



Privacy Policy

March 2023

1.0 Purpose

This Privacy Policy outlines how the Women's Housing Company manages and protects personal information in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* (Privacy Act), the 13 Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and the requirements of the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)*.

2.0 Scope

This policy outlines the circumstances in which the Women's Housing Company collects, uses, and discloses personal information, how the Women's Housing Company ensures the quality and security of that information and how the Women's Housing Company manages requests to access and/or change that information.

This policy applies to all employees working for the Women's Housing Company, whether employed directly or indirectly (for example, via a recruitment agency or through work placement). It also applies to volunteers and Women's Housing Company Directors.

3.0 Policy Statement

3.1 What is personal information and how do we collect it?

Personal information is information or an opinion about an individual from which they can be reasonably identified. Depending on the circumstances, we may collect personal information from the individual in their capacity as an applicant for tenancy, homelessness support or other service, tenant, member of a tenant or tenancy applicant's household, contractor, volunteer, stakeholder, job applicant, donor, visitors or others that come into contact with the Women's Housing Company.

The Women's Housing Company collects information from individuals when assessing their eligibility for and when providing housing or support services to those individuals. This may include:

- **Personal Information** including names, addresses and other contact details; dates of birth; next of kin details; bank account details, photographic images; attendance records and financial information.
- **Sensitive Information** (particularly in relation to providing appropriate housing services and our work health and safety obligations) including where relevant, government identifiers (such as Tax File Number or Centrelink number), religious beliefs, nationality, country of birth, languages spoken at home, family court orders and criminal records.
- **Health Information** (particularly in relation to providing appropriate housing services and complying with our work health and safety obligations) including medical records, disabilities, individual health care plans, and counselling reports.

As part of our recruitment processes for employees, contractors and volunteers, we may collect and hold:

- **Personal Information** including names, addresses and other contact details, dates of birth, financial information, citizenship, employment references, regulatory accreditation, media, directorships, property ownership and driver's licence information.

- **Sensitive Information** including government identifiers (such as TFN), nationality, country of birth, professional memberships, family court orders and criminal records.
- **Health Information** including medical records, disabilities, immunisation details and psychological reports.

The Women's Housing Company collects information from individuals when those individuals apply for, and/or are awarded a position as a Director or Committee member. The collection of personal information such as name, address, telephone number, date of birth, place of birth, professional experience, qualifications, and past appointments enables the Women's Housing Company to ensure that it manages its governance obligations.

The Women's Housing Company collects information from individuals for the purpose of managing donations and fundraising efforts. This may include the collection of personal information such as name, address, telephone number, email address, credit card details etc.

The Women's Housing Company collects information from landlords and real estate agencies as part of its provision of housing and accommodation services. This may include the collection of personal information such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses bank account details etc.

Generally, we will seek consent from the individual in writing before we collect their sensitive information (including health information).

It is noted that current or former employee records (as defined within the Privacy Act) are exempt from the APPs.

3.2 Collection of personal information

The collection of personal information depends on the circumstances in which the Women's Housing Company is collecting it. If it is reasonable and practical to do so, we collect personal information directly from the individual.

Individuals will be provided with the option of using a pseudonym or to otherwise be anonymous, unless it is impermissible or inhibits the adequacy or quality of service provided to them.

3.3 Solicited personal information

Solicited personal information is personal information the Women's Housing Company has requested from an individual or another entity. The Women's Housing Company collects solicited personal information that is reasonably necessary for one or more of the Women's Housing Company's functions and activities.

The Women's Housing Company has, where possible, attempted to standardise the collection of personal information by using specifically designed forms (e.g. an application form or consent form). However, given the nature of our operations we also receive personal information by email, letters, notes, via our website, over the telephone, in face-to-face meetings, through financial transactions and through surveillance activities such as the use of CCTV security cameras and monitoring of email response rates.

We may also collect personal information from other people (e.g. a third-party service provider, referees for prospective employees) or independent sources. However, we will only do so where it is not reasonable and practical to collect the personal information from the individual directly.

3.4 Information collected from our website

We may collect information based on how individuals use our website. We may use "cookies" and other data collection methods to collect information on website activity such as the number of visitors and the number of pages viewed. This information is collected to analyse and improve our website, marketing campaigns and to record statistics on web traffic. We do not use this information to personally identify individuals.

3.5 Information collected from Camera Surveillance Systems

The Women's Housing Company uses camera surveillance systems at some of the properties it manages, in order to maintain the safety and security of its clients and employees. These systems collect and store personal information and the Women's Housing Company complies with privacy legislation in regard to such information.

