only require a tenant to relocate for valid reasons related to the management of a tenancy or property. Tenants will be offered alternate properties that match their current needs and if tenants refuse all reasonable offers to relocate (up to three offers will be made), Housing Managers may take action at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to end the tenancy.

When relocating a tenant under a management transfer, Mission Australia Housing aims to ensure that:

- The tenant is provided with information regarding why a transfer is required
- All housing options will be explored with the tenant
- The tenant will be involved in and consulted with on all relocation matters
- The tenants known housing and location needs are met
- The household members will continue to have access to services they require on a regular basis
- The new location supports the creation of a successful and sustainable tenancy

3. **Applicability**

This policy and procedure applies to Mission Australia Housing - Victoria

4. **Procedure**

Leasehold properties

Many of the properties that Mission Australia Housing manages are rented through the private rental market and then sub-leased to our tenants. These properties are not permanent and Mission Australia Housing can be issued with a Notice to Vacate from the landlord or agent for the following reasons:

- Owner is selling/has sold the property
- No grounds/reason given
- Breach of Tenancy
- End of Fixed Term

Mission Australia Housing may also be required to end the tenancy with the real estate agent under the following conditions (these will still be considered management transfers)

- Landlord has increased the rent over the median rent (maximum amount of weekly rent that we can pay for a property)
- Landlord refuses to carry out regular maintenance work to the property
- Ongoing neighbourhood issues

When Mission Australia Housing is issued with a valid Notice to Vacate by the landlord, we are obliged to pass this notice on to the tenant. As soon as we receive the Notice from the landlord, we will send the tenant a Notice to Vacate from Mission Australia detailing the reasons why we are issuing the notice. The reasons will be the same as those stated on the Notice from the landlord. A copy of the landlord's Notice will also be sent to the tenant.

In most cases Mission Australia Housing will agree to re-house the tenant in another suitable property, provided that the tenant is still eligible for public housing and that the Notice received was not due to a Breach of Tenancy. Mission Australia Housing is under no obligation to rehouse tenants of leasehold properties where a Notice to Vacate has been issued by the landlord for Breach of Duty. These cases will be reviewed individually by the Senior Housing Manager and will depend on the type and severity of the breach along with the rental history of the tenant.

Where Mission Australia Housing agrees to re-house tenants in leasehold properties, they will be sent a letter advising that they have permission to look for a new property through the private rental market. The letter will stipulate:

- Local Government Areas where the tenant can look for properties
- The maximum number of bedrooms allowed
- Maximum Weekly Rental that Mission Australia Housing is able to pay (based on quarterly median rental figures produced by the Victorian Office of Housing)
- Information on the process of applying for private rental properties

Once the tenant finds a suitable property, they will be required to contact their Housing Manager with the property details who will submit an application to the landlord to rent the property. If the landlord accepts the application, Mission Australia Housing will sign a lease for the property and arrange a suitable time for the tenant to sign a new lease.

Capital Properties

Mission Australia Housing may require a tenant in a capital property to transfer to another property due to the following reasons:

- The property requires extensive maintenance or upgrade work
- The property is being sold or redeveloped
- The property belongs to Victorian Office of Housing and Mission Australia Housing is required to hand it back
- The property is a modified property and the tenant/s currently residing in the property do not require a modified property
- Under or over occupancy
- Management of neighbourhood disputes

For all cases of management transfers in capital properties, Housing Managers will meet with the tenant to explain the situation and to discuss all of the tenant's options.

