

2.3.2 Violence & Harassment



Preamble

Women's Housing Company (WHC) is a community housing association as part of the social housing system in NSW. WHC provides long term housing for single women and medium term housing through support partnerships.

WHC guarantees the following of all landlord responsibilities as stated in the NSW Residential Tenancy Act 1987.

WHC recognises that applicants and tenants needs differ greatly based on past experiences, independent living skills, health and social issues and barriers. As a social housing provider we are committed to provide best quality services at all times.

WHC does not tolerate physical or verbal violence as a form of communication or action to any conflict and will pursue action to any form of violence through legal avenues.

POLICY

As a housing association with a primary focus on single women, Women's Housing Company is aware of the various forms of discrimination experienced by women. This knowledge and understanding provides a framework for WHC to adhere to ethical behaviour at all times. The protection of women against violence is paramount as part of such framework.

Domestic Violence is a crime and Women's Housing Company encourages applicants / tenants to report perpetrators to the police. This is done through conversation when staff are made aware of instances of domestic violence, and through publications such as newsletters.

Women's Housing Company will assist tenants with referrals to appropriate legal and specialised support services when instances of domestic violence are communicated to WHC.

Any form of **harassment and violence** is illegal and/or criminal and is not tolerated by Women's Housing Company. Verified acts of such nature will be acted upon immediately. Verification may require police event numbers, police reports, witness statements.

Claims of harassment and threat of violence are investigated by Women's Housing Company within the limitations of tenancy law. WHC will encourage applicants / tenants to report perpetrators of harassment and violence to the police and reserves the right to do so. Women's Housing Company will assist applicants / tenants with referrals to appropriate legal and specialised support services.

PROCEDURE

Information from an existing tenant on **harassment and violence**, and the threat of violence, must be communicated to the Senior Housing Manager immediately.

The SHM assesses the case immediately to guarantee **duty of care**; see 4.4.1. If illegal activity is substantiated the tenant is encouraged to pursue legal avenues; WHC will consider to lay charges against the perpetrator if deemed appropriate.

The SHM must receive evidence to act. WHC will assist tenants to gather evidence and seek external assistance. WHC will follow the **complaints & appeals** policy; see 4.5, 4.6, 4.7.

If these actions lead to further or an escalation of behaviour, WHC will take action that may result in the termination of a tenancy. Such a process is required to be facilitated through the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

Harassment occurs in many ways; some of these include:

- Ethnic background
- Religious affiliation
- Sexual preference
- Age
- Lifestyle choices
- Political identification

WHC may utilise the **management transfer** policy; see 2.3.1.1 or the **mutual exchange** policy; see 2.3.1.2, if it is deemed safest to remove the tenant from the rented property and if the tenant is agreeable to such move.

In the case where the perpetrator is an existing tenant (same sex relationship) and they share a property the shared tenancy can be terminated resulting in eviction for the perpetrator and rehousing for the victim.

Applicants escaping domestic violence will be considered favourably in the hybrid **allocation** model see 2.1.4.

Date developed: 2000

Date/s policy was ratified and/or changed by Board: 28/8/07

Note: Procedures are designed to guide the implementation of a policy and will be updated on a regular basis as part of ongoing best practice service improvement.