

Hoarding Management Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines how YWCA Australia (YWCA) staff will approach and manage situations of compulsive hoarding or obsessive collecting in YWCA properties.

2. Scope

This policy applies to YWCA staff responsible for working with YWCA residents and properties.

This document is a national policy covering YWCA Housing and YWCA National Housing. All references to YWCA Housing include both unless specifically stated otherwise. Where state-based variations exist in policies and procedures, these will be identified in this document.

This policy applies to all forms of housing owned and/or managed by YWCA including community and affordable residential rental properties and rooming houses.

Other YWCA policies may need to be considered when addressing Hoarding and Hoarding behaviours. To assist you, these are identified where relevant in this policy and supporting procedures.

3. Definitions

Compulsive hoarding	A behavioural pattern involving an excessive accumulation of possessions and causing significant distress or impairment to the individual.
Resident	For brevity, the term 'resident' refers to renters and tenants of rented premises, and residents of rooming houses.
Obsessive collecting	Any excessive accumulation of items that the person collecting has little to no control over.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. Leaders –General Manager Housing Operations

- Ensuring that YWCA complies with this policy and associated procedures.
- Recommending any changes to this policy and associated procedures.
- Assisting YWCA to implement this policy.
- Ensuring good management of evidence in the tenancy management system.
- Incorporating this policy and associated procedures into staff induction and training.
- Ensuring staff are aware of and have access to this policy and associated procedures.
- Escalating feedback about this policy to the policy owner and/or policy writer.

4.2. People and Culture

- Incorporating this policy and associated procedures into staff induction and training.
- Ensuring staff are aware of and have access to this policy and associated procedures.
- Escalating feedback about this policy to the policy owner and/or policy writer.

4.3. Employees – Housing staff and Community Housing Officers

- Informing residents of their rights and responsibilities in accordance with this policy.
- Inspecting properties and identifying and responding to issues as required.
- Issuing notices where required in accordance with this policy.
- Keeping records of the process in the relevant systems.
- Recommending improvements to this policy and associated procedures.

5. Policy

YWCA is focused on the needs of the resident and respects their privacy. YWCA has a responsibility to intervene when living conditions are affecting the ability of residents and neighbours to live happily and healthily. When approaching, assessing, and managing instances of hoarding, YWCA considers the following principles:

- Residents will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Actions and decisions will be collaborative where possible, and the grounds for any actions and decisions are explained to residents.
- The safety of the resident and household members is paramount.
- The safety, health and amenity of neighbours should not be adversely affected.
- YWCA properly maintains and protects the value of assets and managed properties.

When compulsive hoarding is identified in a YWCA property, residents are assisted to access support to sustain their tenancies wherever possible.

The YWCA process is fair, transparent and complies with relevant laws, standards, and regulations. Process transparency and accountability are supported through comprehensive record keeping practices.

Residents are given the opportunity to appeal organisational decisions to ensure fair and transparent outcomes.

5.1. General management

Hoarding can pose significant risks to residents and neighbours including fire or other property damage, vermin, and reduced amenity. YWCA:

- Promotes and respects the right of residents to organise properties in a manner of their choosing, where resident choice is consistent with applicable agreements.
- Does not condone or permit the use of its properties for purposes outside of applicable agreements.
- Supports residents wherever possible to live independently and will assist them to comply with the terms and conditions of their agreement.
- Will promptly assess and address identified property hazards and risks relating to hoarding.

When entering a property where hoarding is suspected or has been identified, YWCA are to ensure they are wearing appropriate clothing and have access to adequate personal protective equipment (PPE). YWCA staff will not intervene without the consent

and cooperation of the resident unless the amount or nature of the accumulated goods poses an immediate and significant risk to the property and/or to neighbours or the household occupants, such as due to the risk of fire, emergency access, pests, or noxious odours. YWCA has both a duty and a legal right to insist on urgent action to reduce such risks.

If the resident is unwilling or unable to consent and/or cooperate in circumstances where their hoarding poses an unacceptable risk, YWCA may take legal action to obtain a compliance order or, as a last resort, to end the tenancy.

5.2. Early intervention

From the time a tenancy begins, YWCA Community Housing Officers will use the routine inspection process to identify potential tenancy management issues including hoarding, per the Inspections Policy. YWCA will ensure that safety devices such as smoke alarms and RCD's are in working order with appropriate clearance from hoarded goods, and utilities are connected.

Where hoarding is identified, suspected, or reported, YWCA will regularly monitor properties to develop accurate records of evidence. Where necessary, YWCA will:

Advise residents that they are in breach of their tenancy responsibilities, providing them with the opportunity to rectify the problem as per the Breach of Tenancy Policy; and

Refer identified residents to support services to build their capacity to sustain their tenancy.

5.3. Protection of children

YWCA will comply with the legislative requirement to keep children safe by reporting significant child risks to the National Team Leader for monitoring and/or escalation.

5.4. Response escalation

YWCA will work in a holistic respectful manner and use the mechanisms available to it under state residential tenancy legislation to assist a resident to remedy or rectify issues of hoarding and access the support services they may require.

YWCA will work with agencies and organisations where required to address the identified risks associated with hoarding and enforce the right of all residents to safe living environments.

If all efforts to remedy and sustain the tenancy fail, YWCA will act under the Breach of Tenancy Policy, which may include advice to the resident that a termination notice will be issued per the Ending a Tenancy Policy.

The resident's safety, wellbeing and human rights will be considered throughout any end of tenancy processes, and wherever possible, YWCA will refer residents to alternative housing and support options if resolution cannot be reached.

5.5. Asset management issues

Where a property has been or may have been damaged because of hoarding, YWCA will inform and work with the Assets Management team to determine what action needs to be taken.

5.6. Fines, fees, and charges

There are often costs associated with managing hoarding including the removal of hoarded material, vermin control and repairing damage to the property or adjoining properties. Residents are responsible for paying fines, fees or charges incurred through negligible treatment of property, whether this treatment is intended or unintended.

6. Record keeping

Housing staff should keep accurate records in the appropriate property and/or renter record of tenancy management system including but not limited to:

- Property inspection reports and photographic evidence.
- Support services information and resident consent forms.
- Warning letters for breach of tenancy and/or notice letters for termination.

Document Data Control

Hoarding Management Policy				
Responsible Body			Director, Development and Housing	
Accountable Officer			General Manager, Housing Operations	
Supersedes			Hoarding Policy v1.0	
Associated documents			Breach of Tenancy Policy Sustaining Tenancies Policy Hardship & Temporary Absence Policy	
Legislation			Housing Assistance Act 1996 (COM) Housing Act 1983 (VIC) Housing Act 2003 (QLD) Housing Regulations 2015 (QLD) Housing Act 1982 (NT) Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (VIC) Residential Tenancies & Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (QLD) Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT) National Affordable Housing Agreement Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Queensland Human Rights Act 2019 National Community Housing Standards Department of Human Services Standards (VIC) Consumer Charter for Community Managed Housing and Homelessness Services (VIC) National Community Housing Regulatory Code Victorian Community Housing Regulatory Code State based agreements between YWCA and statutory bodies	
Approval and Amendment history				
Review period – 2 years				
Approval date	Effective date	Version	Amendments	Next review
Jun 2022	Jun 2022	1.0	Superseded Hoarding	Jun 2024
Jun 2024	Jun 2024	2.0	Revised to incorporate principles of WHF.	Jun 2026