

POH1917

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP AND TEMPORARY ABSENCE POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to describe Women's Property Initiatives' (WPI) approach to rent charges when a tenant's household circumstances change and impact on their ability to pay rent.

2. POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all tenants of WPI properties.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

WPI is committed to:

- Treating tenants who are experiencing financial hardship with sensitivity
- Dealing with each situation on a case by case basis
- Helping tenants who are currently experiencing, or may experience, financial hardship or are required to be absent from their home for a period of time.

WPI recognises that there are circumstances which impact upon a tenant's capacity to meet their rental payments on schedule and, where appropriate the tenant can apply to WPI for a temporary rent reduction under this policy.

WPI will work with the tenant to help ensure that they are given the opportunity to sustain their tenancy during times of financial hardship. Tenants who demonstrate ongoing financial hardship may have their rent reduced for a limited period (up to six months) at WPI's discretion.

Financial hardship may be caused by (but not limited to) one or more of the factors listed below:

- Loss or significant reduction of the household's primary income
- Spousal separation or divorce
- Illness or mental / physical wellbeing requiring treatment where a charge for an alternative short-term accommodation applies (e.g. respite, rehabilitation, nursing home)
- Other significant and unexpected financial circumstances.

In circumstances where financial hardship is identified, WPI may:

- Request relevant evidence to demonstrate hardship i.e. income statements; and
- Reduce rental payments for a set period of time, until a review date.

Temporary Absence

A temporary absence is when a tenant is required to be absent from their property and pay for temporary accommodation such as a nursing home, respite, rehabilitation, prison or remand for a period greater than three weeks and up to a maximum of 12 weeks (three months).

Applying for a rent reduction

WPI assists tenants by offering a reduction in rent in specific circumstances. To apply for a reduced rent, tenant must complete a Temporary Absence Form or Rent Review Form and supply documents which verify:

- The loss or significant reduction of the household’s primary income that impacts on a tenant’s ability to pay rent; and/or
- The date the tenant entered the temporary accommodation, the length of stay and estimated date of return, and confirmation that they are paying a fee for accommodation costs (for example respite, rehabilitation and nursing homes).

4. RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

POH1804 Rent Setting and Subsidy Policy

POH1805 Arrears Policy

Housing Registrar Performance Standard 1 (Tenant and housing services)

Temporary Absence Form

Rent Review Form

5. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

Housing Act 1983 (Vic)

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)

6. POLICY REVIEW AND VERSION CONTROL

Policy number	POH1917	Version	0.2
Approved by Board on	30 July 2020	Board Minute reference	Circular Resolution 30/07/2020
Responsible person	CEO	Person responsible for review	Operations Manager
		Scheduled review date	30 July 2022