



Connect Victoria Park Community Housing

Sustainable Tenancies Policy

CVP Policies	Sustainable Tenancies	Effective date:	25/02/2025
Approved By	Connect CEO	Review date:	24/02/2027
Warning	This process is uncontrolled after printing		

Purpose

This policy provides guidance for Connect Victoria Park (CVP) Inc staff to establish and maintain successful/sustainable tenancies, supporting tenants to age well in their homes, to access support if they need, and to live independently for as long as they are able.

Scope

This policy applies to all CVP Inc staff, tenants, contractors and volunteers.

Definitions

Sustainable tenancies can be maintained successfully for as long as possible. The property needs to be appropriate for the tenant's requirements, and the tenant needs to possess the skills required to meet their responsibilities and live independently.

Complex needs, for older people, may include mental health, hoarding, discrimination based on ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, trauma due to history of domestic and family violence, homelessness and poverty, as well as long-term frailty, multimorbidity and complex neurological conditions such as dementia.

Principles

CVP Inc have a duty of care to their tenants and staff. This means that CVP Inc have a responsibility to help their tenants sustain their tenancy, within reason, and tenancy termination is only acceptable when all options have been fully explored.

CVP Inc aims to provide homes where people want to live and where they feel safe, secure and connected.

CVP Inc understands the importance of housing as a foundation for people to be able to flourish through social connection and healthy ageing.

CVP Inc is committed to help its tenants enjoy a better quality of life, connect with others in the community, keep learning, contributing, and living independently for as long as possible.

CVP Inc acknowledges the special needs of older tenants and their households and the need to deliver services that are culturally appropriate.

CVP Inc seeks to understand the experiences of tenants who struggle to sustain their tenancies. It will collect information and keep up-to-date records, which will be reviewed to strengthen service delivery practices.

Village Hub

All CVP Inc tenants are automatically members of Connect Village Hub, the first initiative of its kind in Western Australia.

A membership-based community of people 55+, the Village Hub collaborates with older people to utilise their strengths and abilities so they can continue to live independently for as long as possible in the community they love.

As members, tenants can access the Village Hub Member Help Centre for assistance with day-to-day issues to help them continue living independently. They can also ask for help from other members for small tasks in the home.

At the Village Hub, they also have an array of classes and lifelong learning activities available at affordable rates and at a short distance from their units.

CVP Inc encourages tenants to take part in the Village Hub to promote healthy ageing, social connection and sustainable tenancies.

Property Allocations

CVP Inc staff will endeavour to understand tenants' individual requirements and, whenever possible, allocate properties according to those requirements.

This will include contacting the applicant's support provider (where appropriate consent has been provided by the applicant), if relevant, in relation to any proposed offer to the applicant.

CVP Inc's will consider risk in regard to a sustainable tenancy by a potential tenant with complex needs. This will help to determine appropriate referrals that could be made prior to signing the lease to assist the new tenant in preparing to move to their new accommodation.

Applicants who have a history of debt and/or rental arrears will be encouraged to link in with financial counselling and/or financial management to assist with developing a budget and increase budgeting

skills. Establishing this prior to the tenancy commencing will assist the tenant to sustain their tenancy.

Lease sign up

CVP Inc provides information in a format that is easy to read to ensure new tenants understand their rights and responsibilities. This includes expectations under both the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987* and CVP Inc's policies. If needed, the new tenant will be encouraged to bring a support person to the lease sign up to help them understand what they can do to sustain their tenancy.

Initial leases are for a fixed term period of 12 months, and will becoming periodic after this time, should there be no serious concerns with the tenancy.

Tenancy management

CVP Inc manage properties under the terms of the Residential Tenancies Act (WA) 1987, and Community Housing Regulatory Framework.

As part of CVP Inc's tenancy management activities, tenant wellbeing continues to remains the highest priority.

CVP Inc is committed to working with tenants, so they meet the terms of their tenancy, including:

- Paying rent on time
- Maintaining the cleanliness and hygiene of the unit
- Preventing damage to property
- Being courteous to neighbours, CVP Inc staff and volunteers
- Informing CVP Inc when maintenance is needed
- Informing CVP Inc if their circumstances change:
 - Changes to income
 - Guest Stay
 - Other tenancy challenges

Tenants must follow our Absence from Property Policy's guidelines to maintain the Community Housing discount to their rent.

CVP Inc will conduct routine inspections of all its tenantable properties in accordance with its Property Inspections Policy. In addition to assessing the condition of the property, routine

inspections allow CVP Inc to determine whether there are any tenancy issues, discuss any concerns the tenant might have, and refer tenants to relevant services to help sustain a tenancy.

If the terms of tenancy are continually not met – especially if issues have been addressed with staff and referral to support services have been made –, CVP Inc may choose to issue Breach Notices to try and resolve issues. This may include instances where a tenant:

- Fails to make rent or non-rent payments on time
- Fails to maintain satisfactory property standards
- Keeps unauthorised pets
- Causes nuisance or display anti-social behaviour (or allow visitors to do so)
- Has long term visitor or sublets their property without approval

Supporting ageing tenants

CVP Inc provides homes for people older than 60 years of age and encourages long-term tenancies. We understand the opportunities and challenges of independent living, as well as that the most likely reason for our tenants to move out is transition to age care.

CVP Inc acknowledges that older tenants may require increased support. We encourage tenants to check on their neighbours' welfare as a way for people to maintain independence. Our staff will work with next of kin, family members and/or support workers to assist in maintaining a tenancy where possible.

CVP Inc will respond to the changing housing needs of tenants fairly and flexibly, within its capacity, and in a manner consistent with legislation, eligibility criteria and CVP Inc's Allocation Policy. We will endeavour to provide support to tenants whose circumstances change through illness or injury, so they can remain in their home. This may include assistance to access home modification services or facilitating access to in-home care services and being put on the waitlist for an internal transfer.

