1.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline EACH Housing's (EHL) approach to managing affordable housing. This policy applies to all properties within EHL's affordable housing program that are owned by EACH or EHL and do not have a Department of Housing (DOH) interest registered on the title, or relevant funding obligation.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

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EHL aims to provide access to affordable housing for households with low to moderate incomes who are not eligible for public or social housing, or who are unlikely to be allocated public or social housing in the short to medium term.

Under the EHL program, rents in metropolitan Melbourne are set at 74.99% of the Market Rent of the affordable housing property.

2.1 Eligibility for affordable housing

To be eligible for EHL's Affordable Housing, an applicant must:

- Fall within the relevant income threshold without being placed in rental stress (defined as rent payable exceeding 30% of the household's gross income).
- Able to live independently (with little or no support) and
- Able to look after the property and meet the requirements of the lease.
- Be an Australian citizen or permanent resident.
- Reside in Victoria.
- Not own residential or commercial property.
- May/may not qualify for Commonwealth Rental Assistance under current Commonwealth Government policy.
- Meet any other additional requirements (e.g., connection to the community, age, family status).

Eligible households on the Victorian Housing Register may also apply for homes; however, they will be removed from the VHR once they accept a property.

Income eligibility for EHL's affordable housing are set using the income ranges as per the Planning and Environment Act 1987. These income bands were updated on the 27 June 2024 and come into effect on 1 July 2024. Find income eligibility bands on page 1222 here (PDF).

Table 1: Eligible gross income thresholds

Location	Single	Couple*	Family group**
Melbourne	$30,641 to $73,530	$45,951 to $110,300	$64,331 to $154,410
Regional Victoria	$22,231 to $53,610	$33,501 to $80,420	$46,901 to $112,590

** This can be made up of a couple or two singles earning a household income of up to $110,300.*

*** This can be made up of a family or shared group (couples/singles) earning a household income of up to $154,410.*

All income ranges are measured before tax (gross).

2.1.1 Assets

Applicants or household members cannot have assets that could help resolve their own housing needs. This includes a large amount of savings, property, shares or investments. This does not stop people from saving for a deposit on a home.

2.2 Our commitment

EHL is committed to ensuring that our affordable homes across Victoria start affordable and stay affordable. This means:

- **Rent Protection**: Rents will never exceed market rent, with the added protection of a cap set at 74.99% of market rent.
- **Secure Tenure**: Renters will be provided with a 3-year lease, with the ability for eligible renters to extend their lease for a further 3 years.
- **Controlled Rent Increases**: Rent will be reviewed and increased annually, but by no more than 5% each year.

2.3 Assessment of applications

EHL is committed to ensuring a fair and transparent selection process by assessing all applicants against the eligibility criteria for an EHL affordable home. This process guarantees that homes are allocated to those who meet the qualifications, while ensuring fairness throughout the application procedure.

Applicants who meet the eligibility requirements can apply for homes that best suit their needs.

EHL will:

- Assess all submitted information against the eligibility criteria.
- Not assess incomplete applications.
- Reject applications if any information affecting eligibility is found to be false or inaccurate.
- Evaluate household groupings to match the appropriate home size according to Homes Victoria size guidelines.
- Reject applicants if their rent would exceed 30% of their household's gross income.

2.4 Offers of affordable housing

EHL will:

- Ensure that the property type and location align with the applicant's needs, using the information provided to determine suitability.
- Provide applicants with 24 hours from receipt of the offer to consider.
- Clearly explain the lease terms, ongoing eligibility requirements, and any relevant property-specific details.

2.5 Hardship

If a renter's income changes and they face financial hardship, EHL can adjust their rent for up to 28 days, following the EHL hardship policy. After that, if they still can't afford the rent, our staff will help them apply for a Priority Housing application and place them on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). EHL will also look for housing options within our community housing portfolio. However, EHL must comply with the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA), which may involve action at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Director of Housing	The Victorian government body that owns all public housing land in Victoria and is the main source of funding for community housing.
VHR	means the Victorian Housing Register, the Statewide common application for people seeking public housing and community housing.
Renter	A person or family that lives in a home and pays rent to the owner or landlord. Renters don't own the home and follow the terms of a rental agreement or lease.
Rental Stress	When a household spends more than 30% of its income on rent, it's considered rental stress because there's less money left for other important things like food, healthcare, and bills.
Market Rent	The typical rent a home would cost in the current market, based on where it's located, the condition of the home, and demand from renters.
Commonwealth Rent Assistance	Financial help from the Australian Government for people who are eligible and need help paying rent. It's usually for people receiving government benefits and renting privately or in community housing. The amount of help depends on the rent and other factors.
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).	Is a legal body in Victoria that helps resolve disputes quickly and cheaply. It handles issues like rent problems, evictions, and disagreements between landlords and tenants, without needing to go to court.
Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) 1997	is a law in Victoria that outlines the rights and responsibilities of renters and landlords. It covers things like rent payments, maintenance, eviction rules, and resolving disputes, ensuring that both renters and landlords are treated fairly.

4.0 DOCUMENT OWNER

The Operations Manager, EHL is the subject matter expert and person responsible for this document review.

5.0 REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

This policy implements EHL's obligations under:

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies (Housing Registrar)
- Application documents
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic); Public Health and Wellbeing (Prescribed Accommodation) Regulations 2020 (Vic);

- Noise (Residential) Accommodation Services; Environment Protection (Residential Noise) Regulations 2018 (Vic); Environment Protection Act 2017 (Vic); Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (Vic)
- Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM)
- Planning & Environmental Act (1997)
- Charter of Human rights