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| Relocation manual  Chapter 1: Information and consultation  October 2017 |

# Revision history

Department of Health

| Version | Amended section | Effective | Details |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.0 |  | October 2017 | Incorporation of version control table  Accessible format |

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](mailto:housing.practicesupport@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <housing.practicesupport@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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Available on the [Relocation manual page](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/relocation-manual) on Services Providers website <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/relocation-manual>.

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# Information and consultation policy

## Introduction

The Department of Health and Human Services (the Department) may determine that a property or properties require upgrading or that they may need to be demolished so that new housing can be built.

In these circumstances the Department moves existing tenants to other suitable properties, whilst work is carried out. Generally, eligible tenants are given the option to return to the upgraded or redeveloped housing where there are properties that match their requirements.

Tenants are informed of the redevelopment, the Departments Relocation Policy and of their options for relocation and move back to the redeveloped site. The Department consults with tenants regarding their housing needs and preferences for relocation.

The Department informs and consults with tenants and tenant groups regarding the redevelopment or major upgrade during all stages of the project.

Where the Department determines that a property is to be sold, it may be offered to the current tenant/s in accordance with the Tenant House Sales Policy. Where the Department offers to sell to the current tenant, and the tenant has an interest in purchasing the property, the tenant is required to arrange their own finance. Properties are sold at the prevailing market rate.

## Consultation

Wherever possible, the Department negotiates with tenants and/or their advocates on decisions regarding their relocation. Tenant groups, advocates and other relevant organisations are invited to participate in the consultation process.

The Department will map out existing services in the proposed relocation area to help ensure tenants have informed relocation options.

The Department will engage local support agencies, and where necessary provide language translation.

Tenants that will be directly involved in the relocation process will be consulted with regard to their thoughts, ideas and concerns.

## Written information

The Department provides clear written information to tenants throughout all stages of the redevelopment process. The Department will also ensure that all written information is accompanied with the community languages information sheet promoting contact with the local office.

## Announcement of the project

The Department notifies affected tenants, tenant groups and other relevant local organisations such as, community centres, churches etc, in writing as soon as possible after deciding to proceed with a redevelopment or major upgrade project.

The decision to proceed with the redevelopment and the timing of the formal announcement (if applicable) will take into account:

* the scheduled commencement date of the project
* availability of funds which may affect the timing of the project
* the number of tenants to be relocated
  + the availability of housing for tenant relocation.

## Group meetings

Where required, meetings are arranged with tenants, tenant groups and relevant organisations to provide information about the redevelopment and the Department's Relocation Policy.

Where projects are smaller in scale the Department provides this information to tenants individually.

The Department ensures that interpreters are made available at meetings where this is required, and that all written information is translated into required languages.

## Local advisory committee

The Tenancy and Property Manager or equivalent establishes a Local Advisory Committee to advise on the consultation and communication processes for large projects, such as estate redevelopments. The Local Advisory Committee is to include:

* tenants
* tenant group representatives
* Departmental staff
  + representatives from other relevant local organisations.

If a Local Advisory Committee is not established, alternative communication and consultation processes may be instituted.

The Departmental table information regarding the redevelopment at Local Advisory Committee meetings to reach agreement on how and what information is to be distributed to tenants.

## Interview with tenants

* The Department interviews all households individually to establish their housing needs and preferences, and to explain their relocation options as outlined in the **Move Out** and the **Move Back** Chapters of this manual.
* When required, interpreters are made available, and all written information is translated into required languages as outlined in the **Interpreting and Translating Services Chapter of the Business Practice Manual.**
* Tenants are kept informed at all times during the process, through a **Follow Up Letter**. – see Appendices, page 11

# Information and consultation procedures

## Announcing the project

A letter is sent announcing the project to all relevant tenants, tenant groups and other individuals that may be impacted such as private owners or renters, and local organisations.

The letter may include the following:

* information regarding why the project is taking place
* the proposed timing and staging of the project
* the opportunities that tenants will have to meet with Departmental staff to discuss the project and how it will affect them
* that tenants will be kept informed of progress
* a contact name and telephone number for any queries
* translation of the letter into required languages.

## Arranging a press release

If appropriate, arrange a press release through Corporate Communications Branch, which are located at 23rd Floor, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. The press release should be released at the same time that all other relevant parties being advised (i.e. tenants etc) of the project.

Send the request to Corporate Communications via the Tenancy and Property Manager or equivalent, Housing Manager or equivalent and Director of Service Implementation and Support.

## Arranging a group meeting

Where a group meeting is required all affected individuals and organisations are invited. This should be completed in consultation with the local tenant group.

Depending on the size of the project, there are a number of factors need to be co-ordinated:

* a date for the meeting
* a suitable venue
* general information for the meeting, for example; draft plans, proposed staging
* any written information to be translated into required languages
* required interpreters to be available
* letters of invitation to the meeting
* refreshments for the meeting
* child minding and transport arrangements if required.

