

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how Pacific Link Housing (PLH) manages hazardous materials, control of pests and mould that may be harmful to health in our properties.

Scope

The policy is applicable to all properties owned and managed by PLH, the people who live in them and the people who visit them, including PLH staff and contractors. The policy ensures that PLH takes all reasonable and practical steps to eliminate or minimise the impact that hazardous materials can have on health and safety within our homes. This policy complies with Work Health and Safety Legislation, the Safe Work Australia Codes of Practice and relevant Australian Standards.

Policy

PLH acknowledges its responsibility to provide homes which are safe from hazardous building materials, pests and mould and will do all that is reasonably practicable in order to meet this commitment.

Hazardous Building Materials

Buildings contain many different types of materials and associated chemicals. Unless managed and handled properly some of these can potentially affect the health of people undertaking works and those living there. Materials such as lead paint or asbestos that are in good condition, not peeling or creating dust, or are sealed behind non-hazardous materials such as new paint, are relatively safe. If the material is in good condition, it is best to leave it alone. Disturbing or removing it unsafely can create a greater hazard. The hazardous building materials most typically under consideration in Australia are:

- Asbestos
- Lead-based paint systems
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB)

Asbestos

Removing or working with building materials that contain asbestos can release asbestos fibres, creating a health risk. These fibres are too small to see, but if they are inhaled can irritate lung tissue, causing a number of diseases that can take many years to develop. Asbestos was banned from being used in fibro or sheet asbestos cement products made after 1982, corrugated products (mainly roofing materials) in 1984 and all other products by 1986. Its use was completely banned in 2003. In accordance with the NSW Land & Housing Corporation Asset Management Framework, PLH assumes that all properties built in or before 1987 contain asbestos.

Where asbestos containing materials remain undisturbed, are stable, and are maintained in good condition, they are not considered a risk to health and safety. In managing the risks of asbestos PLH will identify asbestos-containing materials that may present a health risk, assess the risk and maintain and review control measures to minimise, as far as practicable, disturbance of and exposure to the asbestos-containing materials.

To identify and monitor asbestos, the reasonable steps that PLH will include:

- Inspecting the condition of asbestos-containing material as part of the three yearly property condition assessments undertaken on all of our properties;

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- Requiring all of our contractors, whether asbestos specialists or not, to report instances where they consider there might be a risk of asbestos damage;
- Requiring all of our staff to report instances where they consider there might be a risk of asbestos damage;
- Encouraging tenants to report instances where asbestos damage has occurred; and
- Encourage support partners and other advocates to inform PLH where they suspect damage has occurred.

PLH will ensure relevant staff and contractors undertake appropriate training in identification of asbestos containing materials and their condition.

When Damaged Asbestos is Found

If asbestos is identified as being disturbed or in poor condition PLH will take the following action:

- Advise the tenant (and neighbours, where appropriate) and provide information on how they should prepare for the work to be undertaken and eliminate the risk of health impacts
- Engage a licensed asbestos consultant to advise on risk mitigation and control strategies and, where appropriate, appoint a licensed asbestos removalist
- Record the event in the Property Register for Hazardous materials
- Where the property is not owned by PLH, advise the owner so that they can be engaged in determining the most appropriate solution.

All work on PLH properties regarding the management of asbestos handling and removing will be prioritised and conducted in accordance with all relevant State Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice and industry best practice standards. PLH's licensed contractor must put in place an Asbestos Management Plan for each job, which considers:

- Ensuring a competent person maintains regular surveillance of the area
- Conducting air monitoring while working in the affected area
- Developing procedures for the safe disposal of asbestos waste
- Decontamination procedures for workers and wash down procedures for workers leaving an affected area.

Periodic reviews of the Asbestos Risk Management Plan will be performed to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Where latent asbestos needs to be removed in a social housing dwelling, PLH will comply with the procedure provided in the Land and Housing Corporation Asset Management Framework 2017. Where a vacant property is found to contain damaged asbestos it will not be re-let until the asbestos risk has been removed. PLH will investigate complaints of unsafe work practices by contractors handling asbestos material.

Lead Based Paint

Lead paint was widely used in the construction of houses and domestic building stock up to 1970 in NSW up to 1970 in high concentrations and until 1997 in lower concentrations. Until advised otherwise, PLH treats all properties built before 1970 as if they contain paints with high levels of lead. Intact lead paint is not considered a hazard provided its condition has not deteriorated. Exposure to lead is a health hazard and even small amounts of dust or chips of paint containing lead, generated during minor home repairs, can be a health risk. Anyone painting a house or doing maintenance that could disturb paint containing lead should avoid exposing themselves and their families, neighbours or pets to its hazards. As part of the

three yearly property assessment cycle, PLH Assets team consider the condition of the paintwork for each property, particularly where lead paint may be present, and flaking paint will be reported for remediation by trained contractors in compliance with lead safe practices.

Poly Chlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

PCB is an abbreviation for polychlorinated biphenyls, a group of synthetic, chlorinated organic compounds. PCBs are oily, viscous liquids and chemically very stable. They are toxic chemicals responsible for environmental pollution and are suspected human carcinogens and prolonged exposure may result in dermatitis conditions. PCB materials may be encountered in electrical equipment imported or manufactured before 1975. PLH will engage a qualified contractor to dispose of components of light fittings containing PCBs, once detected, in accordance with legislative requirements and industry best practice thereby preventing environmental contamination and acting in the best interests of health and safety.

Meth Drug Labs Contamination

The process of cooking methamphetamine (ice) and other meth-based drugs involves the use of dangerous chemicals and can leave a highly toxic residue on surfaces within a property. There is currently no evidence of harm from passive exposure to methamphetamine smoking or from residue of smoking by previous occupants of a property.

