

## Good Neighbour Policy

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide information on how HousingFirst works to support positive relationships between neighbours. It also sets out how HousingFirst will respond to antisocial behavior.

### Scope

This policy applies to tenants, household members and their visitors who live in properties owned and/or managed by HousingFirst. It also applies to neighbours, property owners and stakeholders of HousingFirst properties.

### Policy Statement

HousingFirst is committed to sustaining tenancies and maintaining harmonious communities. Under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (Vic)* all tenants have a right to quiet enjoyment of their premises. Examples of issues that could interfere with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of tenants and neighbours include:

- Physical assaults and acts of violence
- Verbal abuse or other threatening behaviour
- Using, causing or permitting the property to be used for any illegal purpose, such as distributing or selling illicit drugs
- Damaging and vandalising property
- Excessive and persistent noise
- Retaliatory disputes between households
- Loud and unruly behaviour
- Not keeping pets under control, including dogs barking, or defecating in shared areas.

### Expectations of HousingFirst tenants

The behaviour expected of tenants in being 'good neighbours', demonstrated primarily through:

- Respecting people's rights and privacy and quiet enjoyment of their tenancy
- Being responsible for their action and those of their family and visitors
- Respecting communal areas
- Being considerate and tolerant of others
- Ensuring the rented property is not used for an illegal purpose.

### What HousingFirst will do

HousingFirst will provide opportunities to promote a positive relationship between neighbors and the ability to resolve issues or problems if they arise. We do this through:

- Prevention
- Response
- Resolution.

## Prevention

HousingFirst is committed to preventing instances of antisocial behaviour and promoting harmonious communities by:

- Designing, building and maintaining housing to a high quality
- Considering history of antisocial behaviour reports when deciding to allocate tenants to vacancies
- Committing to managing housing locally, with offices located in reasonable proximity to where tenants live
- Addressing barriers to social inclusion and participation through tenant and community engagement strategies
- Conducting regular property visits and inspections
- Working closely with support agencies to assist tenants to maintain tenancies
- Working collaboratively with neighbours to address safety issues that affect communities.

## Response

HousingFirst takes appropriate action following any reports of antisocial behaviour or interference with quiet enjoyment, including contacting the police if appropriate and/or interviewing the person who reported the incident. HousingFirst also:

- Records all issues concerning tenants, their families or visitors
- Takes all reports of antisocial behaviour seriously and investigates them
- Prioritises a response to incidents as set out in the table below:

Category	Response time	Type of behaviour
One	Within 24 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Violence or threatened violence towards a person</li><li>▪ Destruction of property</li><li>▪ Where there is the potential for real harm to a person or property (for example the storage of explosive or toxic material)</li></ul>
Two	As soon as possible, within 5 working days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Any other issue not covered above such as noise nuisance, pet nuisance, or criminal behaviour</li></ul>

If the incident is Category One, HousingFirst encourages witnesses to notify police in the first instance and keep a record of the incident and any reports to police.

HousingFirst may receive reports about tenant behaviour from other tenants, staff, body corporate representatives and members of the public, including neighbours who are not HousingFirst tenants. If a criminal activity has occurred, HousingFirst encourages the witness to contact the police in the first instance.

## Resolution

HousingFirst resolves reports of antisocial behaviour tenancy issues in the following ways:

- Encourage and support neighbours to resolve issues in the first instance, where safe and practical
- Interview tenants, neighbours and other potential witnesses to gain an understanding of the issue
- Act within the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)* if there is evidence that a tenant has breached their Residential Tenancy Agreement
- Work with tenants to understand any underlying health or wellbeing issues and refer the tenant to support services or independent mediation services with consent and where appropriate
- Liaise with the police when there is antisocial or alleged illegal activity occurring in a HousingFirst property. HousingFirst will not carry out criminal investigations, but will assist police to access properties if there is a warrant
- Keep all parties informed of progress made.

## Related information

- HousingFirst Allocations Policy
- HousingFirst Ending Tenancies Policy
- HousingFirst Breach of Tenancy Agreement 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](http://www.housingfirst.org.au)

## Version control

Version	1	Review frequency	24 months
Date	May 2019	Next review	May 2021