

## CEHL FINANCIAL HARDSHIP POLICY

### 1. PURPOSE

This policy outlines how Common Equity Housing Limited (CEHL) supports its renters experiencing significant financial hardship in sustaining their tenancy and meeting their renter obligations.

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all tenancies where CEHL is the rental provider, including Community Managed Co-operatives (CMC), VicWide and CEHL Direct Rental Housing.

#### *Scope Exclusion*

This policy does not apply to tenancies in Common Equity Rental Co-operatives (CERC), where the CERC is the rental provider and is responsible for rent. CERCs may opt to use this CEHL policy but are not obliged to do so.

This policy does not include a leave of occupancy when the renter is absent for an extended period. For further information, please see the *Leave of Occupancy policy*.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

Financial hardship	Hardship occurs when unforeseen events, such as an unavoidable change in financial position or an inability to pay agreed rents, place a renter's tenancy at risk.
Income earning household member	Any household member who earns an income from any source, including but not limited to wages, salary, Centrelink benefits and compensation payments. No income reporting is required for household members aged under 18.
Renter	For this policy, all members and renters will be called 'Renters'.  Renter refers to a person/s renting a property. The term applies to residents under the Residential Tenancies Act (Act), and tenant is used under the Housing Act. The term "Renters" is used in CEHL Leases and other forms as required by the Act.
Leave of occupancy	A leave of occupancy is defined as the renter requesting a leave from their property for six weeks to six months in any 12 months.
Separation certificate	A document issued by the government to show basic details about someone's employment. Details include period of employment, final pay, reason for termination and how much they were earning when they left.

## 4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

CEHL provides appropriate, secure, affordable rental housing, including co-operative and direct rental housing.

In applying this policy, CEHL will ensure:

- Renters experiencing financial hardship are treated with sensitivity
- Where a tenancy is at risk, intervention will occur as early as possible to attempt to sustain the tenancy
- Consistent, fair, and accountable processes are followed, and renters are provided with information about processes that impact their tenancy
- Proper consideration is given to the rights afforded renters under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) (Charter)
- A commitment to respond to matters that may be family violence related that promotes the wellbeing and safety of renters and their families
- All contractual, legal and regulatory duties are met.

## 5. PROCESS

### 5.1 Financial hardship

Financial hardship occurs when a renter cannot pay their rent without impacting their ability to meet their basic living needs.

### 5.2 Exemption from Minimum Rent

The primary renters are responsible for applying for relevant payments or demonstrating that a household occupant is ineligible for assumed Centrelink payments.

CEHL can consider an exemption to the minimum rent where a household can demonstrate that the assumed minimum Centrelink Benefit is unreasonable, given their particular circumstances.

### 5.3 Application process

To seek financial hardship support, the renter must provide a statement and relevant supporting documentation to demonstrate:

- How the hardship occurred
- When the hardship began, and how long it is expected to continue
- How the hardship impacts their ability to pay rent
- What actions the renter has taken to minimise the impact

### 5.4 Referrals

Where a renter has already engaged with a financial counselling or support service, any financial plans or assistance may be provided as evidence to support the hardship application.

CEHL can assist the renter with referrals to financial counselling or other relevant support services

### 5.5 Assessment and outcomes

Financial hardship applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis based on the information and evidence provided in the application.

CEHL will advise the renter of the outcome in writing within 30 days of receiving all information and evidence from the renter. The agreed support will apply from the date of the approval. Generally, approvals will not be retrospective.