

Establishing and maintaining tenancies

Debt management policy

Policy section: 1.0

Policy: 1.2.7

Section name: Establishing and maintaining tenancies

Document name	Debt management
Applicability	Mission Australia Housing
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide guidance on the tenant debt management processes undertaken by Mission Australia Housing (MAH).

2 Related policies

- 2.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the:
- 2.1.1 Referrals to Agencies Policy, which details the approach taken by MAH in assisting applicants and tenants with specific needs or tenancy management issues to connect with support services.
 - 2.1.2 Arrears Management Policy, which details the MAH **rent arrears** management processes.
 - 2.1.3 Ending Tenancies Policy, which outlines the responsibilities of MAH staff involved in managing and ending tenancies.
 - 2.1.4 Tenant Responsibility for Repairs Policy, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of tenants for property maintenance.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to staff responsible for managing tenants and properties of MAH.

4 Guiding principles

- 4.1 Tenants are informed of their responsibilities at the start of each tenancy in order to avoid debts wherever possible.
- 4.2 Tenants are supported to repay their rental arrears and non-rent debts in order to maintain the financial viability of MAH.
- 4.3 Tenants are given opportunities to appeal organisational decisions in order to ensure fair and transparent outcomes.

5 Policy

- 5.1 Staff will, at the start of each tenancy, inform tenants of their rent and property care responsibilities under state based residential tenancy and rooming accommodation legislation.
- 5.2 Staff will use best practice tenancy and property management processes, including but not limited to rent arrears management and routine inspections, to identify tenant debts owing to MAH.
- 5.3 Tenants are responsible for the costs of repairs and/or maintenance where they, members of their household or guests deliberately or negligently damage a property as per the Tenant Responsibility for Maintenance Policy.
- 5.4 Tenants are responsible for paying any debts owing, whether incurred during or at end of their tenancy.
- 5.5 Tenants will be given opportunities to repay outstanding debts and may be required to enter into a payment plan.
- 5.6 Staff will inform tenants of their right to complain about services of MAH and/or to appeal organisational decisions as per the Appeals and Complaints Policy.
- 5.7 Staff will pursue a range of options, including but not limited to civil proceedings, to recover costs where tenants refuse to pay their debt or vacate properties without rectifying a debt.
- 5.8 Staff will ensure that accurate records of outstanding tenant debts and records of associated tenant payments are stored in the tenancy management system.

6 Definitions

Rent arrears: debt resulting from non-payment of an agreed rental amount.

Non-rent debt: non-rent expenses incurred during tenancy. These include costs for property damage and/or cleaning, replacing keys, swipe cards or remote controls; and water usage charges.