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| HousingVic Online Servicesoperational guidelines V1.3June 2020 |

# Revision history

Department of Health

| Version | Amended section | Effective | Details |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.0 |  | September 2019 | Date of issue |
| 1.1 | Digital mail  | December 2019 | Tenancy letters released in digital mail  |
| 1.2 | My Housing  | March 2020 | Release of My Housing and My account |
| 1.3 | My Account  | June 2020 | Release of payments online and consent |

# More information

To find out about housing options visit the [Housing website](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au> or contact your local [Housing Office](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/contact-a-housing-office) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/contact-a-housing-office>.

To receive this publication in an accessible format contact Housing Practice and Complex Support <housing.practicesupport@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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# Definitions

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Applicant | A person who applies for a tenancy in social housing. |
| Department | Department of Health and Human Services established under the *Public Administration Act 2004.* |
| Determinations | A determination made by the Director pursuant to s 142E of the Housing Act. |
| Digital mail | The capability to receive departmental housing mail via a client’s myGov inbox.  |
| Director | Director of Housing as appointed under the Housing Act. |
| Eligibility Criteria | The criteria determined by the Director under section 142E(1)(a) of the Housing Act |
| Household | The collective term for all household members. |
| Household Member | A person who resides or intends to reside with the applicant in social housing. |
| HousingVic Online Services | HousingVic Online Services (HVOS) is managed by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. HVOS is a source of information for current public housing tenants, potential social housing tenants and anyone wanting to know about housing in Victoria. |
| Public Housing | Long-term rental accommodation managed by the department on behalf of the Director. |
| myGov | myGov is a simple and secure way to access government online services and is the entry portal for individuals to access the services such as HousingVic Online Services |
| Residential Tenancies Act | *Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic).* |
| Social Housing | Means both public housing and housing owned, controlled or managed by a Participating Registered Agency. |
| Tenant(s) | An applicant or household member who has signed a residential tenancy agreement with the Director to enable them to let the property. |
| Residential Tenancy Agreement or Tenancy Agreement | The written agreement entered into by the Director and the tenant(s) which permits the tenant(s) to let the property as a residence. |
| Victorian Housing Register | The register of applicants established and administered under s 142A of the Housing Act. In more specific terms it is a system that unifies public housing and participating registered agencies into a common housing register. The register includes a common application form and the eligibility framework including the eligibility criteria for allocations to social housing.  |

# Introduction

This document outlines the recommended procedure for housing staff to follow when managing the digital suite of client products accessed via myGov and the HousingVic Online Services portal.

The Department of Health and Human Services (the department) is progressively developing a range of digital products accessible via myGov to better assist clients and to give them greater autonomy to self-manage their housing services.

The development of these digital products commenced in August 2016 with the deployment of the online Victorian Housing Register application, followed in February 2019 by the deployment of the RentAssist bond loan application. Each online product is governed by a Privacy Impact Assessment, see <https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/privacy>

In September 2019 departmental housing clients were provided with the capability to receive their departmental housing mail via their myGov inbox.

## Initiating Online Identity Verification

In order to access digital mail and any subsequent online services, a client must first have their identity validated through HiiP.

At a high level there are two processes:

* If the clients identification document are in HiiP, a client can validate their information online or via phone by answering a set of primary and secondary questions that match that data.
* Alternatively, a client can approach a department office in order to verify their identity face to face and receive their client identification number and a verification code that will enable their access via myGov.

In both cases, the verification of identity is recorded in HiiP against the client’s record.

The precursor to either process is that the client has had an approved service, that is, a current or past Victorian Housing Register or Movable Unit application that has held the status at some point of “Approved”, or an “Approved” RentAssist bond loan, or been part of a public housing tenancy.

The client controls whether they use online services and may opt out at any point through a fully automated process. In the case of digital mail, where the client has opted out, HiiP will re-instate the previous mode of correspondence be it via post or email (in the case of bonds and housing applications)

# When do these operational guidelines apply?

These operational guidelines apply when:

* A client elects to use HousingVic Online Services by validating their identity
* They subsequently elect to use digital mail
* They opt out of either using online services or using digital mail

# Online Identity Verification

## Clients automatically validating their identity

Clients need to answer online a series of questions which are detailed enough to eliminate third parties.

