

Privacy Policy

1.0 Purpose

This Privacy Policy outlines how the Women's Housing Company (WHC) collects, uses, stores, discloses and manages personal, sensitive and health information in accordance with:

- *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* and Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)
- *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Cth)*
- *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)* (HRIP Act)
- *Workplace Surveillance Act 2005 (NSW)*
- National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH)

This policy reflects WHC's commitment to privacy, safety, transparency and trauma-informed service delivery, particularly for women experiencing vulnerability, homelessness or domestic and family violence.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Tenants, applicants and household members
- Clients accessing services
- Employees, contractors, volunteers and Board members
- Donors, partners and stakeholders

3.0 Privacy principles

WHC is committed to:

- Collecting only information that is **lawful, fair and necessary**
- Ensuring information is **secure, accurate and up to date**
- Using information **only for authorised purposes**
- Protecting individuals from harm arising from misuse or disclosure of their information
- Providing **transparent access, correction and complaint pathways**

4.0 Collection of Personal Information

4.1. What We Collect

We collect personal information necessary to deliver housing and support services, including:

Personal information

- Name, contact details, date of birth
- Identification and financial details
- Tenancy and household information

Sensitive information

- Cultural background, language
- Criminal history (where relevant)

- Court orders (including AVOs)

Health information

- Disability, medical needs
- Support needs and safety planning

High-risk information (additional safeguards apply)

- Domestic and family violence status
- Property location and tenancy details
- Legal orders affecting safety

4.2. How We Collect Information

We collect information:

- Directly from individuals
- Through Housing Pathways / Homes NSW systems
- From support providers, with consent where required
- Via forms, interviews, electronic systems and secure platforms

Where lawful and practicable, individuals may choose to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym.

4.3. Privacy Collection Notices (APP 5)

At or before collection, or as soon as practicable, WHC will provide a **Privacy Collection Notice** outlining:

- Why the information is collected
- How it will be used and disclosed
- Consequences of not providing information
- Overseas disclosures (if applicable)
- How to access, correct or complain

5.0 Use of Personal Information

We use personal information to:

- Assess eligibility and allocate housing
- Provide tenancy and support services
- Maintain safe housing environments
- Meet legal, regulatory and contractual obligations
- Manage properties and assets
- Support organisational governance and reporting

We may also use information for:

- Service improvement and planning
- Research using de-identified data
- Risk and safety management

5.1. Trauma-Informed and Safety-Based Use

WHC recognises that misuse or disclosure of personal information can create **serious safety risks**, particularly for:

- Women escaping violence

- Children and dependants
- People with complex vulnerabilities

We take additional steps to ensure:

- Location data is strictly controlled
- Sensitive cases are flagged and restricted
- Information sharing prioritises safety

5.2. Automated Decision-Making

Where automated tools or artificial intelligence (AI) systems are used:

- Decisions that may significantly affect an individual are not made solely by automated systems and are subject to appropriate human oversight and review.
- Individuals may request a human review of decisions supported by automated processing.
- WHC regularly monitors and evaluates automated systems to minimise bias, discrimination, inaccuracies and unfair outcomes.
- WHC takes reasonable steps to ensure that personal, sensitive and health information used by AI or automated tools is protected from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, alteration or loss.
- Personal information will only be used in AI systems where there is a lawful and authorised purpose, appropriate security controls are in place, and privacy obligations are maintained.
- WHC will not knowingly enter personal, sensitive or confidential information into publicly available AI tools unless appropriate safeguards, contractual protections and privacy assessments have been completed.
- Where AI tools are provided by third parties, WHC will undertake reasonable due diligence to ensure that information is stored, processed and managed in accordance with applicable privacy laws and WHC's information security requirements.
- WHC is committed to transparency regarding the use of AI and automated systems and will take reasonable steps to explain their role where they materially influence decisions or services.

6.0 Disclosure of Personal Information

We may disclose information to:

- Homes NSW, NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)
- Housing Pathways partners
- Support services and providers
- Contractors and IT providers
- Regulators and auditors

Disclosure occurs where:

- The individual has consented
- It is reasonably expected
- Required or authorised by law
- Necessary to prevent serious harm

6.1. Overseas Disclosure

Where information is stored or processed overseas (e.g. cloud providers):

- WHC takes reasonable steps to ensure APP-equivalent protections
- Individuals are informed where practicable

- Types of providers (e.g. cloud systems) are identified

6.2. Third Party Management

WHC ensures that:

- Service providers enter into confidentiality and privacy agreements
- Appropriate due diligence is undertaken
- Data sharing is limited to necessary information only

7.0 Information Security

WHC implements **robust technical and organisational controls**, including:

- Role-based access and least privilege
- Multi-factor authentication
- Encryption of data (where applicable)
- Secure document storage and handling
- Physical security controls
- Cybersecurity aligned with ACSC Essential Eight (where practicable)

8.0 Data Retention and Records Management

WHC:

- Retains information only for as long as required
- Complies with applicable records retention obligations, including NSW requirements
- Securely destroys or de-identifies information when no longer required

9.0 Data Breach Management

WHC manages breaches in accordance with the **Notifiable Data Breaches (NDB) scheme**, including:

- Assessment of whether a breach is likely to result in serious harm
- Notification to affected individuals and OAIC where required
- Immediate containment and remediation actions
- Internal review and system improvements

10.0 Access and Correction

Individuals may:

- Request access to their information
- Request correction of inaccurate information

WHC will:

- Take reasonable steps to verify identity
- Apply additional safeguards where there are safety risks (e.g. DFV situations)
- Respond within a reasonable timeframe

11.0 Consent

Where consent is required:

- It will be **informed and voluntary**
- Individuals may **withdraw consent at any time**, subject to legal limitations
- WHC will explain the implications of withdrawal

12.0 Surveillance and Website Data

12.1. Surveillance

WHC uses surveillance systems in accordance with NSW law to ensure safety. Appropriate notice and safeguards apply.

12.2. Website

WHC may collect non-identifiable data via cookies to improve services. Individuals can control cookies via browser settings.

13.0 Governance and Accountability

WHC ensures:

- A designated Privacy Officer responsible for compliance
- Staff training on privacy and confidentiality
- Regular policy review and audit
- Alignment with NRSCH and regulatory expectations

14.0 Complaints

Individuals may make a privacy complaint by contacting the WHC Privacy Officer (contact details below)

The Privacy Officer or other WHC officer will:

- Acknowledge and investigate complaints promptly
- Respond within 30 days where possible

If unresolved, individuals may contact:

- Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)

15.0 Related legislation

- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Cth)
- Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)
- Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Act 2012 (NSW)
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) (PPIP Act)
- Workplace Surveillance Act 2005 (NSW)
- Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (NSW)

- State Records Act 1998 (NSW)

16.0 Contact

Privacy Officer
Women's Housing Company
Email: contact@womenshousingcompany.org
Phone: (02) 9281 1764

17.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or as required to reflect:

- Legislative changes
- Regulatory guidance
- Emerging risks and best practice