

# OPERATIONS: Social Housing Rent Policy

## POLICY STATEMENT

Haven Home Safe (HHS) is committed to setting and reviewing rents and rental rebates *fairly, transparently, and in accordance with* legislation and regulatory requirements, to ensure affordability for Renters.

## PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this Level 2 policy is to outline how HHS calculates Social Housing rents and manages income changes impacting rental calculations.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HHS is committed to providing affordable and sustainable Social Housing. Renters living in a property owned or managed by Haven Home Safe are required to pay rent weekly or fortnightly, as set out in their Residential Rental Agreement. HHS will:

- Comply with all obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Be accountable and transparent in the way rent is set, calculated and reviewed, including how rental rebates are determined
- Provide clear and timely advice to Renters when Market Rents, rental rebates, household income or CRA changes affect the Weekly Rent Payable.
- Ensure that all rent and rental rebates reviews are fair, consistent and sustainable for Renters, while being sensitive to Renters' changing circumstances to support housing stability.
- Protect and maintain privacy of renter's personal and sensitive information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Centrelink client privacy and current control requirements.
- Understand that even small changes in rental rebates can have a big impact on a renter's budget and their capacity to meet everyday living expenses.

## SCOPE

This Policy and its associated SOPs apply to all Renters and Household Members living in, or applying for, Social Housing properties owned and managed by HHS.

This policy does not apply to properties delivered under:

- Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)
- Affordable Housing
- Transitional Housing Management
- Any other excluded special housing programs or individual property arrangements.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive	Approve policy
CBSO	Executive owner of this Policy
Snr Lead Housing Governance	Responsible for the administration of this Policy and associated SOPs, and for ensuring compliance with this <i>Policy</i> . Operational and finance staff are responsible for tenancy management, rent setting, rent reviews, and rent administration, and must report any issues of breaches of this Policy to their line manager or the Senior Lead, Housing Governance
Operational and Finance Employees	Responsible for tenancy management, rent setting, rent reviews, and rent administration. Must report any issues of breaches of this Policy to their line manager or the Senior Lead, Housing Governance.

## DEFINITIONS

Bond	Is a security deposit paid by the Renter at the start of a tenancy, at an amount equivalent to four (4) weeks Weekly Rent Payable.
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)	Commonwealth Rental Assistance. A Government payment to help assist with rent. <a href="#">Rent Assistance - Services Australia</a>
Household Members	People other than the Renter who have been authorised by HHS to reside at the property
Market Rent	The rent payable for an equivalent property in a similar location as independently assessed by a qualified valuer or property professional.
Renter	The person or persons who sign a Residential Rental Agreement with HHS
Rental Rebate	Is the dollar amount of rebate that HHS applies. Being the difference between the Market Rent and the amount of rent a Renter pays, based on the gross household's income.
Residential Rental Agreement	Is a legally binding contract between HHS and the Renter that outlines the terms, conditions and responsibilities for renting a residential rental property, in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.
Social Housing	Short and long-term rental housing owned or managed by HHS, with eligibility determined by the Victorian Government
Weekly Rent Payable	Is the dollar amount of rent which will be charged to the Renter each week plus any additional costs (where applicable)

## DETAILS

HHS sets Social Housing rents using income-based calculations and applies a Rental Rebate to ensure rent remains affordable for eligible Renters.

The Weekly Rent Payable is calculated between 25% to 30% of total gross household income, dependent upon the type of property allocation involved, plus 100% Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). The percentage applied is determined by HHS's contractual and funding obligations for each property type.

The Rental Rebate is calculated by assessing the total gross household income for all Renters\* and Household Members aged 18 years and over, including their entitlement to CRA. The Rebate Amount is the difference between the percentage of household income and the Market Rent of the property. If the Market Rent of the property is less than the percentage of the total gross household income, the household will only pay the Market Rent amount.

*\* Note 1: Renters under 18 years in Head Lease properties pay the rent amount advised to HHS by our partner agencies.*

*\* Note 2: Renters in the TCP program pay a fixed rent of \$15 per week if under 18 years, and \$100 per week if over 18 years.*

A detailed breakdown of how a Rental Rebate is determined is set out in the Residential Rental Agreement and is provided to Renters whenever a rental review or reassessment occurs.

When determining gross household income, HHS follows the Department of Health and Human Services Rent Setting and Operational Guidelines, the guidelines for registered housing agencies, together with the property [type requirements](#).

For more information, refer to:

[Rent setting and rebate operational guideline overview \(Word\)](#),  
[Guidelines for registered housing agencies](#)

### Market Rent

Market Rent represents the amount a property could reasonably attract in the private rental market. It is determined annually by an independent valuer, or by using data obtained from Homes Victoria. The market rent amount is also recorded in Residential Rental Agreements.

Market Rent is reviewed annually and will not increase within the first 12 months of a tenancy. Renters will receive at least 90 days' written notice before a Market Rent increase takes effect, in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. Renters will also be advised of the Market Rent review outcome each year, even if no change occurs.

## Rent Management

At the commencement of a Residential Rental Agreement, Renters are required to pay a rental Bond equal to four (4) weeks of the Weekly Rent Payable (excludes additional costs). Renters are advised of the exact Bond amount when a tenancy offer is made.

