

Winda-Mara Housing Program (WMHP) Customer Service Charter

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WMHP Customer Service Charter

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. Purpose

The purpose of this Charter is to demonstrate and articulate the deep commitment of WMHP to providing the highest possible quality services for its clients and stakeholders.

2. Principles

WMHP is committed to the following principles in all that it does:

- safe and secure housing is a right afforded to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons;
- service provision will be culturally appropriate and accessible;
- self-determination, respect and dignity underpin all service delivery activities;
- collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders on issues of strategic importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- transparent accountability in effective and efficient operations;
- commitment to continuous quality improvement.

3. Rights of Renters and Other Service Users

WMHP will uphold the rights of renters and other service users to:

- high quality and professional services which are responsive to the individual needs of Aboriginal tenants, their children and their families;
- opportunities for participation in decision-making affecting their lives;
- services that are non-judgmental promote women's autonomy and self-determination;
- assessment, information and referral practices which are appropriate to their need;
- clear, accurate and accessible information about our service expectations, rules or conditions;
- a grievance procedure that is transparent, empowering and effective;
- housing free from verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse;
- provide feedback on their experience of using this service.
- timely and accurate response to all enquiries.

4. Client Consultation

WMHP welcomes and encourages client participation in decision making and seek to consult and obtain feedback through:

- annual surveys, joint property inspections and exit interviews;
- organised forums, meetings and events;
- the inclusion of tenants on WMHP Subcommittees; and
- feedback from WMHP staff and renter support agencies.

Responding to and analysing complaints is a significant source of feedback and we have instituted a complaints process that is intended to encourage and enable clients to fully disclose any concerns they might have about our behaviour or decisions.

5. Our Commitment to You

Your feedback and views are important to us. Please:

- Engage and communicate with your Housing Officer
- Know your rights
- Be forthright and not afraid to complain...we want to hear
- Keep us informed of your circumstances...if you are experiencing financial or other difficulties, we want to help
- Get involved with our group and community activities
- Make a suggestion ... it does not have to be a complaint

6. Our Obligations and What You Can Expect

We are legally obliged to comply with legislation relating to housing, privacy, human rights, community safety and more. The Victorian Housing Act and the Residential Tenancies Act are highly influential.

In addition, there are National and Victorian Regulatory Codes that set out the service standards that we are expected to reach.

These are all designed to guarantee renters a quality of housing service and a standard of living that are fundamental to a secure, sustainable and rewarding life.

6.1 *Respect and Self Determination*

We will:

- acknowledge the value and dignity of each person, and their right to be treated with understanding, empathy and courtesy;
- recognise the unique life experience of every individual;
- respect the culture and beliefs of all clients and explore diversity as an opportunity for learning and growth;
- abide by the Victorian Charter of Human Rights.

6.2 *Openness and Communication*

We will:

- promote open discussion, engage with the strengths of clients, share our expertise, knowledge and information for the full benefit of clients;
- listen to diverse opinions, perspectives and choices, to enable meaningful communication;
- ensure information is accurate, accessible and understandable and provided in a way that enables clients to make well informed decisions
- respond to enquiries in a timely and culturally appropriate manner
- provide an interpreter service.

6.3 *Fairness and Justice*

We will:

- create egalitarian policies based upon principles of equality, understanding and valuing of human rights;
- ensure all service allocation processes are fair and based on client need;
- identify and break down any barriers to access for individuals and groups;
- respond to complaints in a fair and transparent manner

- adhere to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Housing Act.

6.4 Integrity

We will:

- operate within an ethical and moral framework that inspires trust and confidence in our organisation;
- pursue our goals through sound planning, decisions and actions, with transparency and accountability;
- provide training to our staff to operate effectively across all of the challenges of the organisation;
- pursue continuous improvement.

7. Your Obligations

7.1 Respect and Self Determination

We expect you to:

- treat staff and other residents with courtesy and respect;
- respect the rights of neighbour;
- abide by the terms of your residential rental agreement; and
- take personal responsibility for your actions.

7.2 Openness and Communication

We expect you to:

- be honest and thorough when providing necessary personal information and interacting with staff;
- notify us promptly of any illegal or damage activity occurring within your property;
- notify us of any changes to your personal circumstances that may affect your tenancy; and
- to respond to requests for contact and keep appointments.

