

Rent Arrears Policy

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 Policy owner: Director Housing and Homelessness

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that rents are managed proactively and that where arrears are identified, place managers intervene as early and effectively as possible.

2 Scope

This policy is applicable to all Unison long-term renters in social and affordable housing.

3 Policy Statement

Principles

- 3.1 Unison is committed to ensuring a consistent and proactive process that achieved the best possible outcomes for both renters and the organisation.
- 3.2 Unison's approach to rent arrears follows these principles:
 - a Rent arrears are identified and addressed early to give the renter the best chance to sustain their rental agreement as delays diminish the renter's ability to resolve the issue
 - b The establishment of a rent paying culture from the beginning of the rental agreement, including the provision of support to renters to overcome financial issues
 - c Rent arrears can be a sign of broader tenancy issues and can provide an opportunity to resolve these issues
 - d Engagement with support agencies may assist in addressing arrears, including the provision of referrals to appropriate services and helping renters sustain their tenancies
 - e Eviction for rent arrears must only occur when all avenues to address the arrears have been exhausted

Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.3 Unison Place Managers will:
 - a Ensure that renter/s human rights are considered in line with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
 - b Monitor rents regularly
 - c Try different strategies with a renter/s (where needed with support agencies) to resolve rent arrears

3.4 Unison renters will:

- a Comply with lease agreements in accordance with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (RTA)
- b Communicate with their Unison Place Manager during times of hardship
- c Where required enter into a Rent Arrears Agreement

Consent Order, Order of Possession and Eviction

- 3.5 Where there is non-compliance or where the renter/s refuse to communicate with Unison, Place Managers may, in consultation with the relevant Team Leader issue a Notice to Vacate (NTV) and arrange an application to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for a Consent Order or Possession Order.
- 3.6 If a renter/s breach these orders and a Possession Order is in place, Unison may pursue an eviction.
- 3.7 An eviction will not proceed without written approval from the relevant Manager, Place Management. Eviction will not be approved where the Manager believes that further action could be made to successfully maintain the tenancy, where Natural Justice or the renter's Human Rights have not been met, or where Unison's policies and procedures have not been followed.

4 Related information

- a *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- b *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*
- c Abandoned Goods Policy
- d Change in circumstances Policy
- e Eligibility Policy
- f Information Privacy Policy
- g Rent Policy
- h Right of Entry Policy
- i Consent Order
- j Notice to Vacate
- k Possession Order
- l Rent Arrears Agreement
- m Warrant of Possession

5 Review

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