

## Winda-Mara Housing Program (WMHP) Goods Left Behind Policy

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## WMHP Goods Left Behind Policy

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Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation ('WMAC') and Winda-Mara Housing Limited ('WMHL') work together to deliver safe, secure and affordable housing solutions for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members living in far southwest Victoria.

The activities, principles, policies and elements that contribute to and regulate the housing schemes of WMAC and WMHL are collectively referred to as the Winda-Mara Housing Program ('WMHP').

The WMHP's policies and procedures are designed so that its practice and service delivery align with the following cultural statement:

Our vision is to create a thriving community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing. We aspire to empower individuals and families through improved health, education, and wellbeing, fostering a strong sense of identity and pride in our cultural heritage. Through collaboration and sustainable development, we aim to build a future where every member of our community has the opportunity to flourish and succeed.

### 1. Introduction

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If a renter leaves belongings or documents in or on a property at the end of a rental agreement, these are called goods left behind.

The rental provider (landlord) can dispose of some goods left behind but must store others for a certain amount of time. How long the goods must be stored depends on what they are and how much they're worth.

### 2. Scope

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This is a Housing Program Policy. It applies to all residential tenancies managed by WMAC or WMHL.

### 3. Purpose

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This policy details how WMHP will manage goods left behind in line with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 ("RTA"), Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 ("RT Regs") and any associated directions of the WMAC Board.

### 4. General

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Renters have an obligation under the RTA to leave their property in a reasonably clean condition at the end of the tenancy. The property should be in the same condition as when the renter moved in apart from fair wear and tear. This includes removing all belongings and rubbish.

WMHP aims to avoid the need to handle goods left behind wherever possible by ensuring that all renters are aware of their duty to remove all items from the property at the end of their tenancy. This means that the property can be re-let to an eligible housing applicant as soon as possible.

Where goods are left behind, WMHP aims to alert the previous renter so that they can collect their goods as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Where goods must be stored or disposed of, WMHP will do so in line with all relevant requirements under the RTA

## 5. Inspecting Goods Left Behind

WMHP staff will inspect vacated properties within 24 hours of receipt of keys or VCAT declaration of abandonment. If there are goods left behind, WMHP staff will take a non-stop video of the property to document any remaining items.

Illicit goods will be reported to the police. All goods will then be handled in accordance with section 6 of this policy.

## 6. How Goods Left Behind will be Handled

Goods left behind will be stored and disposed of in line with the following table:

Items	Storage & Disposal	Costs
Goods of monetary value (including abandoned vehicles)	All reasonable steps will be made to inform the renter via the WMHP Notice of Intent to Dispose of Uncollected Goods Form.  The goods will then be stored for 14 days before being disposed of.	The former renter may incur a fee if the goods prevent the property from being re-let to another renter.
Personal documents	All reasonable steps will be made to inform the renter via the WMHP Notice of Intent to Dispose of Uncollected Goods Form.  The goods will be stored for 90 days before being disposed of.	The former renter may incur a fee for the reasonable costs relating to the notification, removal and storage of the documents.
Goods of no monetary value not listed above	The goods will be immediately disposed of.	The former renter may incur a fee for the removal and disposal of the goods.
Abandoned pets	Local Council will be contacted to pick up the pet.	Former renter to liaise with local council regarding any fees.

In circumstances of personal or financial hardship and where the leaving of goods at the property was beyond the control of the former renter, WMHP will consider all relevant circumstance and may waive the fees that would normally be incurred. WMHP will especially consider family violence implications and a cultural safety lens when determining this point.

## 7. Notification

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WMHP utilise the WMHP Notice of Intent to Dispose of Uncollected Goods Form to notify former renters of goods left behind after they have vacated. WMHP will use the forwarding address and/or email address that the former renter has provided to make this notification. WMHP will also attempt to contact support workers, next of kin and emergency contacts where consent has been required. WMHP may contact renters via telephone calls, SMS and/or email during this process.

## 8. Goods Left in Common Areas

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Goods must not be left in common areas without the consent of WMHP and this is a breach of the Residential Rental Agreement. WMHP will attempt to contact the owner where possible and may issue a Breach Notice if the behaviour is ongoing. This may result in further VCAT action permitting disposal of the goods.

## 9. References

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### 9.1 External or Statutory Requirements

This policy complies with the following external legislation or requirements:

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 (Vic)

### 9.2 Internal Requirements and Forms

This policy refers to the following internal documents, which are available in the WMHP Document Register:

- WMHP Complaints and Appeals Policy
- WMHP Notice of Intent to Dispose of Uncollected Goods Form
- WMHP Ending Tenancies and Eviction Policy.
- WMHP Property Inspections Policy
- WMAC Privacy Policy

## 10. Review

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This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if the legal, regulatory, and contractual environment requires.

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## AMENDMENT HISTORY

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