7.3 Fairness and Justice

We expect you to:

- be honest in your dealings with us;
- provide accurate information;
- to support the rights of other renters, residents and neighbours;
- abide by the law and residential rental agreements.

7.4 Integrity

We expect you to:

- do everything in your power to provide a safe home environment;
- provide reasonable access to staff and contractors;
- ensure that staff and contractors treat you in a respectful and lawful manner;
- complain if you think a complaint is justified.

8. Our Service Standards and Benchmarks

8.1 Meeting and Responding to Client Needs

- WMAC's office is open 9 to 5, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays);
- we provide an afterhours service for emergency repairs;
- we will respond to phone calls and emails promptly and courteously;
- we will aim to acknowledge and/or respond to all general calls within one day;
- where appropriate we will engage fully with telephone clients immediately or within one day to address their needs and resolve their issues immediately;
- we will keep all appointments;
- if appointments cannot be kept, we will ensure prior notice is given if possible;
- we will maintain privacy and confidentiality (in accord with our written and available policy);
- we will give you access to your personal information that we hold;
- we will work cooperatively with your advocate or support worker;
- all your concerns will be listened to and responded to.

8.2 Tenancy Management

- we will allocate housing fairly and objectively (in accord with our written and publicly available allocation policies);
- we will ensure that all rentable properties are in a rentable condition standard in line with applicable law and regulations and our own standards and policies;
- we aim to minimise vacancy periods at all times;
- at the beginning of a tenancy, we will provide you with a comprehensive sign-up information package, designed to inform you of your rights and responsibilities and a range of other practical information to assist the establishment of your tenancy;
- WMHP will assist with initial condition reports and be available, where practicable, to assist and advise you on a daily basis;

- WMHP will contact all new renters within four weeks of moving into property;
- With the appropriate notice, WMHP will inspect your home every 6 months to discuss any issues.

8.3 Repairs and Maintenance

We will respond to maintenance requests in a timely manner.

Repairs will be prioritised according to the urgency and type of maintenance as defined in the RTA.

8.4 Ending Tenancies

WMHP is committed to wherever possible sustaining the viability of its tenancies through positive renter support and early intervention.

We acknowledge the personal and financial vulnerability of many of our clients and that these vulnerabilities can result in tenancies being placed at risk.

We are committed to ensuring, through this policy and others, that all of our renters are enabled every opportunity to sustain their tenancies.

We will also apply the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA 1997) fairly and accurately and strive to protect the legal rights of residents at all times.

Every effort within reason will be made to give renters every opportunity to remain in their homes.

8.5 Rent Setting and Review

We will:

- clearly advise all renters about how their rent is calculated and reviewed;
- assist and support renters experiencing financial or other hardship;
- provide accurate and up to date rental statements;
- provide timely and early intervention to assist renters to manage rental payments and repayment agreements

9. Complaints and Appeals

We accept and treat complaints and appeals as a form of constructive feedback and an opportunity to improve the quality of our service. We recognise that you often will sometimes feel reluctant to exercise your rights and make a complaint.

A fundamental feature of our approach is to ensure that firstly you know your rights; and secondly that you feel enabled to raise issues and matters of complaint with WMHP staff

WMHP will endeavour to ensure your concerns can be frankly discussed and resolved in a mutually agreed and timely manner.

In the complaints and appeals process we will:

- provide information to clients and renters about their rights and how to make complaints, compliments and appeals;
- ensure a fair, speedy and effective resolution of complaints and appeals;
- acknowledge the rights of renters and other members of the public to lodge a complaint or appeal with or about WMHP, free from any threat of retribution or adverse consequences;
- positively assist complainants;
- provide a designated Complaints Officer who will manage the complaints process;
- record all complaints on a Complaints Register; and
- protect privacy and confidentiality

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Approval Authority	Board of Directors WMHP Sub-Committee
Governing Authority	WMHP Sub-Committee
Document Type	Policy & Procedure
Policy applies to	All Staff and WMHP Tenants
Responsible position for Review and Actioning	Asset & Corporate Operations Manager
Date of commencement	16-07-2024
Date of this approval	16-07-2024
Projected Review Date	16-07-2026
Document Number and Storage	WMHP-P11 Folder location W: 1.5.4

AMENDMENT HISTORY

Date	Version	Approved by	Amendment Notes
16-07-2024	1.0	Board of Directors	New Document. Full review from previous ToR incorporating new Housing Program