

# Welfare Checking Policy

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 Policy owner: Director Housing and Homelessness

## 1 Purpose

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The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Unison staff when concerns have been raised about the welfare of a renter, including:

- a when a renter has breached a mental health community treatment order, specifically in relation to enabling access to the renter's room/unit/house, for the purpose of checking on or apprehending them
- b the appropriate initial procedures if a renter is found deceased.

## 2 Scope

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2.1 This policy applies to:

- a all social, affordable and transitional housing renters
- b Unison staff, contractors and any parties requesting or requiring Unison to provide access to tenanted properties for the purposes of a welfare check, such as Police or support workers.

## 3 Policy Statement

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### Principles

3.1 The following principles are applied when enacting a welfare check:

- a Welfare checks are only initiated on reasonable concerns for the welfare of a renter, where other methods to verify the welfare of a renter have been unsuccessful
- b When welfare checks are conducted care must be taken to avoid any damage or disturb the renter's belongings
- c Anyone conducting welfare checks must not remain on the property for longer than required
- d All welfare checks will be documented.

### Application

3.2 Concerns may be raised about the welfare of a renter by a neighbour, friend, family member, support worker or the Police. The process followed will depend on who has initiated the welfare check (Police or other) and what evidence there is that the renter is at risk. The decision regarding the appropriate process to be followed should be made by a Team Leader or Manager, Place Management.

## *Requests from Police*

### **3.3 Business Hours**

- a** If Police request access for the purposes of a welfare check or to apprehend a person who is in breach of mental health community treatment order a Unison staff member will meet the Officer at the property and provide them with a key or fob to access the room/unit/house.
- b** Unison staff must not enter a room/unit/house during the welfare check. Unison staff should not respond to a Police request to identify the person if there is a deceased person inside.
- c** It is the responsibility of the Police to contact the renter's next-of-kin in the event to undertake identification. Unison staff are authorised to provide next-of-kin details to the Police.

### **3.4 After Hours – Calls going to on call Facilities Advisor**

- a** Access for the purposes of a welfare check may be requested after hours; it is the responsibility of the on-call Facilities Advisor to coordinate access, except at 660 Elizabeth Street where the Launch concierge is authorised to provide access to emergency services.
- b** If Police request access for the purposes of a welfare check or to apprehend a person who is in breach of mental health community treatment order the Facilities Advisor can arrange an Authorised Contractor (e.g. Locksmith) or a Unison staff member to meet the Police Officer at the property and provide them with a key or fob to access the room/unit/house.
- c** The Authorised Contractor or Unison staff must not enter a room/unit/house or respond to a Police request to identify the person if there is a deceased person inside.
- d** It is the responsibility of the Police to contact the renter's next-of-kin in the event to undertake identification. Unison staff are authorised to provide next-of-kin details to the Police.

## *Request from other party*

- 3.5** If concerns about the welfare of a renter are made directly to Unison by someone other than the Police, Unison will respond appropriately according to the information provided. In all cases Unison will attempt to contact the renter by phone or via a next of kin or support worker before visiting, accessing or providing access to the renter's room/unit/house. A SALTO audit should also be initiated in properties that have this facility.
- 3.6** If there are clear indicators that the person may be deceased or injured, Unison will encourage the person making the report to contact emergency services immediately. If they are unwilling to do this, Unison will contact Police to request that they undertake a welfare check.
- 3.7** Where the concerns are not serious and it is suspected that the renter has abandoned the property, it may be more appropriate that Unison conduct a home visit. Unison will refer to the Abandoned Property Policy and Abandoned Property Procedure
- 3.8** Where access to a room/unit/house is requested regarding a concern about a renter breaching a community treatment order, Unison will refer the person requesting access to Victoria Police.
  - a** Unison will ensure that all parties accessing a rented room/unit/house do so in a manner that is, as far as possible, respectful of the renter and their possessions and privacy.

### *Rights of Entry*

- 3.9** The circumstance in which Unison has a right to enter a room/unit/house is outlined in the Right of Entry Policy.

## **4 Related information**

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- a** Unison Code of Conduct
- b** Incident Management Policy
- c** Keys and Fobs Policy
- d** Right of Entry Policy
- e** Lone Worker Policy
- f** Abandoned Property Policy
- g** *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*

## **5 Review of policy**

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This policy will be reviewed every three years as delegated by the responsible Executive.