

## **Allocation Policy**

**Purpose:** To ensure fair, equitable and transparent processes to manage applications and offers of housing.

### **1. Allocation of Housing**

VWHA provides long term housing to women and their children. These women may be:

- Young women
- Single mothers
- Women escaping domestic violence
- Women exiting prison or women with offending behaviours.
- Older women
- Women on low incomes
- Women with disabilities or who have a child/children with disabilities
- Women who have recently separated from a partner.
- Employed women on low to moderate incomes

### **2. Working with Support Agencies**

VWHA is committed to working with support agencies to help make affordable, long term housing a reality for women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

VWHA believe that support agencies have a critical role to play in assisting women with the application process, providing information and referral, supporting women to establish tenancies and working with women to obtain independence in their new homes.

### **3. Expression of Interest**

Prospective tenants either approach VWHA directly or are referred by community and support agencies.

A standard application form referred to as an (EOI) that collects information pertaining to the woman's need for housing is used. This form collects information on:

- Contact details
- OOH application number (where relevant)
- Members of the household
- Income details
- Support Agency details (where relevant)
- Cultural identity/need for an interpreter
- Detailed housing history
- Links to area
- Health issues
- Domestic Violence
- Specific property requirements

At this time a signed consent to release information form should also be obtained.

#### **4. Waiting List**

VWHA maintains a waiting list for 1; 2; 3; 4+ bedrooms.

EOI's are received and assessed for eligibility to go on waiting list by the Administration Officer. At this early stage a basic eligibility criteria is taken into consideration which includes:

- Women headed household
- Income/ asset eligibility criteria as outlined by Office of Housing (Eligibility, targeting, and rent affordability framework for properties funded the Office of Housing – March 2009)
- Ownership of real estate

If applicant is eligible to be placed on waiting list Administration Officer to:

- Register applicant on CHINTARO
- Create hard file to be placed in relevant filing cabinet dependent on bedroom size.
- Send applicant a letter to advise they have been placed on waiting list.  
Reference: Approval letter via CHINTARO
- If a support agency has been nominated by the applicant, Administration Officer to send worker/agency a copy of the approval letter.

#### **5. Determining Bedroom Size**

VWHA uses the Office of Housing - Housing Size Guidelines (Table 13.1) as a guide to help determine appropriate bedroom size, and therefore what waiting list applicant should be placed on. VWHA will take into consideration individuals circumstances should a different bedroom size be more appropriate.

[http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/word\\_doc/0006/566880/13-Matching-Clients-with-Housing-Jan-2012.doc](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0006/566880/13-Matching-Clients-with-Housing-Jan-2012.doc)

#### **6. Application Updates**

Applicants are notified in the application approval letter that it is their responsibility to keep application details up to date. This can be done in writing via email to [adminvwha@wetstnet.com.au](mailto:adminvwha@wetstnet.com.au) or by completing an application update form. It is the responsibility of the Administration Officer to receive and update applications.

Updates include contact details; members of the household; housing circumstances.

If an applicant advises they have received an offer of long term housing from the Office of Housing or another Housing Association or Provider they will be removed from the waiting list.

If an applicant advises they have partnered and wish to add their male partner to the household, they will be advised they are no longer eligible for housing with VWHA.

## **7. Managing the Waiting List**

Every year the Administration Officer will conduct a mail out to all applicants on the waiting list requesting they confirm details and whether they wish to remain on the waiting list. Mail returned to sender and those who do not contact VWHA to confirm they wish to remain on the waiting list will be de-listed.

These applicants will remain on Chintaro and recorded details can be accessed if they re-establish contact within 12 months. Updated details will need to be provided at time and they will be reactivated from the date of the original application.

If an applicant does not make contact with VWHA within 12 months of being made inactive, she can no longer re-activate the application and the hard file will be archived. The applicant will need to reapply.

Reference: Letter generated from CHINTARO.