- At this meeting the tenant will be advised of the reasons why they will be required to transfer to a different property.
- If the property is being sold, or handed back to Victorian Office of Housing tenants will be issued with a Notice to Vacate at this meeting. The notice period given will depend upon the reason the property Notice is being given and Housing Managers will ensure that it complies with relevant Tenancy Legislation.
- The tenant will be asked to fill in a transfer application form, detailing the areas that they are willing to live in and any other property requirements they may have
- Tenants will be offered up to 3 properties based on the information they have provided in the transfer application form.
- If tenants refuse to fill in the transfer application form they will be offered up to 3 properties based on information they provided in their initial application form for housing and/or a property that is similar to their current property.
- For tenants who accept one of the 3 offers of housing, the Housing Manager will arrange a time for a lease to be signed for the new property.
- Tenants who refuse all three reasonable offers of accommodation (excluding any offers that are found to be unreasonable) will be issued a 120 day No Grounds Termination Notice and the Housing Manager will apply to VCAT to end the tenancy.

1.3.3 Occupancy

1. Purpose

Mission Australia Housing aims to maximise the use of all our properties by allocating properties to tenants that match the size of their household. However, Mission Australia Housing understands that household sizes and circumstances will change over time and when these changes occur, we aim to respond efficiently by providing alternate housing options that are better suited to the tenant's needs.

2. Policy

Under Occupancy

Mission Australia Housing has limited larger properties (3+ bedrooms) and these properties need to be used for large families that require a greater number of bedrooms. Mission Australia Housing generally considers under occupancy to occur when there is more than one spare bedroom within a property.

If a tenant is in a larger property and no longer requires full use of that property, they will be asked to transfer to a more suitable property that still matches all of their other housing needs such as location.

Under occupancy can occur when:

- Children move out of the family home
- A tenant no longer requires a live in carer
- There is a relationship breakdown
- A household member/s dies

Tenants will be offered up to three (3) properties that are similar in location and that will meet the clients known needs at the time the offer is made. If a tenant refuses all three properties, then the Housing Manager may issue a 120 day Notice to Vacate and apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to end the tenancy.

Over Occupancy

Over occupancy can occur when:

- A single person or couple is sharing a room with one or more children over the age of 12 months
- 3 or more children are sharing a bedroom
- The lounge room is being used as a bedroom by 1 or more people

Over occupancy will only be considered when the situation for the occurrence of overcrowding relates to all permanent household members and approved additional occupants and not guests or unauthorised occupants.

Tenants will be offered up to three (3) properties that are similar in location and that will meet the clients known needs at the time the offer is made. If a tenant refuses all three properties, then the Housing Manager may issue a 120 day Notice to Vacate and apply to VCAT to end the tenancy.

If Mission Australia Housing does not have housing stock that is suitable in size for the household then the Housing Manager may work with the tenant to contact other housing associations who may be able to help or The Victorian Office of Housing.

3. Applicability

This policy and procedure applies to Mission Australia Housing - Victoria

4. Procedure

When requesting tenants transfer from a property due to either over or under occupancy, staff will treat tenants with sensitivity and compassion and will provide information to tenants on reasons why a transfer is being requested and MAH's policies.

- In cases where there is believed to be an issue of over or under occupancy, Housing Managers will arrange an inspection of the property to confirm the matter and discuss the situation with the tenant
- At this time the tenant will be advised of the reasons why Mission Australia Housing require them to transfer to a different property. A copy of the Occupancy Policy will be provided to tenants
- Tenants will be advised that if they do not agree to transfer and do not accept any of three reasonable offers of housing made then they will be issued with a 120 day Notice to vacate and Mission Australia Housing will seek to end their tenancy at VCAT.
- Tenants will be given the opportunity to appeal against the decision to transfer them, prior to being offered their first offer of housing (See Appeals Policy 1.3.7).
- Tenants will be asked to fill in a transfer application form, detailing the areas that they are willing to live in and any other property requirements they may have
- Tenants will be offered up to 3 properties based on the information they have provided in the transfer application form. For information regarding the offer process, refer to the Offers of Housing Policy 1.1.9.
- If tenants refuse to fill in the transfer application form they will be offered up to 3 properties based on information they provided in their initial application form for housing and/or a property that is similar to their current property.
- For tenants who accept one of the 3 offers of housing, the Housing Manager will arrange a time for a lease to be signed for the new property
- Tenants who refuse all three reasonable offers of accommodation (excluding any offers that are found to be unreasonable) will be issued a 120 day Notice to Vacate and the Housing Manager will apply to the VCAT to end the tenancy

1.3.4 Relocation Costs

1. Purpose

This policy provides information on some of the costs involved when tenants transfer from one property to another and what support Mission Australia Housing can provide in relation to these costs.

