

Policy name	Dual Keys
Policy date	August 2020
Authorisation	General Manager, Operations
Policy owner	National Manager, Housing Services
Policy type	Mission Australia Housing Operational Policy
Policy setting	

1 Purpose

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This policy sets out the principles to be followed in managing Dual Key properties managed by Mission Australia Housing (MAH). We aim to ensure a process that:

- Is fair and transparent;
- Provides tenants with the information they need when living in a Dual Key property, including their rights and responsibilities;
- Protects the assets managed by MAH; and
- Complies with the specific legal and contractual obligations placed upon MAH by government, funders and other housing partners.

1.2 Coverage

1.2.1 This document is a national policy and covers both Mission Australia Housing (MAH) and Mission Australia Housing Victoria (MAHV). All references to Mission Australia Housing, MAH and Housing include both MAH and MAHV unless specifically stated otherwise. Where state based variations exist in policies and procedures, these will be identified in the document.

1.2.2 This policy only applies to the Dual Key properties provided by MAH, including social, affordable and transitional housing.

1.3 Information on procedures and other related policies

1.3.1 This policy is one of several interlinked policies that support MAH's delivery of housing services. To assist you, these are identified where relevant in this policy and the supporting procedures.

2 Scope

2.1 Parts of Mission Australia that this policy covers

2.1.1 This policy applies to MAH staff responsible for working with MAH clients, tenants and managing Dual Key properties.

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 Key terms used in this policy are defined in the following table.

Term	Definition
Agent	Any third party who carries out functions on behalf of MAH or a tenant of MAH. Agents include but are not limited to contractors, advocates, and other tenants.
Dual Key Properties	A property that contains a main front door to a small entry foyer, which leads to two front doors. A Dual Key property can be let as one whole unit or two separate units.
Key	A device provided to enable tenants to access areas and/or facilities specified in property use agreements.
Lease	A legal contract which sets out the terms and conditions for living in a MAH property, in return for the payment of an agreed rent.
Separate Units	A Dual Key property comprises of two separate units that make up a whole unit.
Tenant	Under state-based residential tenancy and rooming accommodation legislation, a tenant is a person who has entered explicitly into a lease agreement.
Whole Unit	A Dual Key property comprises of two units that make up a whole unit.

3 Policy

3.1 Guiding principles

3.1.1 The MAH management of Dual Key properties is fair and transparent:

- MAH will make the process as clear and straightforward as possible.
- MAH upholds accountability and transparency through its record-keeping practices.

3.1.2 The MAH management of Dual Key properties is tenant focused:

- MAH will assist tenants in understanding the requirements applying to them.
 - MAH will seek to establish a shared understanding of rights and responsibilities.
- 3.1.3 The MAH management of Dual Key properties protects the assets entrusted to MAH:
- MAH will ensure that tenants understand their responsibilities as well as their rights regarding the maintenance of their property.
- 3.1.4 The MAH Dual Key process complies with relevant laws and procedures:
- MAH fully complies with the jurisdictional requirements of the states and territories in which it operates.

3.2 Creating a successful base

- 3.2.1 The process followed in managing Dual Key properties lays the base for successfully allocating and managing these properties and the management of any problems that might arise during the tenancy.
- 3.2.2 At each stage in the process, applicants must be given the information they need to understand what is happening and what is required of them.

3.3 Allocating Dual Key Properties

- 3.2.3 Dual Key properties will be allocated in the first instance as a whole unit. I.e. that the household is eligible for the numbers of bedrooms comprised by the two units.
- 3.2.4 The whole Dual Key property will be allocated to a household, who due to its size has the best use for the property, **see Applications & Allocations Policy**. Household types that may be eligible include:
- Larger families that fit within the opportunity cohort group
 - Tenants who require a separate bedroom for a live-in carer
- 3.2.5 A tenant and their carer may lease the two separate units separately, though approval should be sought from the National Housing Services Manager. If the units are to be leased separately in this instance, then both the tenant and carer should be eligible for Community Housing. If the carer is not eligible for Community Housing, then the property should be leased as a whole unit to them.
- 3.2.6 If there are not any eligible households when allocating to a whole Dual Key property, then approval is required from the National Housing Services Manager to allocate as two separate units.
- 3.2.7 When seeking approval for a separate allocation, consideration should also be given to the future need of the property. As once a Dual Key property is let as two as separate units, it will be hard to bring the property back into use as a whole unit, due to the timing of tenancies ending.

