

Financial Hardship and Temporary Absence Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines how HousingFirst assists tenants who are experiencing financial hardship or who are temporarily absent from their property.

Scope

This policy applies to all tenancies owned and/or managed by HousingFirst.

Policy Statement

HousingFirst are committed to:

- Treating tenants who experiencing financial hardship with sensitivity
- Dealing with each situation on a case by case by case basis
- Helping tenants who currently experiencing, or may experience, financial hardship or are required to be absent from their home for a period of time.

Tenants can apply to have their rent temporarily reduced as a result of hardship and/or temporary absence from their home.

Financial hardship

Financial hardship occurs when a tenant or household member is unable to pay rent without affecting their ability to meet basic living needs due to unexpected changes in income caused by, but not limited to, one or more of the following factors:

- Loss or significant reduction of the household's primary income
- Spousal separation or divorce
- Other significant and unexpected financial circumstances.

Temporary Absence

A temporary absence is when a tenant is required to be absent from their property and pay for temporary accommodation such as a nursing home, respite, rehabilitation, prison or remand for a period greater than three weeks and up to a maximum of 13 weeks.

Applying for a rent reduction

HousingFirst assists tenants by offering a reduction in rent in specific circumstances. To apply for a reduced rent, tenant must complete a *Rent Reduction Application Form* and supply documents which verify:

- The loss or significant reduction of the household's primary income that impacts on a tenant's ability to pay rent; and/or

- The date the tenant entered the temporary accommodation, the length of stay and estimated date of return, and confirmation that they are paying a fee for accommodation costs (for example respite, rehabilitation & nursing homes).

HousingFirst will assess the application and inform the tenant of the outcome in writing. If approved, HousingFirst will reduce the weekly amount owed to HousingFirst to be 25% of the total charge payable.

For example, if a tenant's total charge payable to HousingFirst is \$269.80 per week, the rent will reduce to \$67.45 per week. Approval to grant a rent reduction will be decided on a case by case basis by the General Manager, Housing Services.

Related information

- HousingFirst Paying Rent and Other Charges Policy
- HousingFirst Reviewing Rent Policy
- HousingFirst Debt Recovery Policy
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Housing Registrar Performance Standard 1 (Tenant and housing services)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006)

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