2. Policy

In most cases when a tenant requests a transfer or a mutual exchange, they are required to pay for all costs associated with relocating to another property. These costs can include:

- Removalists
- Connecting and disconnecting utilities
- Cleaning
- Any repairs needed to existing property due to tenant damage or neglect

- Mail redirection

Where a tenant is required to transfer due to a Management Transfer, Mission Australia Housing will provide some financial assistance to the tenant.

3. Applicability

This policy and procedure applies to all of Mission Australia Housing

4. Procedure

Leasehold Properties

Where a tenant is in a leasehold property and is required to transfer to another property due to the landlord wanting the property back, Mission Australia Housing will contribute towards the cost of removalists up to the following amounts:

Household Size	Amount Mission Australia Housing will contribute
1 bedroom	\$300
2 bedroom	\$350
3 bedroom	\$400
4 bedroom	\$500
5+ bedroom	\$600

Management Transfers

Occasionally Mission Australia Housing will require a tenant to transfer due to their property needing to be redeveloped, sold, or if the property is a public housing property and we are required to hand the property back. In these situations Mission Australia Housing will pay for full removal costs provided that an approved removalist is used.

Mission Australia Housing will not pay for any other costs associated with the transfer.

1.3.5 Mutual Exchange

1. Purpose

The mutual exchange policy at Mission Australia Housing aims to help interested tenants find other tenants who might want to exchange or swap their property. This policy is for use for tenants who want to exchange their property with other Mission Australia Housing tenants as well as with other Victorian Community Housing Provider tenants.

2. Policy

To be eligible to apply for and be approved for a Mutual Exchange tenants must ensure that:

- Their rent account is up to date and that they do not have a non-rent debt
- They are maintaining their property in line with their residential tenancy agreement (this may require a Housing Manager to do an inspection of the property)
- There are no nuisance and annoyance issues
- The number of bedrooms the tenant is requesting matches their needs
- There is no damage to their current property
- They are not in a property that has been specifically modified to meet their needs
- They are not being housed in a short or medium term property or a property belonging to a specific supported housing program.

The Senior Housing Manager will review all applications for Mutual Exchange and make a decision to approve or decline an application based on the criteria listed above.

Tenants who have been approved for a Mutual Exchange cannot offer financial incentives or gifts to encourage the other tenant to accept the exchange or move out. Any tenant found to be offering incentives will be removed from the Mutual Exchange List.

3. Applicability

This policy and procedure applies to Mission Australia Housing (Victoria) Limited

4. Procedure

Applying for Mutual Exchange

- Tenants interested in applying for Mutual Exchange should complete the Mutual Exchange Form and provide it to their Housing Manager to assess
- The form requires tenants to provide details of locations where they would like to live and any property requirements they may have
- A Housing Manager will carry out a routine inspection of the property (if one has not already been completed within the last 3 months) to check the condition of the property and ensure there is no damage, maintenance requirements or tenancy concerns
- The Housing Manager will also check the tenant's file to ensure that there are no arrears, any documented complaints or other tenancy issues.
- The Senior Housing Manager will review the application and any recommendations from the Housing Manager. If their application is approved, a letter will be sent to the tenant advising that they have been placed on the Mutual Exchange List.

Once a tenant has been approved for a Mutual Exchange they can request that details of the exchange be posted on the Mission Australia Housing website, tenant noticeboards and an ad placed in the quarterly Newsletter. This will be at no cost to the tenant. Personal tenant details such as the address, name or contact number of the tenant will not be advertised and interested persons will need to contact Mission Australia Housing for these details.