3.6 Unsolicited information

Unsolicited information is information that has been provided to the Women's Housing Company without the Women's Housing Company having taken active steps to obtain. The Women's Housing Company may be provided with unsolicited personal information by means including:

- Misdirected postal mail – Letters, Notes, Documents
- Misdirected electronic mail – Emails, electronic messages
- Employment applications sent to us that are not in response to an advertised vacancy
- Additional information provided to us, which was not requested.

Unsolicited information obtained by the Women's Housing Company will only be held, used and or disclosed if it is considered as personal information that is necessary for one or more of Women's Housing Company's activities or functions. If that unsolicited information is not necessary for one or more of Women's Housing Company's activities or functions, then we will destroy, permanently delete or de-identify the personal information as appropriate. Complaints about individuals are considered to be unsolicited information.

3.7 Collection and use of sensitive information

We only collect sensitive information if it is:

- Reasonably necessary for one or more of these functions or activities, and we have the individual's consent
- Necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to life, health or safety
- Another permitted general situation
- Another permitted health situation.

We may share sensitive information to other entities in our organisation structure, but only if necessary for us to provide our products or services.

3.8 How do we use personal information?

The Women's Housing Company only uses personal information that is reasonably necessary for one or more of our functions or activities (the primary purpose) or for a related secondary purpose that would

be reasonably expected by you, or for an activity or purpose to which you have consented, or where the use is otherwise permitted by law.

Our primary uses of personal information include, but are not limited to:

- Providing housing, support and related services to clients or to assess the eligibility of individuals to receive such services
- Satisfying our legal obligations including our duty of care to tenants, workers, and child protection obligations
- For the purpose of managing and maintaining properties
- Keeping tenants informed as to community housing matters through correspondence, newsletters and magazines
- Marketing, promotional and fundraising activities
- Supporting community-based causes and activities, charities and other causes in connection with the Women's Housing Company functions or activities
- Helping us to improve our day-to-day operations including training our staff
- Systems development; developing new programs and services; undertaking planning, research and statistical analysis using de-identified information wherever practicable
- Managing Women's Housing Company's business, including reporting to third parties in accordance with contractual obligations, the management of insurance arrangements, conducting audits etc
- To support the effective communication with third parties such as the Department of Communities and Justice and Centrelink
- The employment of staff
- The engagement of volunteers.

We will only use or disclose sensitive or health information for a secondary purpose if you would reasonably expect us to use or disclose the information and the secondary purpose is directly related to the primary purpose.

We may share personal information to related bodies corporate, but only if necessary for us to provide our services.

3.9 Storage and security of personal information

The Women's Housing Company stores Personal Information in a variety of formats including, but not limited to:

- Databases
- Hard copy files
- Personal devices, including laptop computers
- Third party storage providers such as cloud storage facilities
- Paper based files.

The Women's Housing Company takes all reasonable steps to protect the personal information we hold from misuse, interference, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

These steps include, but are not limited to:

- Restricting access and user privilege of information by staff depending on their role and responsibilities
- Ensuring staff do not share personal passwords
- Ensuring hard copy files are stored in lockable filing cabinets; staff access is on a need to know basis
- Ensuring access to the Women's Housing Company premises is secure at all times
- Implementing physical security measures around the premises to prevent break-ins
- Ensuring our IT and cyber security systems, policies and procedures are implemented and up to date
- Ensuring staff comply with internal policies and procedures when handling the information
- Undertaking due diligence with respect to third party service providers who may have access to personal information, including customer identification providers and cloud service providers, to ensure as far as practicable that they are compliant with the APPs or a similar privacy regime; third party service providers may be required to sign confidentiality and privacy undertakings where practicable
- The destruction, deletion or de-identification of personal information we hold that is no longer needed, or required to be retained by any other laws.

Our public website may contain links to other third-party websites outside of the Women's Housing Company. The Women's Housing Company is not responsible for the information stored, accessed, used or disclosed on such websites and we cannot comment on their privacy policies.

3.10 Responding to data breaches

A data breach can take many forms and have many causes. The breach may involve human error, a system fault or a deliberate hacking of a database. Depending on the circumstances of the incident, the extent of interference with personal information will vary, as will the potential for harm to be suffered by the individuals affected by the interference.