## Clients validating their identity face to face

Where a client is not able to be verified through HiiP, the client must attend departmental housing office and produce 100 points of identity to seek access. Housing Vic [Proof of identity](https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/proof-identity) <https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/proof-identity> has the list of documents accepted by the department. Some clients may prefer to initiate the process face to face to ensure that they understand what they are signing up to.

When a client presents to a departmental housing office they will be asked to produce 100 points of identification. Staff must in the first instance check HiiP and where sufficient information is available including relevant photo I.D., trigger the client validation process manually.

In the case where the tenancy is prior to 2012, the paper file may need to be accessed to check photo I.D. to verify the client’s identity. The validation process should then be triggered once identity has been confirmed. Staff should also go through steps to re-confirm the client’s preferred email and phone details and update these if necessary. The exercise should be file noted by the staff member.

## Client identity being validated by the Housing Call Centre

Where a client (who does not have a previous approved service in HiiP) is approved for a RentAssist bond loan or a Victorian Housing Register housing application, the Housing Call Centre may contact that client by phone and seek to confirm their identity. Should the client elect to utilise Online services and in particular digital mail, the Housing Call Centre in the same process as used in “Face to Face” validation, will provide the client with a print-out of their client identification number and initiate a verification code for the user.

### HiiP Behaviour

Where a client successfully validates their identity online and subsequently chooses digital mail, the system will update their client record to show they have linked an account via myGov

### Where a client is unable to establish their identity

Where a client is unable to be verified online an error message will be displayed indicating to the client, they cannot proceed to the next step to complete their identity verification online. In this instance, the client will need to contact the Housing Call Centre or visit a departmental housing office to verify their identity.

# Digital Mail

Where the client has selected to receive digital mail, HiiP will:

* trigger an Initial Welcome letter to their myGov inbox
* automatically gather all their triggered mail at the end of a business day and forward this to their myGov inbox.

Unless the client is at the counter and requests a printed copy of the letter, (any letters that would otherwise be printed and posted out by housing office staff) HiiP will now record the action and advise that the letter is being delivered digitally. Staff should not print and mail these letters (in effect, these letters will now behave like correspondence that is triggered through bulk mail).

The copy of the letter will appear in the “Documents” tab of the client’s HiiP file and its generation will also appear in the “Action type” as “Document sent”.

Letters

As of December 2019, all client, appeals and tenancy letters are sent via digital mail. Legal letters and payment related letters are currently not available, however will be available in a future release to ensure that legal notices are served correctly. Functionality of payment related letters does not impact current practices of frontline staff.

Where there is an associated form with the letter that would be added by as staff member or bulk mail, a link to an online version of the form will be provided in the MyGov inbox message.

## Third Parties

Staff should seek documentation outlining their appointment to ensure any powers are understood as per the department’s [Appointed representatives of tenants and applicants operational guidelines](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/tenancy-management-manual-appointed-representatives-tenants-and-applicants-operational-guidelines) <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/tenancy-management-manual-appointed-representatives-tenants-and-applicants-operational-guidelines>, Formal decision makers confirmed by a Power of Attorney, Administration Order issued by VCAT or a Guardian appointed by VCAT will be required to attend a department office and validate their identity in order to gain access to the client’s services. Staff must file note the exercise.

## Breach of Privacy is Reported

If a breach of privacy is reported staff should inform their VPS 5 manager when this has occurred and the client contacted immediately. Where the client cannot be contacted and they have a support provider or an emergency contact, staff should communicate with the support or contact

# My Housing

Through the My Housing tab, clients are able to view past and current housing services such as:

* Tenancy
* Victorian Housing Register application
* Movable unit application
* RentAssist bond loan

The information a client can see will vary on what role they had within the application.

## Victorian Housing Register applications

Primary applicants will be able to see their reference number, application type (register of interest or Priority), application status, effective date and household members.

 However, If the application is at status of ‘community housed’, ‘department housed’, ‘ineligible’’, not approved’, ‘rejected’ or ‘tenancy created’, primary applicants will only be able to view their own name.

Household members who are not the primary applicant and the application is at the status of ‘accepted’, ‘approved’, ‘assessed’, ‘awaiting action’, ‘escalated’, ‘new’, ‘offered’, ‘ready for sign up’, ‘reassess’’ and ‘reassessed’ will be able to see the reference number, application type (register of interest or Priority), when they arrived or left the application and the name of the primary applicant and other household members on the application.

