



Responding to Tenant Needs Policy and Procedure

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1. About this document

1.1 What is the purpose and objective of this policy and procedure?

We recognise that tenants and other household members of NSWALC Housing have needs above and beyond their need for housing. We also acknowledge that tenants' needs change over time.

This policy outlines how NSWALC Housing identifies and responds to the needs of our tenants.

The objective is to ensure that we:

- identify and appropriately respond to the needs of tenants and other household members in culturally safe and appropriate ways
- connect tenants and household members to social services and support
- use the statewide presence of Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs), their broad membership base, communication channels and strong relationships with community to generate greater uptake of available social services and supports by target groups within communities
- support tenants to identify and achieve their goals and aspirations
- maximise housing stability for tenants by connecting tenants to support
- increase the rate of positive exits, and avoid evictions and exits into homelessness.

1.2 Who must comply with this policy and procedure?

This policy and procedure applies to all staff who are involved with administering and managing tenancies.

NSWALC Housing service partners are expected to have a tenant needs policy and procedure that, at a minimum, addresses the requirements of this policy and procedure.

1.3 Terms and definitions

These definitions apply to terms used in this document.

Term	Meaning
Applicant	Any person applying to NSWALC Housing for housing assistance, including social housing.
Community	The local community and property neighbours, Aboriginal communities, service providers, local and state government, funding bodies and trusts.
Engagement	Engagement refers to all forms of participation in the development and review of the service being offered to tenants by NSWALC Housing.
Other members of the tenant's household	People other than the tenant who live in the property.



Term	Meaning
Staff	Any person working for NSWALC Housing. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• permanent, temporary and casual employees, including managers and the Executive• members of committees, working groups and advisory bodies• agency staff, consultants and contractors• volunteers• work experience students• intern placements.
Support partners	Service providers requested or contracted by NSWALC Housing to provide specialised support services to tenants and other household members.
Tenant	The person who signed the Residential Tenancy Agreement.

1.4 Related documents

- Tenant Feedback Process
- Tenant Survey Process
- Tenant Engagement Policy and Strategy
- Asset Management Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure

1.5 Authorities and accountabilities

The General Manager is responsible for administration, revision, interpretation and application of this policy.

Housing Officers are responsible for implementing the policy.

The policy shall be reviewed regularly.

1.6 Quality assurance

How NSWALC Housing determines tenant needs are being responded to and met

- All NSWALC Housing staff receive training in this policy and procedure.
- Housing Officers regularly engage with NSWALC Housing support partners to maintain awareness of their referral criteria.
- The General Manager reports to the Board quarterly on the number of Support Plans in place.
- Housing Officers are reviewing results of tenant satisfaction surveys to ascertain satisfaction with services and how well NSWALC Housing is responding to tenant needs.



How NSWALC Housing determines tenant needs are being responded to and met

- Ten per cent of Tenant Needs Assessments are peer reviewed to ensure consistent practice.

- Tenants are encouraged to provide feedback in surveys and/or through tenant forums and local committees, if they are in place.

- Annual client service visits incorporate wellbeing index questions to measure tenant social outcomes.

- We tap into social wellbeing research outcomes produced by government agencies and work with organisations like the Australian Social Value Bank to establish Indigenous-specific wellbeing values which can help inform the measurement of our effectiveness in meeting tenant needs.



2. Responding to tenant needs policy

2.1 Identifying and assessing need

2.1.1 Applications and allocations

NSWALC Housing shall identify tenants' needs and existing supports when allocation of an NHL managed property is a possibility. At the commencement of every tenancy we will work proactively with applicants to identify any barriers to sustaining tenancies, and take applicants' needs, preferences and tenancy skills into account. .

We shall facilitate sustainable tenancies by matching tenants to properties that meet their needs. Where applicable, we shall consider the needs and preferences of other household members.

2.1.2 Establishing tenancies

At the start of a tenancy, we shall provide information to tenants about their responsibilities, services that are available, and opportunities for engagement and feedback.

NSWALC Housing shall engage with new tenants for the term of the tenancy establishment phase, to help them settle into their property and community. With the tenant's consent, we shall ascertain what current supports are being received by the tenant and other household members, and we may also conduct more formal assessments of the tenant's and other household members' needs to determine whether our support partners may assist.

2.1.3 During a tenancy

For the term of tenancies, NSWALC Housing staff shall be proactive in identifying the support needs of tenants and other household members.

We shall provide information about available services to tenants for the term of their tenancies. This may include information kits, newsletters, meetings and other mechanisms. This shall include information about making complaints about services, in accordance with NSWALC Housing's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Interaction with tenants shall be in line with the NSWALC Housing Tenant Engagement Policy and Strategy.

2.2 Support planning

NSWALC Housing shall work proactively with tenants to seek to identify any additional tenancy skills or assistance they require in order to maintain their tenancies. We shall engage with tenants and other household members to identify supports, resources and opportunities to help them overcome barriers to sustainable tenancies.

With the tenant's consent, staff shall have discussions with tenants to determine the resources appropriate to their needs. These resources may include:

- information about, and referral to tenancy advice and advocacy services
- information about, and referral to education and training, employment and financial assistance services
- Information about, and referral to other relevant support services; for example, family support, crisis refuges, financial counselling, legal services, disability support services, health and translator services.