The Women's Housing Company will take appropriate, prompt action if we have reasonable grounds to believe that a data breach may have, or is suspected to have occurred. Depending on the type of data breach, this may include a review of our internal security procedures, taking remedial internal action, notifying affected individuals and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC). In addition to notifying the OAIC and affected individuals, the Women's Housing Company is also required to consider its obligations to notify other stakeholders, for example, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

In the situation where multiple people are impacted by a data breach, Women's Housing Company will make all reasonable attempts to notify each person directly however if we are unable to notify individuals directly, we will publish a statement on our website and take reasonable steps to publicise the contents of this statement.

Not all data breaches require notification to the OAIC and affected individuals. If a data breach is not a Notifiable Data Breach, Women's Housing Company is not legally required to notify the OAIC and

affected individuals but may nonetheless choose to do so as a matter of best practice. A decision to voluntarily notify the OAIC and/or affected individuals will be made on a case-by-case basis having regard to the specific circumstances of the breach.

3.11 Disclosure of personal information

Personal information is used for the purposes for which it was given to the Women's Housing Company or for purposes which are directly related to one or more of our functions or activities.

Personal information may be disclosed to government agencies, our services providers, agents, contractors, business partners, related entities and other recipients from time to time, if the individual:

- Has given consent; or
- Would reasonably expect the personal information to be disclosed in that manner.

The Women's Housing Company may disclose personal information without consent or in a manner which an individual would reasonably expect if:

- We are required to do so by law
- The disclosure will lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of an individual or to public safety
- Another permitted general situation applies
- Disclosure is reasonably necessary for a law enforcement related activity
- Another permitted health situation exists.

3.12 Disclosure of your personal information to overseas recipients

Personal information about an individual may be disclosed to an overseas organisation in the course of providing our services, for example when storing information with a "cloud service provider" which stores data outside Australia.

We will however take all reasonable steps not to disclose an individual's personal information to overseas recipients unless:

- we have the individual's consent (which may be implied);
- we have satisfied ourselves that the overseas recipient is compliant with the APPs, or a similar privacy regime;
- the disclosure of information is required or authorised by or under an Australian law or a court/tribunal order;
- we form the reasonable opinion that the disclosure will lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of an individual or to public safety; or
- we are taking appropriate action in relation to suspected unlawful activity or serious misconduct.

3.13 The quality of personal information

We take all reasonable steps to ensure the personal information we hold, use and disclose is accurate, complete and up-to-date, including at the time of using or disclosing the information.

If the Women's Housing Company becomes aware that the personal information is incorrect or out of date, we will take reasonable steps to rectify the incorrect or out of date information.

Please contact us if any of the details you have provided change. You should also contact us if you believe that the information we have about you is not accurate, complete or up to date.

3.14 Access and correction of personal information

You may submit a request to the Women's Housing Company to access the personal information we hold, or request that we correct the personal information. Upon receiving such a request, we will take steps to verify your identity before granting access or correcting the information.

If we reject the request, you will be notified accordingly. Where appropriate, we will provide the reason/s for our decision. If the rejection relates to a request to change personal information, an individual may make a statement about the requested change and we will attach this to their record. The Women's Housing Company will respond to your request within a reasonable period.

3.15 Complaints

You can make a complaint about how the Women's Housing Company manages personal information, including a breach of the APPs or the Health Privacy Principles, by notifying us in writing as soon as possible. We will respond to the complaint within a reasonable time (usually no longer than 30 days) and we may seek further information in order to provide a full and complete response.

The Women's Housing Company does not charge a fee for the handling of complaints.

If you are not satisfied with our response, you may refer the complaint to the OAIC. A complaint can be made using the OAIC online [Privacy Complaint form](#) or by mail, fax or email. A referral to OAIC should be a last resort once all other avenues of resolution have been exhausted.

3.16 How to contact us

The Women's Housing Company can be contacted about this Privacy Policy or about personal information generally, by:

- Emailing contact@womenshousingcompany.org
- Calling (02) 9281 1764
- Writing to our Privacy Officer at Suite 901 Level 9 418A Elizabeth Street Surry Hills 2010.

If practical, you can contact us anonymously (i.e. without identifying yourself) or by using a pseudonym. However, if you choose not to identify yourself, we may not be able to give you the information or provide the assistance you might otherwise receive if it is not practical to do so.

3.17 Changes to our privacy and information handling practices

This Privacy Policy is subject to change at any time. Please check our Privacy Policy on our website (www.womenshousingcompany.org) regularly for any changes.

4.0 Other relevant policies

- Code of Conduct
- Contractor Code of Conduct

5.0 Related legislation

- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)