

Policy name	Tenant Committees
Policy date	August 2020
Authorisation	General Manager, Operations
Policy owner	National Manager, Community Development
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 by Mission Australia Housing (MAH) in the development, management and support of tenant committees.

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, the steps involved in the development, management and support of tenant committees.
- 1.3.2 This policy is one of a number of interlinked policies and procedures that support MAH's delivery of housing services. 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, applicants, tenants and properties; and
- MAH Community Development and Community Engagement Officers (CDOs) working with MAH staff, clients, and tenants.

2.2 Definitions

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

Term	Definition
Community Development and Community Engagement Officers (CDOs)	CDOs work with staff, tenants and communities to improve communication and the capacity of tenants to connect and engage with their community, and to address community issues.
Feedback process	The documented process map for communicating and tracking the receipt and actioning of complaints/queries/feedback received by a tenant committee to the MAH team.
Partnerships	Cooperative relationships between MAH, Mission Australia (MA) and other bodies including support providers, councils, educational institutions and health services, to deliver services and provide support. Partnerships can be formal or informal, and focus on cooperative action to achieve common goals.
Tenant committees	Committees formed to facilitate tenant input into MAH activities, services and planning, while also helping tenants to achieve their personal, family and community objectives. Tenant committees may also be referred to as tenant groups.
Tenant Engagement Strategy	A local strategy incorporating a range of activities required to successfully engage, inform and introduce tenants to their location, neighbours and local community support services.
Tenant voice	The various ways in which MAH encourages and supports communication from and consultation with tenants in order to better reflect how tenants would like MAH to operate. Tenant voice may also be referred to as resident voice.

3 Policy

3.1 Guiding principles

- 3.1.1 Tenant committees focus on the needs of tenants and their families and communities:
- They help tenants to define needs; identify problems and opportunities; and develop responses to issues affecting tenants in MAH properties and the local community.
 - They empower tenants by providing a variety of ways to have greater input and contribution into shaping the services that MAH provides.
 - They encourage tenant and community cohesion and self-belonging, and increase skills and confidence through facilitating meaningful contribution from tenants.
- 3.1.2 Tenant committees support and reinforce the delivery of all MAH services to tenants, families and communities.
- 3.1.3 Tenant committees respect the autonomy and privacy of tenants.

3.2 Importance of tenant committees – part of the tenant voice

- 3.2.1 Tenant committees play an important role in MAH activities. They:
- Form part of MAH's Communications, Community Development and Tenant Engagement Strategies, as well as Local Area Plans;
 - Reflect the importance that MAH places on consultation and joint action with tenants and their households;
 - Allow tenants to have a say about matters that affect them in terms of services, place and community;
 - Empower tenants to take action on matters that concern them; and
 - Provide information to MAH about issues, problems and opportunities that can be used to improve existing services and assist with future planning.

3.3 Form and role of tenant committees

- 3.3.1 Tenant committees can take different forms, each with its own role. This reflects the varied structure of tenancies in the different areas in which MAH operates. These variations include:
- Some MAH tenants live in apartment blocks with other MAH tenants.
 - Some MAH tenants live in mixed neighbourhoods alongside private market properties.
 - Some MAH tenants live in properties that are close to or form part of social housing neighbourhoods.

- The number of MAH tenancies in a particular area varies. Tenants with common concerns can be separated by considerable distances, impeding effective communication and cooperative action.
- 3.3.2 Taking this variety into account, tenant committees take four broad forms:
- The National Tenant Advocacy Committee;
 - Regional tenant committees;
 - Local tenant committees; and
 - Special interest committees.
- 3.3.3 The National Tenant Advocacy Committee consists of the chair and deputy chair from each regional tenant committee. The committee:
- Provides a vehicle for broad discussion on common issues and concerns across the country;
 - May, where appropriate, provide oversight and act as a central point of advocacy for all regional tenant committees; and
 - May represent MAH tenants nationally where appropriate.
- 3.3.4 Regional tenant committees consist of interested tenants from across the region, appointed through self-nomination and acceptance by the existing committee members. These committees:
- Are governed by a chair, deputy chair, treasurer and/or secretary selected from the committee members;
 - Meet regularly (as decided within the committee), with relevant MAH staff in attendance where appropriate; and
 - Are guided by a self-determined terms of reference/charter/constitution.
- 3.3.5 Local tenant committees consist of tenants from specific neighbourhoods or blocks. These committees:
- Focus on local concerns and problems, including tenancy management, place and community issues;
 - Have a strong social and networking component;
 - Are supported financially by MAH where required;
 - Are open to all interested tenants;
 - Are chaired by a tenant elected by the other tenants;
 - Meet as often as required, with relevant MAH staff in attendance where appropriate; and

