

STARTING A TENANCY POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE & SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline EACH Housing Limited (EHL)'s approach to commencing tenancies. The start of a tenancy is a crucial period for establishing expectations, clarifying responsibilities, and ensuring systems are in place to support long-term housing success.

This policy applies to all long-term properties managed by EHL, whether owned or leased. It does **not** apply to:

- Deuchar Place (respite accommodation).
- Programs operated by EACH (not EHL), including Youth Residential Rehabilitation Programs and Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation services.
- Affordable Housing Programs

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

EHL is committed to starting tenancies in a way that promotes secure, affordable, and safe housing and aligns with relevant legislation and funding obligations.

2.1 Legal Compliance

EHL ensures its tenancy commencement processes comply with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA) and any relevant funding or program requirements. All forms and procedures are reviewed at least every two years.

2.2 Security of Tenure

Renters in EHL's long-term housing programs are provided with security of tenure, meaning they have the right to remain in the property as long as they meet their obligations under the RTA and their tenancy agreement.

This right is clearly communicated through both written tenancy agreements and verbal briefings at the start of the tenancy.

To maintain their tenancy, renters are expected to:

- Pay rent as agreed
- Maintain the property in a reasonable condition
- Comply with all terms of the tenancy agreement and the RTA

EHL supports renters to sustain their tenancy and provides early intervention and support referrals where issues arise.

2.3 Rent Transparency & Payment Arrangements

EHL charges rent in accordance with its Rent Setting Policy. Renters are provided with a clear explanation of how their rent is calculated and how rent will be reviewed during the tenancy.

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Prior to commencing a tenancy, renters are required to:

- Pay a bond equivalent to one month's rent, which will be lodged with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA) in accordance with the RTA
- Commence paying rent fortnightly in advance.

EHL offers a variety of payment methods to suit renters' needs, including:

- Direct bank deposit
- Centrepay, a voluntary bill-paying service for Centrelink recipients

All payment expectations and methods are explained clearly to the renter at the start of the tenancy.

2.4 Property Safety and Condition

EHL ensures that all properties are safe, habitable, and fully functional prior to occupancy. A Condition Report is completed and shared with the renter. Renters are provided with information about EHL's maintenance process, including urgent and routine repairs.

2.5 Working with Support Networks

EHL supports a **Housing First** model and aims to ensure renters are connected with appropriate support services at tenancy commencement. While some renters may eventually transition away from formal supports, EHL maintains a collaborative approach and reviews support status periodically.

2.6 Customer Rights, Responsibilities, and Feedback

Renters receive information about their rights and responsibilities under the RTA. EHL provides accessible, anonymous channels for complaints and feedback to ensure continuous service improvement.

2.7 Administration and Data Management Records

EHL maintains accurate data collection and tenancy records, ensuring systems are well-ordered to support effective tenancy management. EHL ensures that all personal and tenancy information is handled in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)* and other relevant privacy legislation, to protect the confidentiality and rights of renters.

2.8 Bond Management

At the commencement of the tenancy, EHL will collect a bond in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic). The bond is lodged with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA). Renters are provided with a copy of the completed bond form and advised of their rights regarding bond refunds and claims. EHL ensures that bond processes are clear and transparent.

2.9 Centrepay Registration

EHL encourages renters who receive Centrelink payments to use **Centrepay** as a convenient and reliable way to pay rent and housing-related charges. EHL provides

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Centrepay registration forms at the beginning of the tenancy and can assist renters with the setup process if needed.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA)	Is the legislation governing rental agreements in Victoria, Australia. It outlines the rights and responsibilities of renters and rental providers (landlords) in residential tenancies, rooming houses, caravan parks, and specialist disability accommodation. The Act covers key aspects such as rent, repairs, bonds, breaches, evictions, dispute resolution, and compliance with rental laws.
Renter	A person who occupies property under a rental agreement with EHL.
Condition Report	A formal document completed at the beginning of a tenancy that records the condition of the property, including cleanliness and functionality of all fixtures and fittings. It is used to compare the state of the property at the end of the tenancy for bond purposes.
Housing First	A service model that prioritises access to stable housing as the first step for people experiencing homelessness or housing instability, without requiring them to engage with support services as a precondition.
Bond	A financial deposit paid at the start of a tenancy to cover any potential damage or rent arrears. Held in trust by the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA) and returned at the end of the tenancy, minus any lawful deductions.
Centrepay	voluntary bill-paying service that allows renters receiving Centrelink payments to have regular amounts deducted directly from their payments to cover rent and other housing-related costs.

4.0 DOCUMENT OWNER

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

5.0 REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

- **Legislation and Regulatory Requirements**
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Consumer Affairs Victoria Guidelines
- Housing Registrar Performance Standards
- **EHL Policies and Procedures**
- Rent Setting Policy

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- **Forms and Other Documents**
- Residential Tenancies Bond Form
- DHHS Bond Application Form
- Condition Report
- Centrepay Form