

Rent Arrears Policy

1. Purpose & Scope

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.

This policy applies to all Unison long-term renters.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Principles

Unison is committed to ensuring a consistent and proactive process that achieves the best possible outcomes for both renters and the organisation.

Unison's approach to rent arrears follows these principles:

- 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.
- 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.
- Rent arrears can be a sign of broader tenancy issues and can provide an opportunity to resolve these issues.
- Engagement with support agencies may assist in addressing arrears including the provision of referrals to appropriate services and helping renters sustain their tenancies.
- Eviction for rent arrears must only occur when all avenues to address the arrears have been exhausted.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Unison Place Managers:

- Ensure that renters' human rights are considered in line with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.
- Monitor rents regularly.
- Try different strategies with a renter (where needed with support agencies) to resolve rent arrears.

Unison renters:

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

2.3 Consent Order, Order of Possession and Eviction

Where there is non-compliance, or where the renter refuses 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.

If a renter breaches these orders and a Possession Order is in place, Unison may pursue an eviction.

An eviction does not proceed without written approval from the relevant Manager, Place Management. Eviction is not 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.

3. Definitions

NTV: Notice to Vacate

RTA: Residential Tenancies Act

VCAT: Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

4. Document owner

The Director Housing & Homelessness is responsible for the review of this document. Refer to them to suggest any revision.

5. Related Information

5.1 Internal documents and links

- *Abandoned Goods Policy*
- *Bad Debt Procedure*
- *Change in Circumstances Policy*
- *Eligibility Policy*
- *Privacy Policy & Collection Notice*
- *Rent Arrears Procedure*
- *Rent Policy*
- *Right of Entry Policy*
- *Rent Arrears Agreement*

5.2 External documents and links

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*