

Australian Capital Territory

Housing Assistance (Community Housing Providers) Standards 2009 (No 1)

Disallowable instrument DI2009–215

made under the

Housing Assistance Act 2007, s 25I (Community housing providers- standards)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Housing Assistance (Community Housing Providers) Standards 2009 (No 1)*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

3 Object

The object of these standards is to set the operational benchmark required for community housing providers, and to assist these providers to demonstrate that they are achieving quality outcomes for clients.

4 Application

Community housing providers must comply with these standards.

5 Interpretation

In this instrument;

‘the Act’ means the *Housing Assistance Act 2007*.

‘organisation’ means a registered community housing provider.

Note 1 The Act contains definitions that apply to these standards, including definitions of the following terms:

- community housing;
- housing;
- housing commissioner;

- housing provider; and
- information.

6 Standards

- (1) A community housing provider must supply the housing commissioner with evidence to demonstrate that these standards have been satisfied in order to meet the criteria for registration. The provider must be able to satisfy the housing commissioner of its compliance with these standards at all times. Reporting against the standards will be required under section 25N.
- (2) The indicators set out below each standard are intended to provide a guide as to the types of practices that may go towards satisfying the standards. They are not to be taken to be measures of compliance of themselves.

Standard 1 - Tenancy management

- (1) Community housing providers must provide effective tenancy management.
- (2) Indicators of effective tenancy management include:
 - the organisation has policies and strategies to deliver housing services in a fair and equitable manner to its tenants;
 - tenant rights are protected through formal tenancy agreements or, where appropriate, occupancy agreements consistent with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (and subsequent Acts);
 - the organisation develops and promotes internal dispute resolution processes in relation to:
 - applications and transfers;
 - rental rebates;
 - tenant rights; and
 - tenancy management decisions.
 - the organisation develops, and regularly maintains, written information on all its policies in a way that is readily accessible to tenants.

Standard 2 - Tenant rights and participation in the general management of community housing provision

- (1) Community housing providers should have appropriate participation processes for all tenants.
- (2) Indicators of appropriate participation processes include:
 - the organisation has mechanisms to regularly consult with tenants on issues that affect their housing, including development and

monitoring of its policies on tenancy management, access, allocation of housing and asset management.

Standard 3 - Governance and organisational management

- (1) Community housing providers should have clear arrangements for internal control and transparent decision making, appropriate to the scale and scope of the operations of the organisation.
- (2) Indicators of good governance and management include:
 - the organisation's core purpose, mission and values in relation to its housing program are aligned with the provision of community housing and/or the management of affordable housing, and the organisation acts at all times in accordance with its core purpose;
 - the organisation has policies to secure a sufficient number of appropriately qualified or experienced persons to participate as members of the board and ensures that vacancies are filled in a timely manner;
 - the roles and responsibilities of members of the board are communicated to each member in writing on their appointment and re-appointment and there is an appropriate induction process;
 - the organisation has developed strategies to identify, declare and manage potential and actual conflicts of interest;
 - the organisation has board approved policies and procedures covering all relevant areas under the National Community Housing Standards, or any other standards that may be nominated from time to time; and
 - the board has clear objectives contained within its Strategic Plan or other corporate planning documents and monitors progress and achievements against them.

Standard 4 - Finance

- (1) Community housing providers must remain financially viable and solvent at all times.
- (2) Indicators of financial viability include:
 - the organisation has sufficient non-restricted assets to cover its liability obligations and is able to cover unforeseen but serious financial risks;
 - the organisation is building adequate restricted cash reserves to meet its employee entitlement provisions (if required);
 - the organisation manages rental collections to ensure that arrears do not exceed a financially viable level of collectable rental income;

- the organisation has policies and strategies to minimise prolonged vacancies in housing stock and loss of income;
- the organisation has policies and strategies to monitor and control variances between actual to budgeted income and expenditure;
- the organisation has policies and strategies to limit income lost through rental bad debts, other bad debts and vacancies/voids;
- the organisation has an appropriately budgeted responsive maintenance program that is updated annually; and
- financial records certified by the board as representing a true and fair view of the organisation's financial condition and operational results are reviewed by the board not less than quarterly, and are independently audited not less than annually.

Standard 5 - Management systems, including human resource management

- (1) Community housing providers must be managed effectively at all times, particularly in relation to:

Property Management

- (a) Indicators of effective property management include:

- the organisation maintains a consistently high tenancy rate for all lettable properties;
- the organisation sets and consistently achieves an appropriate turnaround time for vacant properties;
- the organisation has an appropriately budgeted and planned cyclical maintenance program that is adhered to and is updated annually;
- urgent maintenance repairs on properties are completed as soon as necessary, having regard to the nature of the problem, in accordance with the requirements of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (and subsequent Acts); and
- responsive maintenance repairs on properties are completed within 4 weeks of being notified of the need for the repairs, in accordance with the requirements of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*.

Staffing

- (b) Indicators of effective staffing practices include:

- the organisation maintains appropriate staff levels to ensure it provides a high quality and cost effective housing service;
- the organisation selects staff on the basis of actual/potential skills and experience required to effectively carry out the functions of the organisation;

- the organisation has procedures for the appropriate screening of all persons (whether employees, volunteers or agents) to be involved in any way with children and/or vulnerable adults to ensure they are ‘fit and proper persons’;
- the organisation has policies with respect to staff development and training and regularly reviews the staffing of the organisation to ensure the operational needs of the organisation are met;
- remuneration of staff is commensurate with skills and experience and the scale and complexity of the organisation’s operations; and
- the relationship between organisational performance, individual performance and remuneration is clearly and appropriately defined.

Financial Management

(c) Indicators of effective financial management include:

- the organisation has clear, articulated delegations for the approval of expenditure in its community housing program;
- the organisation has clear records on expenditure in its community housing program and cross-subsidisation between its community housing program and other activities; and
- the organisation meets statutory and administrative requirements to submit reports on time.

Martin Hehir
Commissioner for Social Housing
30 September 2009