All rental Bonds are lodged with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA) in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. Renters may be eligible for assistance through DFFH Bond Lend Scheme or other financial assistance programs. HHS staff can provide information and guidance on how to apply.

In addition, HHS requires Renters to pay two (2) weeks of the weekly rent payable (includes additional costs where applicable) in advance when signing their Residential Rental Agreement.

When rent payments are received by HHS, they will be allocated to Renter accounts in the following order (where applicable): Bond, Rent, Utilities, Arrears, Damages and Tenant Responsibility.

Renters may choose to pay their Weekly Rent Payable weekly or fortnightly, but payments must always remain two (2) weeks in advance and be made on time.

If a Renter is experiencing difficulty paying rent, they are encouraged to contact their Tenancy and Property Manager as soon as possible to discuss payment options or support arrangements. Refer to HHS Rent Arrears Policy and HHS Hardship and temporary Absence Policy.

The weekly rent payable can be paid through the following methods:

- Centre Pay
- Direct Bank Transfer
- HHS Direct Debit
- In person at an HHS office

## Additional Property Costs

Some properties may have additional costs for shared facilities or services such as water, gas, car parking, laundry, and other services provided by HHS that are not separately metered.

These costs will be clearly identified and communicated to Renters before a tenancy offer is made and where applicable will be included in the Weekly Rent Payable.

HHS will review these charges during the rent review process, and Renters will be notified in writing of any changes. And additional property costs will also be included in the Residential Rental Agreement.

## Household Income

Renters and applicants applying for housing are required to provide evidence of their total gross household income:

- Before a tenancy offer is made
- During a Renter-initiated rent review or rental rebates review, and
- Within 21 days of any change to household income or household composition (whether the change increases or decreases income).

Evidence may be provided via Centrelink's Income Confirmation Services or in writing.

If a Renter or Household Member has no income, HHS will assume eligibility for a standard Centrelink payment rate or equivalent in determining the Rental Rebate, until appropriate evidence is provided.

When determining gross Household Income, HHS follows the Department of Health and Human Services *Rent Setting and Operational Guidelines*, the guidelines for registered housing agencies, together with the property type requirements.

For more information, refer to:

[Rent setting and rebate operational guideline overview \(Word\)](#),  
[Guidelines for registered housing agencies](#)

## Rental Rebate Reviews

Rental Rebate reviews are a vital part of HHS operations. They ensure that the rent payable remains fair, accurate and consistent with the requirements of each property program, while ensuring assistance continues to support those most in need.

Rental Rebates are reviewed every six (6) months, or when requested by the Renter. Renters will receive written notice when a Rental Rebate review begins and will be given fourteen (14) days to provide updated income details for all Household Members.

HHS will use this information, along with the relevant property program requirements, to determine the appropriate rental rebate and calculate the new Weekly Rent Payable, if applicable.

Following the review, Renters will receive written notice of the outcome, including (where applicable) the date the new weekly rent will take effect. This date will be at least 30 days after the review is completed.

If the Weekly Rent Payable decreases, the change will be backdated to the date HHS was notified of the income change, or up to six (6) weeks prior, at HHS' discretion.

If the household's income no longer meets the eligibility criteria for the relevant housing program, HHS may determine to apply full Market Rent or review the household's ongoing eligibility for the program.

In cases where rental fraud or intentional non-disclosure is suspected, the Rental Rebate may be cancelled, and full Market Rent applied until accurate and verified information is provided.

## Renters paying Market Rent

Renters paying Market Rent will be notified annually of the Market Rent review outcome (even if no change occurs) and reminded to update their income and household details.

If the renter's gross household income decreases, HHS will reassess the household's eligibility for a rental rebate and, if applicable, confirm the new weekly rent payable.

## Hardship and Special Circumstances

Renters experiencing financial hardship or temporary absence (hospitalization, rehabilitation, imprisonment, refuge state), may apply for a temporary rent reduction or rent rebate review. Refer to HHS Hardship and Temporary Absence Policy.

## RELATIVITIES

### Relevant Legislation and Standards

- Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) (1997)
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)

- Privacy Act
- Housing Registrar Performance Standard 1 (Tenancy & Housing Services)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)


### Policies

- HHS Operational Instrument of Delegation
- HHS Allocations & Eligibility Policy (TBD)
- Tenancy Management Policy and SOP (TBD)
- Operations – Social Rental Process SOP
- Rent Arrears Policy and SOP (TBD)
- Rent Calculation Form
- Hardship and Temporary Absence Policy and SOP (TBD)

This policy replaces the following policies and associated SOPs:

- Rent Calculation
- Rental Bonds
- Rent in Advance
- Preventing Debt and Recovering Rent Arrears
- Rental Arrears

END

GOVERNANCE RECORD					
Recommended by:	CBSO	Date:	22.10.25	Policy Level:	2 v.1
Endorsed by:	Executive	Date:	24.10.25	Risk Rating:	Low
Approved by:	CEO 	Date:	24.10.25	Next Review:	Oct 2027