

# Changing needs of tenants

## Mutual exchange policy

Policy section: 1.0

Section name: Changing needs of tenants

Policy: 1.3.3

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## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 To outline circumstances where Mission Australian Housing (MAH) may approve a **mutual exchange**.
- 1.2 To outline requirements and process where tenants wish to exchange their properties.
- 1.3 To outline factors which may cause MAH to decline a mutual exchange or withdraw approval for a mutual exchange.

## 2 Related policies

- 2.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the:
  - 2.1.1 [Transfers Policy](#), which outlines the processes of tenants and MAH with regard to transfers.

## 3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to staff responsible for managing tenants and social housing properties of MAH. This policy does not cover affordable housing or specific short or medium term housing programs.

## 4 Guiding principles

- 4.1 MAH works with tenants who are able to demonstrate a need for a mutual exchange.

- 4.2** MAH has systems in place to reduce the risk of impropriety and bribery.
- 4.3** Tenants are given opportunities to appeal organisational decisions in order to ensure fair and transparent outcomes.
- 4.4** MAH upholds accountability and transparency through its record keeping practices.
- 4.5** MAH will not share information about tenants or their circumstances without their consent as per the [Privacy and Confidentiality Policy](#).

## 5 Policy

### 5.1 Mutual exchange within Mission Australia Housing

- 5.1.1 Tenants of MAH may apply to exchange their property with another tenant of MAH. Under a mutual exchange, both tenants would vacate their current property and swap premises.
- 5.1.2 To be eligible to apply for a mutual exchange a tenant will:
- Have lived in their property for at least six months
  - Have an up to date rental account and not owe any money for a non-rent debt as per the [Arrears Management Policy](#) and [Debt Management Policy](#). A tenant will be required to pay any debts they owe in full before a mutual exchange may proceed
  - Be able to demonstrate their continuing eligibility for housing as per the [Eligibility Policy](#)
  - Be able to demonstrate that the number of bedrooms contained in the alternative property matches their needs as per the [Housing Allocations Policy](#)
  - Be able to demonstrate that a mutual exchange will improve their safety, increase their access to essential services, education or work opportunities; or better meet the needs of their household
  - Have maintained their current property to a suitable standard (fair wear and tear accepted) as required under the lease or rooming accommodation agreement the tenant signed at the start of their tenancy
  - Have had a successful tenancy with minimal breaches of tenancy
  - Have not caused any damage at their property
  - Have had no recent complaints for noise or nuisance
  - Have not been housed in a property that has been specifically modified to meet their needs
  - Not currently be housed through a specific short or medium term housing program

- 5.1.3 A Senior Manager will be responsible for reviewing mutual exchange applications and for approving these applications where appropriate.
- 5.1.4 A Senior Manager may take other factors into account in the approvals process, such as tenancy history, wider neighbourhood issues and whether a tenancy can be sustained in an alternative proposed location.
- 5.1.5 Mutual exchange applications will be determined and the tenant notified within 28 days.
- 5.1.6 Where approved, tenants will be required to agree to accept the property they wish to move to in its current condition.
- 5.1.7 Tenants are discouraged from offering financial incentives to others in order to encourage them to agree to exchange their property. MAH will decline to approve a mutual exchange or withdraw an approved application where financial incentives have been exchanged.

## **5.2 Mutual exchange with a tenant from another housing provider**

- 5.2.1 Tenants of MAH may apply for a mutual exchange with a tenant of another housing provider where MAH has been unable to facilitate a suitable mutual exchange.
- 5.2.2 Tenants will be advised that other community housing providers may have specific requirements which need to be met in order to qualify for a mutual exchange. Where there is a discrepancy between the requirements of an alternative provider and the requirements contained within this policy, tenants may be required to meet both sets of requirements for a mutual exchange to proceed. Any applications will be reviewed and approved by a Senior Manager and an equivalent delegation in the alternative housing provider.

## **5.3 General requirements**

- 5.3.1 Staff will inform tenants of their right to complain about the services of MAH and to appeal organisational decisions as per the [Appeals Policy](#) and [Complaints Policy](#).
- 5.3.2 Staff will store any information relating to mutual exchanges in the tenancy management system.

## **6 Definitions**

**Mutual exchange:** where two tenants mutually agree to swap their properties in order to better meet their individual/household needs, enhance their lifestyle, or increase their participation.