3.3 Leasing the whole unit

- 3.3.1 Applicants will be required to sign an agreement for the whole unit which complies with state-based residential tenancy legislation.
- 3.3.2 Staff will explain the agreement in detail, including the length of tenure offered, type of property, applicable program and tenancy and property requirements. Staff will explain the financial arrangements, condition reports and other tenant information. **See the Starting Tenancies Policy.**
- 3.3.3 Staff should ensure that applicants understand the rental arrangements applying to the property, as well as any other fees or charges such as water usage charges that might apply. See the **Rents, Bonds and Other Charges Policy** and associated procedures for further information. Where appropriate, staff should refer to material included in the Tenant Welcome Pack.
- 3.3.4 Following confirmation that the tenant understands and accepts the terms contained within the agreement, they should be asked to sign. All agreements must be signed by both MAH and the tenant, with a copy retained by each.
- 3.3.5 Tenants will receive a set of keys to the main front door, and the locks to the two-unit front doors will be set to the unlocked position.
- 3.3.6 For all purposes, when a Dual Key property is leased as one whole household, the property will be treated as one property. There will be one lease, with a weekly rent charge and will receive water bills for the whole unit.

3.4 Leasing two separate units

- 3.4.1 Applicants will be required to sign an agreement for the separate unit which complies with state-based residential tenancy legislation.
- 3.4.2 Staff will explain the agreement in detail, including the length of tenure offered, type of property, applicable program and tenancy and property requirements. Staff will explain the financial arrangements, condition reports and other tenant information. **See the Starting Tenancies Policy.**
- 3.4.3 Staff should ensure that applicants understand the rental arrangements applying to the property, as well as any other fees or charges such as water usage charges that might apply. See the **Rents, Bonds and Other Charges Policy** and associated procedures for further information. Where appropriate, staff should refer to material included in the Tenant Welcome Pack.
- 3.4.4 Following confirmation that the tenant understands and accepts the terms contained within the agreement, they should be asked to sign. All agreements must be signed by both parties, with a copy retained by each.
- 3.4.5 Tenants will receive a set of keys to the main front door and keys to their separate unit door.

3.4.6 When a Dual Key property is leased with two separate leases, then these two units should be treated separately, with separate leases, rent charges and water charges.

3.4.7 The tenants of the two units will be jointly responsible for maintaining the small common corridor.

3.5 Informed decision making

3.5.1 To assist applicants where cultural or communication barriers are identified, or where a tenant is unable to consent on their own behalf, staff will:

- Engage an interpreter and/or support service at no cost to the tenant; and/or
- Engage an advocate, guardian or family member to witness the signing of the agreement. Housing Officers will organise representation for tenants under 18 years of age where they are unable to nominate a representative for themselves.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Housing staff, including Housing Officers and Client Service Officers, are responsible for:

- Identifying suitable applicants for Dual Key Properties
- Seeking approval from the National Housing Services Manager if the property is to be leased as two separate units.
- Providing information to tenants.
- Keeping records associated with establishing a tenancy in the tenancy management system and, where required, in original hardcopy tenant files.
- Recommending improvements to this policy and associated procedures.

4.2 Team Leaders/Regional Manager are responsible for:

- Incorporating this policy and associated procedures into staff induction and training.
- Ensuring staff are aware of and have access to this policy and associated procedures.
- Escalating feedback about this policy to the policy owner and/or policy writer.

4.3 The National Manager, Housing Services is responsible for:

- Approving the leasing of a Dual Key property as two separate leases.
- Ensuring that MAH complies with this policy and associated procedures.
- Recommending any changes to this policy and associated procedures.