PLH staff will be trained on the signs that a property is being used as a clandestine drug laboratory and the steps to take when this is suspected, including informing police and the property owner, if not PLH.

Where PLH becomes aware of a property having been used as a clandestine drug laboratory, government advice on testing and remediation will be followed which may include specialist cleaning to remove any toxic chemical residues from soft furnishings, carpets, floors, walls and ceilings.

Hazardous Material Management Plan and Hazardous Substances Register

When PLH becomes aware that hazardous substances such as asbestos, lead paint, PCBs or drug contamination are present or where it could potentially be a hazard, PLH will immediately act to remove the hazard or, where this is not practical, minimise any impact. Where hazardous material is known to exist it will be recorded on the PLH Property Register. This will allow us to inform our contractors of any risks when carrying out works on properties and allow us to better manage the safety of the tenant and our staff. This data will be incorporated into our Annual and Ten Year Asset Management Plans so that we are able to plan our approach to taking all reasonable steps to eliminate, or where this is not possible, minimise the impact on health and safety. When we become aware of hazardous material in properties that we manage on behalf of other owners, we will immediately advise the owner. In accordance with the Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 PLH will report all significant contamination to the Environmental Protection Authority.

Pest Management

Rats, mice, cockroaches, fleas, termites (white ants), wasps, and ants can cause infestation of pests and vermin in the home which can be harmful to health. Under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010, both landlords and tenants have responsibilities for management of pests in dwellings. In properties owned by PLH or managed on behalf of NSW Land and

Housing Corporation, PLH will ensure that at the commencement of a tenancy a property that it is free from pest infestations. PLH will ensure the property remains free of pests in line with our responsibilities for pest control as specified in the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010. In leasehold properties and properties managed on a fee for service basis, PLH will take reasonable steps to ensure that the property owner has met their responsibilities and the property is pest free. For pest problems that occur during a tenancy, the tenant is generally responsible to manage the infestation.

Notifying Tenants about Pest Control

It is compulsory for the landlord to notify tenants when pesticides are being used in the common areas of a unit block or complex. PLH will provide tenants with written notice of at least 5 working days before a pesticide application. The pest management technician is responsible for giving tenants notice while a pesticide application is underway. Notifying tenants about pesticide use before it happens does not mean the tenant can prevent the use of pesticides in the area. The aim of the notification is to allow people to choose to reduce their exposure to the pesticides if they wish. If a pest emergency occurs and pesticides need to be used in the common area of a unit block or complex, then it is not necessary for the landlord to give tenants prior notice, but it is still necessary for the pest management technician to give notice immediately prior to the application of the pesticide. A pest emergency may include a sudden infestation of dangerous, biting or stinging pests such as rodents, wasps, bees, venomous spiders or bird mites.

Tenant Responsibilities for Pest Control

Under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010, the tenant is responsible for the eradication of pests within their home or garden if the infestation occurs after the tenant has moved in. If a PLH tenant lives in a leasehold property or property managed by PLH on a fee for service arrangement, the tenant should contact PLH immediately to determine action. The tenant must never directly correspond with the property owner/agent.

PLH expects tenants to take reasonable action to prevent pest infestation. This includes:

- Regularly and securely removing rubbish from the home and properly disposing of it and to not allow rubbish to pile up inside or outside of the property
- Properly storing food by ensuring all packaged food is tightly closed and not leaving fresh food out in the open for significant periods
- Regularly vacuuming and cleaning floors
- Regularly cleaning kitchen work surfaces and cupboards and ensuring dirty dishes are not piled up in the sink or around the property
- Routinely using pest prevention treatments, such as mousetraps, powders, sprays and baits
- If a pet is kept in the home, ensuring the pet is kept clean and treated for infestations, particularly fleas, on a regular basis (see PLH's policy on pets for more information); and ensure pet's food bowls are cleaned regularly and any leftover pet food is disposed of.
- Not feeding wild birds such as pigeons or other species
- Regularly cleaning the garden of loose leaves and debris.

PLH may also request to see a copy of a certificate of treatment for fleas or receipts for purchasing flea treatments from a tenant if a severe flea infestation is present at the property. In situations where tenants do not take reasonable precautions to deal with a pest infestation and consequently any neighbouring properties become infected due to the tenant's neglect, PLH may recharge the tenant who neglected their responsibilities. If a

tenant has a pet, PLH can request that carpets are professionally cleaned at the end of the tenancy to prevent pests. If pests are present in the property at the end of the tenancy PLH may recharge the tenant.

Mould

Mould is part of a group of very common organisms called fungi that are present virtually everywhere, both indoors and outdoors. Mould may grow indoors in wet or damp areas lacking adequate ventilation, including walls, ceilings, bathrooms, carpets, insulation material and wood. If moisture accumulates in a building, mould growth will often occur and airborne spores have the potential to cause health problems, if inhaled.

Prevention of Mould Growth

PLH will take reasonable steps to ensure that properties are designed and maintained to prevent mould issues by including adequate ventilation, addressing rising damp and installing ventilation fans in bathrooms. There are a number of steps that tenants can take to prevent mould growing in their home and PLH provides regular information in newsletters including:

- opening windows and doors when weather permits to allow airflow
- opening curtains and blinds to allow sunlight during the day
- always using exhaust fans in bathrooms, when cooking or running a clothes dryer.

Tenants must notify PLH as soon as possible if they see any signs of mould or damp developing during the tenancy. Where mould accumulates, PLH will work with the tenant to ascertain the reason for the mould and who is responsible to rectify. This may be a shared responsibility, depending on the circumstances.