## **8. Closing the Waiting List**

A decision can be made by the CEO to close the waiting list when there are no new developments in the pipeline and a large number of applicants are already on the waiting list. VWHA does not want to create a false hope, nor waste administrative resources on managing a waiting list if there will be few offers made available in the near future.

If a decision is made to close the waiting list the following should occur:

- All support agencies that VWHA has a relationship with should be contacted and notified by letter.
- Notice to be placed on VWHA website.
- All VWHA staff to be sent a memo to advise the waiting list has been closed and a brief outline of how to respond to any enquiries.
- Any enquiry that comes through for housing can be referred to Administration Officer/ or Tenancy and Property Managers. A referral to another organisation can be made where appropriate, and the referral list is to be offered to be emailed or posted to those enquiring about housing options.

Reference: Referral list on z drive/

## **9. Receiving Applications when the Waiting List is Closed**

The Administration Officer will return any applications which are received when the waiting list is closed with a letter outlining the situation and enclose a copy of the 'VWHA referral list' of other housing agencies and organisations.

If a support agency has been nominated they will also be notified that the application has been returned due to the waiting list being closed.

Reference: Waiting list closed letter z drive.

## 10. Vacant Property

The Property & Tenancy Manager will typically receive 28 days notice that the property will soon be vacant and can begin to prepare selecting the prospective tenant.

Before assessing applications from the waiting list for a prospective tenant the Property and Tenancy Manager must first identify whether the vacant property has:

### 1. Nomination rights - Melbourne City Mission and Matrix Guild

In the instance the property does have nomination rights the Property & Tenancy Manager must contact the support agency to notify of the vacancy as soon as they receive the 28 day notice of intention to vacate.

The applicant must be selected by the nominated support agency. The Property and Tenancy Manager must ensure that the household is a woman-headed household and that the applicant meets VWHA income and asset eligibility criteria; however the allocation assessment tool will not be used. The decision of who is housed in the property lies with the nominated support agency.

All tenants nominated by a support agency are charged 25% of household income; 15% of Family Tax Benefit A&B and Child Support; Plus Rent Assistance.

Property & Tenancy Manager to refer to the partnership agreement Reference: z drive

### 2. A Rental Requirement – the property is to be charged at 75% of market value and not charged at a percentage of household income.

The income eligibility criteria for applicants to be offered a property charged at 75% of market rent is different for those charged at a percentage of household income.

This income is determined by the Department of Human Services: “Guidelines for Registered Housing Agencies” <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/guidelines-for-registered-housing-agencies>.

1 person - \$30,371 - \$44,248
2 persons - \$46,704 - \$67,723
3 persons + - \$65,045 - \$91,561

The Property and Tenancy Manager will first check waiting list to determine if any applicants meet the higher income criteria. Eligible applicants are recorded with “Rent Requirement Income” in the Waiting List Type 2 field on CHINTARO. If there are no eligible applicants on the waiting list Property & Tenancy Manager to advertise the vacancy by:

- Updating current vacancy list on VWHA website, outlining income requirements.
- Placing an ad on Domain.com.au
- Administration officer to send link to Domain ad to support agencies

Applications will be received during 14 day period of Domain ad. If no suitable applications received, Domain ad will be run for second 14 day period. It will be assessed whether to run the advertisement again if no suitable applicants.

### **3. Vacancies with no nomination rights/ rent requirements**

Applicants can be considered from the waiting list. The Property & Tenancy Manager will consider the first five applications on the waiting list in date order from the date the application was lodged with VWHA.

These tenants are charged 30% of household income; 15% of Family Tax Benefit A&B and Child support; Plus Rent Assistance. When rent charged at a percentage of household income exceeds 75% of market rent, 75% of market rent will be charged for the property.

All applicants from the waiting list will be contacted by letter and a follow up phone call to request updated documentation; income documents; supporting documents to support current housing circumstances; supporting documents to outline any additional requirements/ circumstances. If a support agency has been listed on the application, they will also be sent a copy of the letter. Applicants to be given 10 days to return documentation to have application considered for vacancy, otherwise they will not be considered. During the ten day period, Property & Tenancy Managers will actively follow up with phone calls to applicant and support workers.

