

## Hardship and Temporary Absence

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### 1. Purpose

This policy outlines the approach of YWCA Housing to assist renters who are experiencing hardship or who are temporarily absent from their property

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all long-term social housing properties owned and/or managed by YWCA Housing.

### 3. Policy Statement

YWCA Housing are committed to approach each situation on a case by case basis, with sensitivity, and seek to charge a fair and affordable rent in order to sustain the tenancy.

Renters can apply to have their rent temporarily reduced as a result of hardship and/or temporary absence from their home.

#### Financial hardship

Financial hardship occurs when a renter or household member is unable to pay rent without affecting their ability to meet basic living needs due to unexpected changes in income caused by, but not limited to, one or more of the following factors:

- Loss or significant reduction of the household's primary income
- Spousal separation or divorce
- Unexpected and significant new (or increased) expenses.

#### Temporary Absence

A temporary absence is when a renter is required to be absent from their property and pay for temporary accommodation such as a nursing home, respite, rehabilitation, prison or remand for a period greater than three weeks and up to a maximum of 13 weeks.

#### Applying for a rent reduction

YWCA Housing assists renters by offering a reduction in rent in specific circumstances. To apply for a reduced rent, the renter must supply documents that confirm the date the renter entered (or will enter) the temporary accommodation, the length of stay and estimated date of return, and confirmation of the amount they are paying for accommodation costs.

YWCA Housing will assess the application and inform the renter of the outcome in writing. If approved, YWCA will reduce the weekly amount owed by the applicant to be 25% of the assessable amount for a period of up to 6 weeks for financial hardship and 13 weeks for a temporary absence. Renters in rental arrears and on a VCAT order, must maintained the agreement during the reduced rent period.

On approval by the Senior Manager, Community Housing, the reduced rent may be backdated to the documented commencement of the hardship.

Document Control Data	
Policy Framework	
Responsible Body	Chief Executive Officer
Accountable Officer	Senior Manager, Community Housing
Transparency and Accessibility	This policy will be available on the website <a href="https://www.ywcahousing.org.au/policies/">https://www.ywcahousing.org.au/policies/</a>
Supersedes	All previous local policies
Associated documents	YWCA Housing Rent Setting Policy
Legislation	Housing Act 1983 (VIC) Residential Tenancies Act (VIC) Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies Legal agreements between YWCA and the Director of Housing

Approval and Amendment History			
Review period – 2 years			
Approval Date	Version	Amendments	Next Review
12/01/2021	1.0		2 years
24/03/2021	1.1	Minor wording updates (tenants to renters) in line with Rental Reforms	2 years