- Are guided by a self-determined terms of reference/charter/constitution where appropriate and/or relevant.

3.3.6 Special interest committees provide a flexible vehicle for tenants to pursue a common interest or objective supported by MAH. These committees:

- Are generally time-limited;
- May be created or sponsored by MAH, or by the regional or local tenant committees;
- May have varying chair or membership arrangements;
- May or may not have an established terms of reference/charter/constitution;
- Can meet a variety of needs, but often have a particular social, educational, economic or community development purpose (eg community gardens, hobby clubs or school support groups);
- Are tenant-driven; and
- Can take a variety of forms and membership, but are generally less formal.

3.4 Organisation of tenant committees

3.4.1 Tenant committees are tenant-focused, and participation is voluntary. MAH recognises and respects that not all tenants or their families will wish to participate in the committees and associated activities.

3.4.2 Within MAH, CDOs are primarily responsible for the organisation and support of tenant committees. In consultation with Regional Managers, they:

- Work to identify needs and facilitate the formation of committees;
- Are responsible for drafting terms of reference/charters/constitutions, advising on the workings of committees and organising particular activities;
- Act as the main conduit between MAH and tenant committees; and
- Maintain records of committees and their office bearers.

3.4.3 In carrying out their work, the CDOs are supported by Housing and Assets staff as required. This may include attendance at committee meetings or briefing sessions.

3.4.4 Housing and Assets staff may, with the agreement of Regional Managers and CDOs, put forward matters for consideration by tenant committees. This may include the formation of ad hoc committees or subcommittees to provide advice on particular issues or needs.

3.5 Reimbursement and financial support

3.5.1 Subject to agreement in advance, MAH may reimburse committee members for out-of-pocket expenses associated with their membership, upon submission of receipts.

- 3.5.2 Upon recommendation from the CDOs, MAH may also provide some financial support for particular community activities on a case-by-case basis.

3.6 Communication, reporting and evaluation

3.6.1 To aid communication, reporting and evaluation, CDOs:

- Will provide quarterly and/or annual reports to MAH on the operations of tenant committees in the geographic areas for which they are responsible;
- Will provide information to tenant committees on the operations of local, ad hoc and special interest committees and groups in their geographic area; and
- May, where appropriate, facilitate networking and organise conferences or meetings involving tenant committees.

4 Responsibilities

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

- Working with CDOs to achieve the objectives set for tenant committees.
- Representing MAH Operations by regularly attending tenant committee meetings or activities.
- Providing updates to tenant committees on general business, staffing changes, policy changes, key milestones, achievements and changes to operational functions.
- Utilising the feedback process and Service Improvement Log to receive feedback and action responses accordingly.
- Providing information to tenants and other stakeholders about tenant committees.
- Keeping records associated with the activities of tenant committees where required.
- Recommending improvements to this policy and associated procedures.

4.2 CDOs are responsible for:

- Facilitating and assisting tenant committees in the geographic area for which they are responsible. This includes the setting up and ongoing management of committees, and liaising, updating and connecting with MAH staff as required.
- Maintaining records on committee activities.
- Managing the feedback process and Service Improvement Log to record and communicate actions from the MAH team.
- Reporting on committee activities as required.
- Recommending improvements to this policy and associated procedures.

4.3 Team Leaders/Regional Managers are responsible for:

- Supporting the work of CDOs as required.

- Incorporating this policy and associated procedures into staff induction and training, and reporting and management meeting structures.
- 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.

4.4 The National Manager, Housing Services and National Manager, Community Development are responsible for:

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