

# Absence from Property Policy (QLD)

## 1. Purpose

To define HOME in PLACE (Queensland) Limited (HOME in PLACE QLD)'s approach to ensuring properties are not left vacant for extended periods of time and how HOME in PLACE (QLD) manages absences from properties.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to social housing properties and social housing tenancies managed by HOME in PLACE. This policy does not apply to affordable housing properties.

This policy applies to HOME in PLACE entities. References to HOME in PLACE in this policy refer to all HOME in PLACE companies unless specified otherwise.

The policy applies to all workers, directors and members of HOME in PLACE decision-making committees and advisory bodies. The policy applies to third parties engaged to carry out activities on behalf of HOME in PLACE if stipulated by agreements.

## 3. Policy Statement

HOME in PLACE QLD recognises that social and affordable housing is a limited resource and in high demand. HOME in PLACE QLD expects tenants to live in their property in accordance with their tenancy agreement. To ensure HOME in PLACE QLD meets its obligations as a social and affordable housing provider it is essential that properties are not left vacant by tenants for extended periods of time. Tenants have a right to be away from their properties for reasonable purposes and for fair periods of time. In managing tenant absences HOME in PLACE QLD must balance the needs of the tenants with the needs of those people waiting for housing assistance and ensure the use of community housing is maximised.

### Reasons for absences

Tenants who are away from their property for longer than eight (8) weeks need approval from HOME in PLACE QLD prior to the absence. HOME in PLACE QLD will approve an absence if it is satisfied that the tenant has an acceptable reason for being away, this includes, but may not be limited to:

- For improved health and wellbeing such as for treatment, hospitalisation or rehabilitation or to meet care responsibilities;
- To allow tenants to improve their circumstances through work/training/study;
- In recognition and support of cultural needs;
- For travel related to a significant life event, circumstance or emergencies;

- Where there is domestic violence or family violence or child safety issues;
- To contribute to outcomes that reduce reoffending and homelessness for tenant who are incarcerated with a release date in the near future.

Tenant will be required to provide evidence for an absence. Tenants are expected to continue to meet their obligations in accordance with their tenancy agreement during their absence.

## Obtaining approval for absences

For absences of more than eight (8) weeks up to a maximum of five (5) months, at a time, or in total in a twelve (12) month period tenant must have HOME in PLACE QLD approval. Tenants must provide the following information to assist in the assessment of their request:

- The reasons for the proposed absence;
- Who remains in the property during the proposed absence;
- Confirm contact details during the proposed absence;
- If a tenant is not contactable during the absence they are to provide contact details for their nominated contact person;
- Arrangements for caring for and monitoring the property during the proposed absence

Each request will be assessed and tenants notified of the outcome in writing.

Tenants do not need approval to be absent from their property for periods up to eight (8) weeks at a time, or in total in any twelve (12) month period. Tenants will be responsible for paying rent and caring for the property during their absence. However, tenants are requested to notify HOME in PLACE QLD of their intention to be absent and provide HOME in PLACE QLD with the following information:

- Contact details during these absences;
- Who will remain in the property during the tenant's absence;

When tenants are absent from their property for unreasonable periods HOME in PLACE QLD will reassess the tenant's need for ongoing subsidised community housing assistance.

## Absences without approval or in excess of agreed time limit

If a tenant is away from the property without HOME in PLACE QLD approval, or away for longer than the agreed period, HOME in PLACE QLD will try to contact the tenant to discuss the absence. HOME in PLACE QLD may

also take the following action:

- Applying market rent;
- Issuing a Notice to Leave.

## Tenants who are incarcerated

If a tenant goes to prison, they can apply to retain their tenancy for an initial period of three (3) months. An absence due to incarceration may be extended on review at the end of the three (3) month period for

a maximum period of six (6) months in total. If a tenant is incarcerated for longer than six (6) months they will be asked to relinquish the tenancy.

If the incarceration is related to a breach of the tenancy agreement, HOME in PLACE QLD will take action to terminate the tenancy.

## Tenants moving into aged care

If a tenant moves into an aged care facility, HOME in PLACE QLD will request the tenant end their tenancy unless the stay in the facility is for short term respite care.

## Care of the property during absences

The tenant has obligations during any absences. The tenant:

- Is required to continue to pay their rent and any other non-rent charges such as water usage;
- Must ensure the property is secure during the absence;
- Must plan for the property to be maintained during the absence, for example, lawns and gardens are maintained.

A tenant may appoint someone else to act on their behalf during the absence, if this occurs the tenant will provide HOME in PLACE QLD with:

- Written consent for HOME in PLACE QLD to discuss any tenancy matter with the nominated person;
- Name and contact details for the nominated person.

The nominated person must:

- Be over 18 years of age;
- May be another household member, family member, friend, support provider or legal representative;
- Inspect and maintain the property during the tenant's absence

## Eligibility for reduced rent

If, during an approved absence, the tenant is required to pay a fee to stay in an aged care facility (respite), hospital, rehabilitation or refuge accommodation HOME in PLACE QLD will consider applying a reduced rent. The tenant will be required to provide evidence of any fees or reduced income.

When a tenant is incarcerated HOME in PLACE QLD may apply reduced rent for an initial period of three (3) months.

## Review of decisions

If a tenant's application for an absence from the property is declined, the tenant should first discuss this with a Tenancy Relations Officer. If the tenant is still dissatisfied, they have the right to lodge an appeal for a formal review of the decision. Appeal Request forms are available on the HOME in PLACE QLD website or by contacting a HOME in PLACE QLD branch.

## 4. Definitions and Acronyms Glossary

For clarification of any definitions or acronyms contained within this document, please click on the [Glossary](#) for information.

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