

Debt Recovery Policy

Purpose

This policy explains how HousingFirst manages rent arrears and other non-rent debts owed to HousingFirst.

Scope

This policy applies to all tenants and former tenants of HousingFirst.

Policy Statement

Failure to recover rent and other charges impacts on the ability of HousingFirst to maintain a service to tenants and restricts the ability of the organisation to develop and maintain affordable housing for people on low to moderate incomes.

Debt Recovery Principles

HousingFirst requires tenants to pay rent on time and in advance at the commencement of and throughout the tenancy. The following principles guide the action taken by HousingFirst to recover debt, to assist tenants to maintain their tenancy, and prevent, reduce and recover rent arrears by:

- Early intervention by making prompt and regular contact when payments are missed and rent arrears first appear on an account
- Maximising verbal contact and communication with tenants and keeping them fully informed
- Providing tenants with the opportunity to negotiate payment plans if they are unable to pay arrears in full
- Working in collaboration with support services to engage tenants and address their arrears to maintain their tenancy
- Taking action to recover outstanding rental arrears through legal agreement; or if this isn't possible, through seeking an order for possession of the property
- Working constructively with advocacy and legal aid organisations such as the Tenants Union of Victoria (TUV) to resolve arrears through legal orders
- HousingFirst will give due consideration to a tenant's human rights at all stages of the arrears recovery process and will consider the impact on the tenant when deciding whether to proceed with an eviction
- HousingFirst will only proceed with eviction as a last resort.

HousingFirst will act on rent arrears in accordance with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)* when the tenant has accrued:

- 7 or more days of arrears, for tenants who have signed a Rooming House Resident Agreement
- 14 or more days of arrears, for tenants who have signed a Residential Tenancy Agreement.

Related information

- HousingFirst Financial Hardship and Temporary Absence Policy
- HousingFirst Rent Setting Policy

- HousingFirst Reviewing Rent policy
- HousingFirst Rental Bonds Policy
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1977 (Vic)
- Victorian Housing Registrar Performance Standard 1 (Tenant and housing services)

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available at www.housingfirst.org.au

Version control

Version	2	Review frequency	24 months
Date	May 2019	Next review	May 2021