Arranging a Suitable Exchange

Staff will review the Mutual Exchange List every week during the Allocations Meeting. At this meeting the transfer list and vacant properties list will also be reviewed.

If there is a potential match found between Mutual Exchange applicants, a letter will be sent to each tenant providing contact details of the other tenant (provided that both tenants have signed the consent to disclose information section of the Mutual Exchange Application Form). The tenants will need to contact each other to arrange a time to view each property. If, after viewing the properties both tenants would like the exchange to go ahead, they will need to contact Mission Australia Housing to have the exchange approved and arrange a time to sign new leases for each property. Both tenants will be required to sign the leases for the new property on the same day. Tenants will need to arrange between each other moving dates and swapping keys.

Mutual Exchanges with Other Housing Providers

If a tenant is interested in applying for a Mutual Exchange with another Community Housing Provider in a different location, they will still need to complete the Mutual Exchange Form stating what areas they would like to live in and what community housing organisation they would like to exchange with.

The same eligibility criteria apply and their Housing Manager will check the tenant's file and carry out an inspection of their property to ensure there are no outstanding tenancy matters or concerns. Provided there are no issues, Mission Australia Housing will contact the desired Housing Organisation to advise them of a potential mutual exchange and will send the tenants details through to the organisation.

Mission Australia Housing will contact the other housing organisation on a regular basis to check on the status of the Mutual Exchange. Once a suitable exchange has been located and provided that both housing organisations agree to the exchange, a time will be made between the tenants and the housing associations to sign the new leases.

Tenants will need to arrange between each other the specific moving dates and swapping keys.

1.3.6 Succession of Tenancy

1. Purpose

This policy provides information regarding eligibility for Succession of Tenancy at Mission Australia Housing.

2. Policy

Succession of tenancy occurs when Mission Australia Housing grants permission for another household member (other than the main tenant) to take over tenancy of a property. This can happen due to a number of reasons including:

- The main tenant dies
- The main tenant moves to a nursing home, moves overseas or is incarcerated
- The main tenant decides to permanently move out of the property

This policy aims to ensure that if you are a household member with a satisfactory tenancy history, and you demonstrate an ongoing need for affordable housing, then

you will not be made homeless as a result of the tenant leaving the property due to the above circumstances.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for Succession of Tenancy, applicants must prove that:

- They have been living in the property for a minimum of 12 months
- They have been a declared member of the household for a minimum 12 months and have been included on the household's income assessment for rental subsidy for this entire period.
- There are no issues with the tenancy including rent arrears and noise complaints
- The person applying for succession can live independently or has support in place to help them manage a tenancy
- They are in need of affordable, secure accommodation that cannot be provided elsewhere
- They meet the eligibility criteria for public housing
- They are prepared to sign a Residential Tenancy Agreement and become responsible for managing the property

3. Applicability

This policy and procedure applies to Mission Australia Housing (Victoria) Limited

4. Procedure

- Applicants for succession need to apply as soon as possible to allow enough time for MAH to consider the request. Where possible, tenants should notify MAH at least two weeks prior to the main tenant moving out.
- If Mission Australia Housing is not advised within 6 weeks of the main tenant moving out, any applications for Succession of Tenancy will not be considered and Housing Managers may issue the household with a Notice to Vacate.
- Applicants for succession need to contact the Housing Manager of the property to discuss the matter. Evidence will need to be provided showing the reasons why the main tenant has moved out/is moving out
- The Housing Manager will need to carry out an inspection of the property to ensure there are no issues regarding the condition of the property or the household's ability to manage a tenancy.
- If the applicant meets the criteria for succession and is approved they will be offered a tenancy. However, if the current property the applicant is in is not suitable for their needs, (i.e. it may be too large or may be a modified property that is better suited to another applicant) then the applicant will be offered another property that is more suitable. Mission Australia Housing will ask the application to agree to this in writing before succession is granted.
- Once an application for succession is approved the previous tenancy will end and the applicant will be required to sign a new lease for the property.
- The accounts of the former tenant will not be transferred to the new tenant. If the former tenants account was in credit and they have passed away, the money will be returned to their estate. Any money they owe will be written off
- If the application for succession is declined, the Housing Manager will issue the remaining household member/s with 120 day Notice to Vacate.
- Where an application for succession has been declined, applicants will be given the opportunity to appeal the decision made. See Appeals Policy 1.3.7