If no suitable applicants can be found on the waiting list for the vacancy, then a range of support agencies servicing women in or with connections to the area will be contacted to advise of vacancy and request they put forth eligible applicants by a due date to be considered. The Property & Tenancy Manager will consider all applications received from support agencies that were received within the required time frame.

If waiting list is closed all unsuccessful applications will be sent back to support agency notifying them of outcome, and explaining that the applications are not being held on the waiting list.

If waiting list is open any eligible applicants who were not successful will be notified and placed on waiting list for future vacancies.

## **11. Assessment Process**

All applicants must meet VWHA income eligibility criteria as outlined by Office of Housing (Housing Sector Development – Social Housing Sector V5. March 2009)

Must be a woman-headed household

Applications will only be considered when the first two criteria are met.

VWHA Property & Tenancy Managers will be responsible for assessing applications based on information that has been provided.

Two Property and Tenancy Managers (or one Property and Tenancy Manager and another staff member) will assess applications using the Allocation Assessment Tool. Factors taken into consideration include:

- Current housing circumstances
- Connection to the local community
- Additional issues eg. Escaping domestic violence/ health issues/ disability
- Special housing needs/ modifications
- Level of support to be provided (where necessary)
- The date application was received

In selecting an applicant for a particular property the following may be also taken into consideration:

- Overall tenant mix within higher density developments to facilitate a positive environment for all tenants including those who are not VWHA tenants.
- Neighbourhood fatigue
- Owners Corporation rules in relation to pets may rule an applicant ineligible
- VWHA has the discretion to consider 'additional' information provided in support of an application where Office of Housing eligibility is not met. However, the final decision on such a matter is with the Director of Housing.

## **12. Unsuccessful applicants**

All unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome in writing.

Reference: Proforma letter generated from CHINTARO.

## **13. Offers of Housing**

The Property and Tenancy Manager will email/ post the official offer letter with details of the property, date and time of the inspection. The letter will also provide detail of two weeks rent and bond required to enable prospective tenant to begin planning if they accept the offer. Copy also emailed/ posted to support agency where nominated.

Reference: Offer letter proforma on CHINTARO

At the same time the Property & Tenancy Manager will telephone the successful applicant to advise them they have been successful and to set up a suitable time to inspect the property as quickly as possible, but within 3 days of being notified. Where a support agency/ worker have been nominated the support agency / worker will also be contacted.

Following the inspection of the property the applicant will have a maximum of 2 days to accept the offer before it is offered to next eligible applicant.

Once the applicant has accepted the offer, sign-up is to occur within 14 days. Although, can be negotiated depending on individual circumstances.

A letter outlining sign up details to be emailed/posted to applicant; and support agency/ worker where necessary.

#### **14. Previous arrears**

VWHA would not re-house a tenant who vacated a VWHA property with significant arrears until they were repaid in full.

The existence of rental arrears with another agency or a previous poor housing history does not preclude a tenant from moving into VWHA housing, however VWHA would want to ensure that long term support was in place.

#### **15. Tenant Transfer**

If a tenant wishes to transfer they would need to complete an application form to be considered for the waiting list. Relevant supporting documentation needs to be supplied stating the need for a transfer.

To be eligible for a transfer the tenant must have no rent arrears or tenant liabilities outstanding.

The property must be returned to a standard in which the next tenant can move straight in. If a bond claim needs to be made for damages or repairs then the bond cannot be transferred over to the new tenancy and the tenant will need to pay the bond (equal to four weeks rent) of the new tenancy.

Acceptable reasons for a transfer may be:

- Safety issues
- Property size unsuitable
- Changed needs e.g. specialised housing needs.

Applications for tenancy transfer are approved at the discretion of Tenancy and Property Managers after consideration of the reasons for needing a transfer. Tenants are advised in writing of whether their application has been placed on the waiting list.

Tenant transfer applications are recorded on CHINTARO as “tenant transfer” under the Waiting List Type 2 field.