

## **Victorian Housing Register** **Management Update #9**

### **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 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 February?**

DHHS has completed their work on the key documents and has released them to the sector this week for comment.

All registered CHOs should have received an email with:

- A letter from the Director of Housing presenting the VHR Opt-in documents and inviting your comments and questions.
- The revised **Allocations Framework**
- The **VHR Participation Agreement (Participation in the Victorian Housing Register: Registered Agency Agreement)**: This is 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.
- The **VHR Performance Monitoring Framework** : This explains 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.
- A **VHR Property Assessment Tool**, which illustrates how the allocation target will be calculated.
- A **Guidance Note** on the Property Assessment Tool.

Community housing organisations have until 30 March to submit comments or questions to the department.

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.

The revised allocations framework has softened the target by restricting it to 'Targeted Social Housing', and allowing CHOs to count priority access allocations made to Non-targeted Social Housing towards this target.

Non-Targeted Social Housing properties include NRAS properties **without** a DoH interest, Nation Building properties, and properties that did not receive any government funding. These properties will retain their current allocation targets or tenant cohort requirements. Community housing organisations will need to negotiate which properties make up their Targeted Social Housing list directly with the department as part of the opt-in process.

## What's Next?

CHIA Vic is commissioning legal advice on the Participation Agreement on behalf of our members now to assist with the opt-in process. This advice will be provided to members as soon as possible, but will most likely not be available prior to the DHHS deadline for comments.

The Participation Agreement outlines the general obligations of being a participating registered agency. This includes having up-to-date and publicly available documents on the following:

- Information security policy
- Complaints policy
- Code of conduct
- Rent setting policy
- Allocations policy

Agencies are also required to maintain an up-to-date asset register.

CHIA Vic is taking 'publicly available' to mean that CHOs must have a web presence of some kind. CHOs who intend to opt into the VHR should ensure that they have these policies available on their website.

CHOs that require assistance in creating a website are invited to get in touch with CHIA Vic's Communications Manager, Kate Robertson: [kate.robertson@chiavic.com.au](mailto:kate.robertson@chiavic.com.au) or 9654 6077.

## Timeline for Opting in

The Director indicated in his letter that the invitation to opt into the VHR will be issued in April. Based on that the timelines should look something like this:

| Step  | Likely timing  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Key documents are finalised by DHHS and released to the sector for review.</b>  | 20 March 2018  |
| <b>2. CHIA Vic members meeting to discuss the package of documents.</b>   | 26 March 2018  |
| <b>3. Sector provides feedback to DHHS on package</b><br>DHHS then has a couple of weeks to finalise the package of documents         | 30 March 2018  |
| <b>4. Enter VHR process</b><br>CHOs formally invited to join by Director of Housing   | Say mid April  |
| <b>5. Resolve property portfolio organisation by organisation: Targeted Social Housing</b><br>(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 |
| <b>6. Approved by DoH</b><br>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.  |
| <b>7. Commence Stage 3:</b> 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