

Purpose

In response to the COVID19 pandemic, Pacific Link Housing (PLH) policies as outlined below will be varied for the duration of the emergency. In a departure from the normal cycle of policy review, this policy will be reviewed quarterly or as required. It is envisaged that as the situation continues and is stabilised certain government measures will be relaxed allowing the gradual return to normal operations. PLH will continue to keep all relevant stakeholders informed of changes to operations as they occur and to advise when these policy amendments cease to apply.

Scope

This policy will apply to all tenants, residents, employees and other stakeholders as indicated below and will be published on the PLH website.

Policy Changes

<p>CP01 Workplace Health and Safety Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect the health and safety of others, all PLH employees, directors, contractors and tenants are required to immediately notify PLH if they have symptoms of, or test positive to COVID19, or are required to self-isolate by NSW Health. • In compliance with privacy obligations, PLH will request consent from persons notifying to advise their COVID19 status so that relevant stakeholders who may come into contact with them including employees, tenants, tenant neighbours, real estate agents, landlords or contractors may be notified. • Notification of COVID19 positive reports to the PLH Board and Registrar of Community Housing is required and is provided on a deidentified basis.
<p>CP38 Rent and Rent Subsidy Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum Rent \$5 - current PLH/DCJ policy allows for a reduction of rent to a minimum \$5 per week in certain limited circumstances (going to aged care, rehabilitation, prison etc). DCJ have proposed a change to policy that where a tenant has lost their job, their rent be reduced to \$5 minimum until Centrelink benefits start to be received. PLH’s policy is amended to be consistent with DCJ approach until further notice. Where tenants advise of change of circumstances, normal PLH policy continues to apply, where any rent decrease adjustments will be made immediately, effective from the date of change. • No Rent Increases – current PLH/DCJ policy requires that rent is recalculated every six months and where an increase in income is advised. PLH’s policy is amended to pause implementation of rent increase adjustments until further notice. In March PLH sent letters requesting income confirmation for the regular rent review, however. It has been decided not to proceed with the planned rent review in April. Tenants may continue to provide income information that PLH will record but not process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Stimulus payments – DCJ has confirmed that COVID19 stimulus payments are not to be counted as income for purpose of calculation of rent subsidy.
<p>CP40 Arrears Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Evictions for Rent Arrears - DCJ policy requires that no evictions are to occur for rent arrears providing a tenant agrees to a payment plan with a mandatory automatic payment of rent via CentrePay. PLH's policy is amended to comply with DCJ policy. Most PLH tenants who are receiving government benefits will not experience any loss of income and are being reminded of the importance of continuing to pay their rent and secure their tenancy. Tenants are advised to contact PLH to discuss payment plans should they be experiencing hardship. • PLH will continue to adhere to normal Arrears policy in the issue of a Notice of Termination and seeking Specific Performance Orders through NCAT for rent arrears / non rent arrears. • NCAT appearances will be conducted via phone or online as specified by the tribunal. • PLH policy in relation to non-rent related tenancy matters (such as property care) has not changed and where there are tenancy breaches or anti-social behaviour, we will take appropriate actions, which may include termination.
<p>CP41 Housing Transfer Policy</p>	<p>During the COVID19 period, PLH will only process transfer requests that are required due to urgent or exceptional circumstances. Non-urgent transfer requests will be suspended.</p>
<p>CP33 Property Inspections Policy & Maintenance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To comply with social distancing requirements, tenancy inspections under the Residential Tenancies Act are being deferred until further notice. Regular welfare phone calls to elderly and vulnerable residents are being made until the situation becomes clearer. • For ingoing and outgoing inspections where there is a change of tenancy, these will be conducted in accordance with social distancing measures. Moving house currently remains a 'reasonable excuse' activity that is not in breach of public health orders and PLH will continue to process tenancy allocations, commencement and ending of tenancies, while aiming to minimise vacancy periods. • Non-essential maintenance is being deferred until further notice. Urgent works will continue to be carried out and tenants are requested to call the office or email details and photos to maintenance@pacificlink.org.au. • While non-essential maintenance is on hold, normal cleaning of common areas and multi-tenancy properties will not change. In certain properties with potentially higher risk of infection spread, more frequent cleaning at certain high-volume areas is being implemented. • Smoke alarm inspections that are required to be conducted annually and other essential maintenance will continue to be conducted by PLH's contractors, in order to comply with the Residential Tenancies Act. Inspections will be rescheduled

	<p>where a tenant or household member is COVID19 positive. PLH contractors will take necessary distancing measures and use personal protective equipment where necessary to prevent infection spread.</p>
CP57 Community Engage and Partnerships Policy	<p>To comply with social distancing requirements, all tenant engagement activities, training, events and workshops have been suspended until further notice.</p>
CP59 Resident Services and Support Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While PLH aims to continue to provide normal services as far as possible, our office is currently closed for visitors and appointments until further notice. Tenants and applicants are encouraged to contact PLH by phone or email. • PLH will provide regular updates by letter, website and social media to keep tenants and residents informed of changes in services and availability of community support services for those in need.
CP56 Running a Business from a Property	<p>Tenants may not run a business from a PLH property unless prior written approval has been obtained. During the COVID19 period, tenants are not permitted to conduct any business from a PLH property that would breach compliance with social distancing measures and public health orders.</p>
CP16 Working From Home Policy	<p>To comply with social distancing measures, PLH has directed that the majority of PLH staff are to work from home instead of the office. There will be two rotating teams of a small number of staff working in the office.</p> <p>For staff working from home, it is acknowledged that flexibility in working hours will be required to care for children and family members. Staff are encouraged to discuss their circumstances with their managers. Staff are regularly being provided with WHS information in relation to best practice safety and ergonomics for their working from home set-up, video conferencing access to minimise social isolation and welfare calls from colleagues.</p>