

Victorian Housing Register Management Update #8

Introduction

This update is to provide CHIA Vic members with information on the implementation and operation of the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). The VHR was launched in September 2016 and its purpose is to provide a single, consistent, application process for people seeking to access public housing and community housing.

In this update we provide an update on the likely timing of the release of key documents to facilitate the opting in of community housing organisations (CHOs) to the VHR (Stage 2).

What has happened since our last update in December?

In short, not a great deal of public activity but DHHS has been working internally to resolve issues that members have raised during the consultation.

Just to recap.

DHHS released a draft **Allocations Framework** for consultation in August last year. The key element of the draft Framework was that participating CHOs would be required to allocate 75 per cent of social housing vacancies annually to the VHR's *priority access applicants*, including rooming house vacancies and properties that have nomination rights over them. Priority access applicants are households with low incomes and who meet additional need-based criteria including people who: are escaping family violence; are homeless; need supported housing; have special housing needs or are aged 55 years and over.

DHHS called for submissions from the industry on the draft by mid-September.

In our submission, we expressed concerns that the 75% priority access allocations target was a significant change to current arrangements and may have adverse financial consequences to CHIA Vic members, compromising our sector's ability to continue to provide quality affordable housing.

What's Next?

After much internal work we understand that DHHS is planning to release a package of documents for the sector to review. The aim is to release the package next week and it will include:

- A revised **Allocations Framework**, which we hope will take into account the sector's concerns

- **A VHR Participation Agreement:** This will be the agreement between *participating registered agencies* (a CHO that opts-in) and the Director of Housing. It is the agreement that a CHO formally agrees to the conditions for the use of the VHR, such as privacy and information sharing, as well as the Allocations Framework in place of their current funding agreements with the Director.
- **A VHR Performance Monitoring Framework :** This will explain the Director of Housing’s approach to monitoring participating registered agencies’ compliance with the terms of participation of the VHR as articulated in the VHR Participation Agreement and other agreements, monitoring participating registered agencies’ compliance with their VHR obligations under the *Housing Act 1983*, and responding to identified performance issues. It should articulate the difference between contract management and regulation.

CHIA Vic will commission legal advice on the Participation Agreement and Performance Monitoring Framework on behalf of our members to feedback to DHHS as soon as the documents are made available.

If the documents are released next week then the timelines should look something like this.

Step	Likely timing
1. Key documents are finalised by DHHS and released to the sector for review.	Week commencing 5 March
2. CHIA Vic members meeting to discuss the package of documents.	Tentatively 15 March
3. Sector provides feedback to DHHS on package DHHS then has a couple of weeks to finalise the package of documents	Say week commencing 19 March
4. Enter VHR process CHOs formally invited to join by Director of Housing	Say 1 st or 2 nd week of April
5. Resolve property portfolio organisation by organisation: Targeted Social Housing (for purposes of allocations framework)	From mid April CHOs can apply to opt in. There will probably not be an opt-in window of 3 months as previously suggested. CHOs have time to analyse arrangements and consult with their Boards
6. Approved by DoH Once approved, the DoH confirms the CHO is now authorised to participate in the VHR	This is likely to occur in stages across the sector as CHOs opt-in.
7. Commence Stage 3: Combining data held on waiting lists/ registers of interest of CHOs that opt-in with VHR	

Other resources

The [CHIA Vic website](#) contains a range of resources to assist CHOs to get ready for the due diligence process on whether to opt-in to the VHR. This includes:

Information for Boards

A succinct high-level briefing paper for members to provide to their boards to assist in this process.

Due Diligence Checklist

To assist members in preparing for the introduction of the VHR. It is intended to be used as a general guide for due diligence on a decision by the organisation on whether to opt-in in the VHR. Members should obtain their own independent legal and financial advice on their particular circumstances.

Privacy and Information Sharing Legal Advice and Factsheet

Following recent changes to the Housing Act 1983 the VHR will be available to organisations in Victoria to access and to fill vacancies. There are a range of privacy obligations your organisation will need to consider in order merge applicant databases with the VHR and participate in its ongoing operation.

CHIA Vic has commissioned Moores to prepare legal advice on privacy and information sharing and a fact sheet to assist members to get involved in the VHR in accordance with relevant privacy laws. Please contact us if you wish to receive a copy.

Template policies

CHIA Vic has prepared template policies that reflect the VHR's operating environment for members to use as guide:

- Allocation of long-term housing
- Eligibility for long-term housing
- Rent setting/ rental subsidy
- Privacy and information sharing
- Complaints and appeals