If the application has been removed, the user who has logged in to HVOS will see their name plus reference number, application type only.

## Tenancy services

Current tenants will able to see their address, reference number, tenancy start date and household members.

Current residents will be able to see their address, reference number and the tenancy start date.

Clients who have left a tenancy as a tenant or resident will be able to see the address, reference number, tenancy start date and tenancy end date. This is the same if the tenancy is terminated or if they have left the household and the tenancy is still active.

## Bond Loan Services

All clients with current or previous bond loan services with the department will be able to see the Bond property address, reference number, the date the application was received, the amount issued and the status.

## Movable Unit applications

For those applications that are active and at a status of ‘accepted’, ‘approved’, ‘assessed’, ‘awaiting action’, ‘escalated’, ‘movable unit allocated’, ‘new’, ‘offered’, ‘ready for sign up’, ‘reassess’ or ‘reassessed’), both the property host and applicant for movable units will be able to see the reference number, application received date, host name, household member names and the suburb the unit is located in.

# My account

My Account is where clients can view housing payment information and transactions. Clients can view:

* Account summaries for their current or vacated tenancy or bond loan.
* Their most recent transactions and keep track of account balances.
* Request statements for tenancy and bond services to be sent to their myGov inbox or other preferred method of receiving correspondence.
* Make a payment to a current or vacated tenancy or maintenance services.
* Make a payment for an outstanding bond loan debt.

What clients can see will vary on their circumstances and role in the household.

## Tenancy Services

Current tenants will be able to view the total weekly payment amount, last payment amount, account balance, rental balance, maintenance balance, weekly agreement details, the past 90 days of from the most recent transaction and request a statement of their account (for a maximum of 18 months)

Vacated tenants will be able to view the last payment amount, vacated account balance, vacated rental balance, vacated maintenance balance, view the last 90 days of from the most recent transaction and request a statement (for a maximum of 18 months).

## Bond Loan services

Clients with bond loans from the department that have the status of ‘settled’, ‘bond debt’ or ‘lodged’ will be able to view the account balance and all transactions on the account.

## Payments

Clients can make payments for current and vacated tenancy services or bond loan debts via Make a payment in the My Account area

For tenancy services clients can select to make a payment into the rental or maintenance account for the tenancy service.

This service can be used to make the initial one of payment required at the commencement of the tenancy.

Payments must be made with a Visa or Mastercard debit card. A receipt can be emailed following the transaction if the client requests. Payments will be processed the next business day.

Third parties cannot use this service to make payments on behalf of a client.

Receipts are not automatically generated but can be sent to the client if an email address is provided during the transaction process.

There is a credit threshold of $1000 credit on payments into an account .

Example: If a tenancy account balance is $800.00CR, only $200.00 will be able to be paid into the account.

If a tenancy account is in debt, the full amount of debt, is able to be paid, plus an additional $1000.00.

Example: If a tenancy account balance is $2000.00DR, an total amount of $3000.00 could be paid into the account.

For tenancy services residents may make payment if the tenant/s has granted the resident consent.

# Consent for residents

Tenants can grant residents within their household to make payments via the Permissions on the home screen.

Granting consent to a resident does not grant the resident tenancy rights. The tenant/s of the property remain solely responsible for ensuring that the rental account of the property does not go into arrears. When consent is granted both the tenant and the resident will be sent a letter outlining their legal obligations.

A resident who has been given consent can:

* Make payments online
* Contact a local office to set up a direct debit payment from their bank account
* Contact a local office to set up Centrelink direct debit payments.
* View their payments on the tenancy account.

The tenant/s of the household can remove consent for the resident at any time via Permissions. Consent will be automatically revoked if the resident leaves the household or the tenancy ends.

# Lodging a Complaint

Where a client wishes to make a complaint about the delivery of the HousingVic Online services, they should firstly contact the department housing office or the Housing Call Centre to speak with a staff member. If the client remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may seek to discuss the issue with the local manager. If the matter remains unresolved, the client may submit their complaint online by completing the e-form which can be accessed from the following link: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-complaint> or by calling 1300 884 706.