NSWALC Housing does not provide support services. That is the role of our support partners. We acknowledge the importance of separating housing management from provision of support. When a tenant has difficulty dealing with and/or accessing services from a support partner, NSWALC Housing will offer referral and/or advocacy.

2.3 Responding to changing needs

NSWALC Housing acknowledges that tenants' and other household members' needs and priorities change over time. We shall endeavour to meet changing needs within program guidelines, legislative requirements and available funding.

NSWALC Housing shall work closely with tenants whose circumstances change suddenly — for example, as a result of ill health, domestic and family violence, bereavement or other life event — to coordinate additional supports as required.

We shall fairly and flexibly manage requests from tenants to modify their property or transfer to another property as a result of changing needs, and take into account the under/over-utilisation of properties, safety issues regarding location and/or family breakdown, and any required property modifications.

2.4 Developing support partner relationships

NSWALC Housing shall actively develop strong relationships with support partners to assist tenants and other household members who require or request assistance in sustaining their tenancy and/or improving their life circumstances.

In doing this, we shall focus on developing reciprocal relationships with support partners, recognising the interdependence of support and tenancy sustainability, and the importance of secure housing to tenants' wellbeing.

We shall work in partnership with support partners who:

- provide services that achieve better outcomes for tenants and other household members
- share our organisation's values, principles and commitment to tenant and community engagement.

Only when we have a tenant's or other household members' consent shall we:

- refer the tenant to support partners
- seek feedback from support partners
- share information about the tenant or other household members with support partners.



3. Responding to tenant needs procedure

3.1 Identifying and assessing need

3.1.1 Housing Officers

To identify and assess the needs of tenants and other household members, Housing Officers should:

- communicate directly with tenants and other household members
- consider evidence and/or assessments they may provide, such as letters from health professionals
- seek feedback from support partners, when you have the tenant's or other household member's consent.

Housing Officers should manage tenancies proactively, identifying signs that a tenant or other household member may be experiencing difficulties, and seeking to offer assistance early.

When action is required to collect rent arrears, Housing Officers should provide information about any support services that might mitigate risk of the tenancy failing. Housing Officers should encourage tenants to have an advocate present for any meetings to discuss rent arrears and/or rent payment plans.

When the Housing Officer and the tenant agree that support would benefit the tenant and/or other household members, the Housing Officer should engage with the client to fill out a Tenant Needs Assessment form.

3.1.2 All staff

All staff should be alert to indicators that a tenant may need support, and pass this information onto the applicable Housing Officer.

Support needs may:

- come as a request for assistance from a tenant
- be observed during tenancy administration and management activities. Indicators that support may be needed include rent arrears, property damage, and neighbourhood issues.

3.2 Support planning

3.2.1 Housing Officers

To ensure tenants and other household members are aware of the services available, NSWALC Housing will:

- develop a list of community services in the local area, and provide it to each new tenant
- make information about community services available in our publications, our regular tenant newsletter and on-line channels.

If a tenant agrees that access to support services would benefit them, the Housing Officer should:

- discuss the available support options with them and other household members
- provide information about those options. This may involve a three-way conversation between the tenant/household member, the Housing Officer and a support partner



- make any referral necessary, once you have received the tenant's or other household member's consent.

Housing Officers should contribute to the development of a formal support plan or support agreement between a tenant and applicable service partner/s when requested and consented to by the tenant.

Housing Officers should address requests for property modifications in accordance with NSWALC Housing's Asset Management Policy and Procedure, which includes the process for applying for a disability modification.

3.3 Responding to changing needs

3.3.1 Housing Officers

Housing Officers should regularly meet with tenants to discuss progress, celebrate achievements and realign goals and supports as needed. Housing Officers should record support arrangements using the Tenant Needs Request form, and keep this information up-to-date to reflect change over time.

During annual service visits, Housing Officers should speak with tenants to identify whether additional support would benefit the household. When the Housing Officer and the tenant agree that support would benefit the tenant and/or other household members, Housing Officers should engage with the tenant to fill out a Tenant Needs Assessment form.

3.4 Developing support partner relationships

3.4.1 Housing officers

NSWALC Housing will develop relationships with support partners. Specifically, NSWALC Housing will seek to:

- a. Identify a range of partners to assist with and support the client groups that form our tenant community.

This includes people with a disability, people with mental ill-health, families, the aged, those who are homeless, youth, those involved in the criminal justice system, those troubled by domestic violence and those needing employment and training assistance

- b. Build relationships with community service agencies.
- c. Encourage colocation of community services at our offices, where possible.
- d. Involve community services in NSWALC Housing's community development and engagement activities and participate in those initiated by those agencies.
- e. Invite support agencies to attend tenant events.

NSWALC Housing will develop memoranda of understanding or support agreements, as applicable, with support partners. These agreements will clearly document:

- the sorts of services provided
- referral arrangements
- eligibility and assessment criteria
- whether they will promote access for our clients, smooth referral pathways and service delivery



- roles, responsibilities and mutual expectations.

Housing Officers should establish and maintain knowledge of the referral criteria of each service partner, to assist with linking tenants to the most appropriate support services.



Document information

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