

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

1 Purpose

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This policy outlines the requirements for tenants or applicants of Mission Australia Housing (MAH) who wish to keep a pet or assistance animal at their property.

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 pets and assistance animals. 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
Assistance animal	An animal that has been specially trained to perform tasks to assist a person with a disability, or to assist a person with particular health support needs.
Pet/companion animal	Any animal that is generally kept by a tenant for enjoyment, recreation and company. They include animals such as fish and mice, and larger domestic animals such as cats and dogs.

3 Policy

3.1 Guiding principles

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

- Consideration is given to tenants who need an animal of assistance for their health and wellbeing wherever required.
- Tenants requiring an assistance animal will be accommodated in a suitable property wherever possible.

3.1.2 The MAH process for approving pets is fair and transparent:

- Consideration is given to the location, size and suitability of a property when managing pet approval requests.
- The basis for decisions is explained to tenants.
- Tenants are given the opportunity to appeal organisational decisions in order to ensure fair and transparent outcomes.

3.1.3 The MAH process complies with relevant laws and procedures:

- Properties are managed in accordance with the requirements of residential tenancy and rooming accommodation legislation, taking property owner requirements into account.

3.2 General approach

3.2.1 Tenants are required to seek the permission of MAH to have any type of pet or assistance animal at their property.

- 3.2.2 MAH is generally accepting of pets living at MAH properties provided that a pet is suitable to the type of property and housing program, and the pet does not cause a nuisance to neighbours as per state-based residential tenancy and rooming accommodation legislation.
- 3.2.3 Tenants requiring an assistance animal to help with daily living should provide the evidence set out in the **Allocation of Housing Policy** at the time of application. Wherever possible and permitted by housing program guidelines and state-based legislation, MAH will allocate applicable tenants with a property that is suitable for keeping an assistance animal.
- 3.2.4 Where existing tenants come to require a property that is suitable for an assistance animal due to disability or health needs, Housing Officers should assess the existing property and consider any possible minor modifications. Where the property is found to be unsuitable, Housing Officers should encourage tenants to initiate a transfer request as set out in the **Making Changes to Your Tenancy Policy**.

3.3 Limitations

- 3.3.1 Pets will generally be permitted in properties owned by MAH where:
- The type of pet requested is allowed under state or local government rules applying in that area;
 - A tenant has maintained their property to a reasonable standard, including no evidence of property neglect or deliberate damage;
 - A pet would not compound any noise issues;
 - There are no concerns for the wellbeing of the pet; and
 - After obtaining a pet, a tenant continues to maintain their property to a reasonable standard.
- 3.3.2 Large domestic animals including dogs and cats will generally not be permitted in boarding and rooming accommodation settings.
- 3.3.3 Tenants in properties that MAH manage on behalf of other owners will be advised that MAH does not have the delegation to approve pet requests, and will be unable to guarantee that animal requests will be approved. MAH will relay any pet approval requests for tenants of leasehold properties to the relevant property owner/s.

3.4 Failure to seek approval

- 3.4.1 Tenants who do not seek permission to keep a pet at their property will be in breach of their lease or rooming accommodation agreement, and may be required to remove the animal from their property as per the **Breach of Tenancy Policy**. Continued failure to remove an animal may result in steps being taken to have a tenancy ended as per the **Ending Tenancies Policy**.

3.5 Tenant responsibilities

3.5.1 Tenants with pets or assistance animals are responsible for:

- Looking after their animals. Where this does not occur MAH may contact animal welfare services to protect the wellbeing of an animal, and will provide access to the property for these services when legally required to and/or in an emergency;
- Ensuring that their animals are microchipped and registered where required;
- Minimising any disturbances to the peace and comfort of neighbours; and
- Ensuring that the property is properly maintained. Where a tenant keeps a pet, MAH may request that the tenant have the property steam cleaned or fumigated during or at the end of their tenancy.

3.5.2 Tenants with pets who are absent from their property for extended periods will be required to establish alternative arrangements for the care of their animal, as per the **Absence from Dwelling Policy**.

3.5.3 MAH takes no responsibility for the care of pets, and tenants will be responsible for any damage resulting from a pet at their property as per the **Bad Debt Management Procedure**.

3.6 Appeals

3.6.1 Staff will inform tenants of their right to appeal organisational decisions and to complain about the services of MAH 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.
- Inspecting properties and assessing tenant pet and assistance animal requests in accordance with this policy.
- 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
- Contacting local Council or animal welfare agencies where there are concerns for the welfare of an animal.

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.