

<b>Policy name</b>	Inspections
<b>Policy date</b>	August 2020
<b>Authorisation</b>	General Manager, Operations
<b>Policy owner</b>	National Manager, Housing Services
<b>Policy type</b>	Mission Australia Housing Operational Policy
<b>Policy setting</b>	

## 1 Purpose

### 1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This policy outlines the requirements for Mission Australia Housing (MAH) staff involved in performing property inspections.

### 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 applies to all forms of housing provided by MAH including social, affordable and transitional housing.

### 1.3 Information on procedures and other related policies

- 1.3.1 This policy focuses on why certain things need to be done. It is supported by procedures that provide more detail on the “what” to do.
- 1.3.2 Other MAH policies also need to be considered in managing inspections. To assist you, these are identified where relevant in this policy and 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 properties.

## 2.2 Definitions

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

Term	Definition
<b>Condition report</b>	A report form that is used to detail the condition of a property at the start and end of a tenancy. Condition reports are used to gauge changes in the condition of a property during a tenancy.
<b>Routine inspection</b>	A regular process in tenancy and property management used to establish the condition of a property, establish a schedule of maintenance, and address behaviours or practices in contravention of residential tenancy and rooming accommodation legislation.

## 3 Policy

### 3.1 Guiding principles

3.1.1 MAH is focused on the needs of tenants and their families:

- Property inspections are a way to check the condition of properties and ensure their suitability to meet tenant needs, as well as to establish the wellbeing of tenants and other household members.
- Inspections allow MAH to identify and address tenancy management issues under an early intervention and tenancy sustainment framework.

3.1.2 The MAH property inspections process is fair and transparent:

- MAH respects the privacy of tenants and their households.
- Tenants are given opportunities and support to address any issues identified at their property wherever possible.
- Tenants are given the opportunity to appeal organisational decisions and/or to complain about the services of MAH.
- MAH upholds accountability and transparency through its record keeping practices.

3.1.3 The MAH inspection process protects the value of the assets under its management:

- It allows MAH to assess the condition of the property to identify maintenance actions that may need to be taken at the time of the inspection, or in the future.
- It provides an opportunity to identify and rectify specific tenancy issues that may affect the condition of the property.

3.1.4 The MAH process complies with relevant laws and procedures.

### 3.2 Overview

3.2.1 Property inspections allow staff to:

- Assess the condition of the property;
- Identify repairs or maintenance work that may be required;
- Identify tenancy management issues that may need to be addressed by tenants and/or MAH; and
- Take required corrective action.

3.2.2 Inspections also allow staff to build relationships with tenants and household members.

3.2.3 Inspections take place across the tenancy management cycle.

- Prior to the start of the tenancy, properties are inspected to confirm that they are suitable for letting. This includes the preparation of the necessary condition report. See the **Starting Tenancies Policy** for further detail.
- During the tenancy, MAH undertakes regular routine inspections. MAH may also carry out inspections where requested by the tenant, or where MAH develops particular concerns about the tenancy or property. See, for example, the **Keeping Pets Policy**, **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy** and **Managing Hoarding and Squalor Policy**.
- At the end of a tenancy, MAH will inspect the property to establish its condition and determine what further action may be required by MAH or the tenant. See the **Abandoned Properties and Goods Policy** and **Ending Tenancies Policy** for further details.

### 3.3 Routine inspections

- 3.3.1 The first routine inspection should be carried out within eight weeks of the start of the tenancy for early identification of tenancy management issues. Thereafter, inspections will normally be carried out at six-monthly intervals, however may occur more frequently where staff need to assess whether any required corrective action has been taken. Such inspections may be subject to limitations laid down in state or territory real estate legislation.
- 3.3.2 For all routine inspections, the tenant must be given written notification and where possible verbal notice, conforming to the legislative timeframes of operating jurisdictions.
- 3.3.3 Tenants are required to facilitate access to their property for routine inspections as per tenancy legislation in each jurisdiction. Where tenants do not provide access, MAH may issue a breach of tenancy notice and apply to state- or territory-based authorities for an order for access or to end the tenancy.
- 3.3.4 Where practicable, routine inspections should be undertaken jointly by an Assets and Housing staff member. This allows repairs and maintenance work and tenancy management issues to be identified and actioned by appropriately qualified staff.
- Joint inspections may not always be possible. However, where Housing staff have reason to believe there may be maintenance matters to attend to, they should endeavour to arrange for support from the Assets team.
  - Where a tenant cannot be present for an inspection, or where there are significant concerns about tenancy management, two staff should undertake the inspection.

### 3.4 Following up on inspections

- 3.4.1 Following all inspections, necessary follow-up actions should be taken. This might include:
- Actions to fix any identified repairs and maintenance issues. Where the tenant is responsible for any repairs or maintenance, they may be given the opportunity to rectify the matter themselves.
  - Actions to resolve identified tenancy management issues.
- 3.4.2 Where staff identify that a tenant is experiencing difficulty in managing their tenancy, they will encourage the tenant to access support wherever possible.
- 3.4.3 Throughout the process, staff must ensure that proper records are kept including photos of the property. These records will be used to facilitate follow-up, including any subsequent corrective action.
- 3.4.4 Full details of the processes involved are set out in the associated procedures.

### 3.5 Complaints and appeals

- 3.5.1 Tenants will be informed of their right to complain about the services of MAH and to appeal organisational decisions as per the **Appeals and Complaints Policy**.

## 4 Responsibilities

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

- Informing tenants of their rights and responsibilities in accordance with this policy.
- Undertaking routine inspections and documenting findings.
- Working with tenants to manage identified property or tenancy management issues.
- Issuing notices where required in accordance with this policy.
- Keeping records of the process in the relevant systems.
- Recommending improvements to this policy and associated procedures.

### 4.2 Team Leaders/Regional Managers are responsible for:

- Assisting housing staff to implement this policy.
- Ensuring good management of evidence in the tenancy management system.
- 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:

- Ensuring that MAH complies with this policy and associated procedures.
- Recommending any changes to this policy and associated procedures.