In cases where maintaining a tenancy is not an option, we will refer the tenant to support to find alternative and appropriate accommodation.

Rent arrears

CVP Inc is committed to supporting tenants to manage their finances and meet their debt commitments. Tenants identified with complex needs and those with a previous history of rent arrears will be encouraged to use Centrepay to avoid rent arrears.

If arrears arise, CVP Inc will work on a realistic repayment arrangement with the tenant. A realistic payment arrangement will look different for each tenant, and will consider their arrears amount, the time over which a repayment can feasibly be made, and the impact on their situation. The Rent Arrears Policy outlines this in more detail.

We encourage tenants to give early notice of financial difficulties, and we may refer tenants (with their permission) to services that assist with budgeting or financial counselling.

Behaviours of Concern

A tenant's quiet enjoyment of a property is a right enshrined in the Residential Tenancies Act (WA) 1987 and must be enforced by the lessor.

Behaviours of concern can include ongoing or unreasonable instances of nuisance or disruption that occurs in and around CVP Inc properties that impacts negatively on other residents, or the wider community. This can include instances of:

- Excessive or ongoing noise
- Shouting or arguing
- Threatening or offensive behaviours
- Trespassing

If CVP Inc receive a report of a tenant exhibiting behaviours of concern, or witness it themselves, a case management meeting will be held with the tenant and a support person, if so desired. During this meeting the incident will be discussed, and the tenant will be reminded of the relevant policies and sections of their signed tenancy agreement.

Should it be required, the Housing Officer will work with the tenant to self-identify areas they can improve on, and strategies to prevent the recurrence of the behaviours of concern. This may result in a tenancy support plan being co-designed and agreed to with the tenant.

There are instances where behaviours exhibited due to an illness or mental illness are reported as nuisance behaviour. For tenants who are struggling with physical and mental illness, and it culminates in the exhibition of behaviours of concern, CVP Inc will be especially sensitive and supportive of these tenants to help find solutions to the root cause of the behaviours. Where there

are no reasonable adjustments that CVP Inc can make to improve the issue, CVP Inc will refer the tenants to specialised support services, or help facilitate a suitable assessment for support.

Some reports of behaviours of concern can amount to a misunderstanding of a tenant's actions based on lack of knowledge of cultural or religious practices. Where this has occurred, we will assist the tenant to evaluate if the time and place of these practices was appropriate and help identify a suitable alternative. In these instances, CVP Inc will also try and facilitate suitable education for other tenants to help foster understanding and inclusion.

Ending Tenancies

Tenancies come to an end for a variety of reasons. Where a tenant identifies that they are no longer able to maintain a tenancy and make other accommodation arrangements that are more suitable for them, they are required to provide CVP Inc with 21 days written notice, in accordance with the RTA (WA) 1987. This can be done by using a Form 22: Notice of Termination from Tenant to Lessor, or via email or letter.

The tenant may withdraw a notice to vacate at any time during those 21 days, with CVP Inc's consent, and they may give a further notice on the same or other grounds at a future date.

Where a tenant has been identified by CVP Inc as no longer able to sustain a tenancy without support, CVP Inc will work with the tenant, their family and/or supports to get an up-to-date ACAT, or equivalent assessment, to get the tenant the support they need to maintain a tenancy. However, if a tenant is identified as no longer being able to maintain a tenancy and they are already receiving adequate support, CVP Inc will work with the tenant, their family and/or their supports to source alternate accommodation more suitable to their needs.

Where a tenancy has persistent and enduring concerns, the Housing Officer will meet with the tenant and co-develop a Tenancy Support Plan to help the tenant sustain their tenancy. As part of this process, referrals will be made for the tenant for further support and advocacy, where required. Where the tenant does not engage with CVP Inc staff, or pursue relevant referrals, to resolve items of concern within the tenancy, and there is no improvement, the tenancy will be breached, with the approval of the CEO. There will be a maximum of 3 breaches with follow up meetings and attempts at support before a termination notice is issued.

Where there are concerns for the safety of the tenant, other residents or the property, a termination may be issued without a breach. CVP Inc have zero tolerance for violent or threatening behaviour, which includes any impact on the psychological safety of staff and other residents.

CVP Inc will take all reasonable steps to assist tenants to address concerns directly, before they become a breach of their tenancy, however the impact on staff, other tenants and the community, will be considered when responding.

In the case of a tenancy ending due to death, the tenancy will end immediately, and all rent will cease. The family or next of kin will be contacted and 14 days will be provided to them to empty the unit. More time can be provided at the discretion of the CVP Inc Operations Manager or CEO.

At the end of a tenancy

At the end of tenancy, tenants are responsible for:

- Providing CVP Inc with a forwarding address
- Giving CVP Inc vacant possession on the agreed vacancy date
- Returning all keys
- Removing all furniture, personal items and rubbish
- Leaving the property clean and tidy
- Removing any alterations or additions not approved to remain
- Paying any outstanding debts to CVP Inc

CVP Inc is responsible for:

- Confirming the tenant's vacate date
- Outlining end-of-tenancy processes in writing
- If need be, offering the tenant a pre-termination inspection to identify any potential charges and giving tenant opportunity to avoid such charges
- Identifying any cleaning issues and non-fair wear-and-tear in the property; liaise with the tenant to have them fixed or paid for
- Managing any abandoned goods in line with *Residential Tenancies Act 1987*
- Issuing a final account advising the tenant of any outstanding charges
- If there are no damage to the property and/or outstanding debts, proceeding with bond disposal