

Establishing and maintaining tenancies

Managing hoarding and squalor policy

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Section name: Establishing and maintaining tenancies

Document name	Managing hoarding and squalor
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 To outline expectations of staff who become aware of, or suspect, **hoarding and/or squalor**.
- 1.2 To protect housing assets in order to enhance the capacity of Mission Australia Housing (MAH) to provide sustainable housing.

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 to assist applicants and tenants who have specific needs or tenancy management issues to establish a connection to relevant support services.
 - 2.1.2 [Tenant Responsibility for Maintenance Policy](#), which outlines the approach taken by MAH in preventing and managing property damage caused by tenants.
 - 2.1.3 [Routine Inspections Policy](#), which outlines staff and tenant requirements with regard to routine inspections, including actions that maybe taken where property damage or tenancy management issues are identified.
 - 2.1.4 [Work, Health and Safety Policy](#), which outlines measures staff should take to protect their health and safety and that of tenants.

3 Scope

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

4 Guiding principles

4.1 All tenants have the right to enjoy safe and secure living environments.

4.2 MAH has a responsibility to intervene when living conditions are affecting the ability of tenants to live happily and healthily.

4.3 MAH takes an early intervention approach to hoarding and squalor to sustain tenancies wherever possible.

4.4 MAH acknowledges the complexity behind hoarding and squalor issues and takes a collaborative, partnership-based approach to address these issues.

4.5 Tenants are assisted to access support in order to sustain their tenancies wherever possible.

4.6 Tenants are responsible for maintaining the condition of their property and for paying any non-rent debts relating to the condition of their property.

5 Policy

5.1 Policy position

5.1.1 MAH does not condone or permit the use of its properties for purposes outside of applicable agreements.

5.1.2 MAH promotes and respects the right of tenants to organise properties in a manner of their choosing, where tenant choice is consistent with applicable agreements.

5.1.3 Wherever possible, MAH supports tenants to live independently and will assist them to comply with the terms and conditions of their agreement.

5.1.4 MAH will promptly assess and address identified property hazards and risks relating to hoarding and/or squalor.

5.2 Early intervention

5.2.1 Staff will commence identifying potential tenancy management issues from the time a tenancy is entered into via the routine inspections process as per the [Routine Inspections Policy](#).

5.2.2 Staff will regularly monitor properties and develop accurate records of evidence where hoarding and/or squalor is identified, suspected or reported.

5.2.3 Staff will, wherever possible and appropriate, refer identified tenants to support services in order to build their capacity to sustain their tenancy as per the [Referral to Agencies Policy](#).

5.3 Protection of children

5.3.1 Staff will comply with the legislative requirement to keep children safe by reporting significant child risks as per the [Child Protection Policy](#).

5.4 Response escalation

5.4.1 Staff may take action under the [Breach of Tenancy Policy](#) where intervention attempts are not successful to rectify tenancy management issues associated with hoarding and/or squalor.

5.4.2 Staff will work with government agencies and other community based organisations where required, in order to address risks associated with hoarding and/or squalor and enforce the right of all tenants to safe living environments.

5.4.3 Staff will, wherever possible, refer tenants to alternative housing and support options in the event that resolution cannot be reached.

5.5 Fines, fees and charges

5.5.1 Tenants are responsible for paying fines, fees or charges incurred through negligible treatment of property, whether this treatment is intended or unintended as per the [Debt Management Policy](#).

5.5.2 Tenants are responsible for costs incurred to other properties where their negligence impacts on surrounding properties.

5.5.3 Staff will use remedies available under residential tenancy and rooming accommodation legislation to recover costs for fines, fees and charges where applicable.

6 Definitions

Hoarding: excessive accumulation of items, regardless of actual value. In the extreme, homes may be filled to capacity, with limited or no room for tenants and/or occupants.

Squalor: a state of extreme filth and degradation resulting in public health and property risks, often a result of neglect. Squalor is not the same as hoarding, although it is often associated with extreme hoarding.