1.3.7 Appeals Policy

1. Purpose

This policy details how Mission Australia Housing will manage the appeals process

2. Policy

If a tenant, applicant or ex-tenant believes that a decision made by Mission Australia Housing, including any employees, in relation to their tenancy was unfair or incorrect, they have the right to appeal against the decision. Mission Australia Housing welcomes tenant feedback and encourages tenants who disagree with a decision that was made to lodge an appeal. The appeals process allows Mission Australia Housing to grow as an organisation and hopefully to improve our services. Tenants will not be discriminated against or punished for lodging an appeal.

A tenant can appeal the following decisions that have been made in regards to their tenancy:

- Applications for Transfer, Mutual Exchange or Succession that have been declined
- Reasons for declining an application
- Withdrawal of a Transfer Application
- Any charges that Mission Australia Housing have added to your non-rent account that you disagree with
- The areas or type of property that MAH has allocated you
- A decision not to allow an additional occupant to move into the property
- Management Transfers

3. Applicability

This policy and procedure applies to Mission Australia Housing (Victoria) Limited

4. Procedure

Tenants can ask for a formal review of the decision made and will be given an Appeals form to complete along with information on Mission Australia Housing's Appeals Policy. The Appeal will be reviewed by either the Senior Housing Manager or the Executive Officer and a response will be given within 21 days of the appeal being lodged.

If an applicant is unhappy with the outcome of this appeal they have the option of appealing to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will review and respond to the appeal within 21 days of the appeal being lodged.

Note: Applicants must first appeal to either the Senior Housing Manager or the Executive Officer before the Board of Directors will review the appeal, unless the appeal is regarding a decision the Executive Officer has made.

If tenants are unhappy with the outcome of these internal appeals, they will be provided with information and contact details for the following external organisations who may be able to provide support or advice:

- The Ombudsman Victoria
- The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Consumer Affairs Victoria
- Equal Opportunity Commission

1.3.8 Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

This policy details how Mission Australia Housing will manage any complaints that it receives

2. Policy

If tenants are unhappy with any part of the service that Mission Australia Housing provides or the service a staff member has provided, we would like to know about it so that we can attempt to resolve the matter and improve the services we provide to tenants.

Tenants will not be discriminated against or punished for lodging a complaint and complaints can be lodged anonymously

3. Applicability

This policy is applicable to Mission Australia Housing (Victoria) Limited

4. Procedure

If the tenant is unhappy with the way they have been treated by a Mission Australia Housing employee, they are encouraged to first discuss the matter with the employee, to see if the matter can be resolved. If the tenant is not comfortable doing this, or they would like to complain about a service that the organisation provides, they will be provided with a complaints form to fill in and return to the office.

The complaints form can be anonymous or, if the tenant would like either a response or an opportunity to discuss the matter in person then they will need to put their name and contact details on the form. The complaint will be reviewed by the Senior Housing Manager or the Executive Officer and where contact details have been left, a response will be given within 21 days of the form being lodged. Where necessary or appropriate the tenant will be contacted to come into the office to discuss the matter. A letter will be sent detailing any action that Mission Australia Housing has taken or will be taking in regards to the complaint.

If tenants are unhappy with the outcomes of any internal complaints process, they will be provided with information and contact details for the following external organisations who may be able to provide support or advice:

- The Ombudsman Victoria
- The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- Consumer Affairs Victoria
- Equal Opportunity Commission