Where the project is on a smaller scale (i.e.: less than 10 properties) the information can be provided individually.

In the invitation explain that the meeting will provide tenants with an opportunity to learn about the project, how it will affect them and that they will be given an opportunity to raise any queries.

All expenses incurred for the meeting i.e. refreshments, child minding, transport, are to be charged to the project account.

Attach a flyer about the meeting to the letter, this will ensure that all details are clear.

Arrange translation of the letter into required languages if required.

* Send a copy of the Department's **Moving to a New Home Fact Sheet** see Appendices, page 12, with the invitation.

At the meeting explain:

* why the project is taking place and what will happen to the site
* the benefits to tenants, neighbouring residents and businesses
* the timing and staging of the project. Stress that the timing could change and explain any factors that may affect the timing of the project
* that tenants will be kept informed of changes and will be given a minimum of one month's notice before relocation offers are made
* the Department's relocation policy, including relocation move out, move back details and relocation expenses as described in the **Move Out** and the **Move Back** chapters
* the policy for offering the redeveloped housing
* the role of the Local Advisory Committee, if a committee is to be established. Request nominations for the committee from tenants. If a committee is not to be established, discuss information and the consultation processes.

Provide an opportunity for queries and respond clearly and accurately.

Take minutes of the meeting to ensure participants are clear about the issues raised and of the responses provided to these issues. After the meeting, distribute the minutes to all relevant parties.

Take name, address and contact details of attendees to ensure mailing list is up to date.

## Interviewing tenants

Arrange individual interviews with all tenants to be relocated. The interview can be conducted at the tenants’ home or at an interview in the office, whichever is convenient to the tenant.

At the interview explain:

* the reasons why the redevelopment or other asset renewal activity is taking place (if this has not already been done at a group meeting)
* the relocation move out and move back options (if applicable) available to the tenant, including eligibility and relevant policy as described in the **Move Out** and the **Move Back** chapters
* the expenses that will be paid by the Department as outlined in the **Payment of Expenses Chapter**
* if the tenant is paying market rent and the new market rent is higher, the previous tenancy market rent value is charged at the new property, as detailed in the **Rental Rebate Manual**. The Department will provide regular information on the progress of the project.
* a **Tenant Relocation Form** see Appendices, page 15, will need to be completed and submitted.
* Ensure the tenant receives a copy of the **Moving to a New Home Fact Sheet,** see Appendices, page 9

Give the tenant the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have. The tenant should also identify what their preferences are, and whether they have any special housing requirements.

Write a file note detailing any issues raised by the tenant and the response or commitment given. Place the note on the tenancy file.

* Send a letter to the tenant confirming what was discussed. **Follow Up Letter**. – see Appendices, page 8

If a tenant refuses to attend group meetings, or participate in the project all together, refer to the **Move Out** Chapter for procedures.

# Appendix 1

## Follow up letter

«Addressee3»

Dear «Tenantname2»

<**Sample Text**>

When we met on [date], I informed you of a program to improve the quality and quantity of public housing across Victoria.

As part of this program you have an opportunity to move to a better and more comfortable home.

I am writing to provide you with some follow up information.

Firstly, please find attached a Moving to a New Home: Fact Sheet that provides you with some more information about the options available to you in moving to a new home.

Secondly, also attached is a Tenant Relocation Form that we need you to complete. If you already have an application submitted, we will use that one.

You will also need to provide:

* + <list of documents>

If you need help with the form please contact me and I will arrange for someone to assist you.

Also, if you have changed your mind since we last spoke please contact me directly and let me know.

We will do our best to find you a home in an area that you want to live in and will try to match it with any special accommodation requirements that you may have. If we can’t find a home in the area where you would like to live, we will try to find you another one nearby.

As soon as a property has become available we will contact you to arrange a time so that you can have a look at it. Should you decide to move to a new home we will meet most costs associated with the relocation.

In the meantime should you have any questions or concerns about the redevelopment do not hesitate to contact me at the [Office name] on [Office contact number].

Yours sincerely

«User Name»  
«Position title»  
«Office Name»

# Appendix 2

## Moving to a new home fact sheet

## Moving to a new home

### The Department of Health and Human Services fact sheet

For many people, moving to a new home is an opportunity to live in a more comfortable and secure environment; however for some people moving can pose some challenges.

To give you a better understanding of the issues and opportunities in moving to a new home we have collected the questions and answers most commonly asked and answered during this time.

If your question does not appear below or you require further information do not hesitate to ask your local Department of Human Services Office.

#### Why has my house been chosen?

An improvement program has been set up to ensure that people who live in homes that are very old and outdated have the opportunity to move to more modern and comfortable homes.

After careful consideration of all our existing houses, your regional Office has found that your property is no longer in good condition, and it is important that you have the opportunity to move.

We understand that moving to a new home can be stressful which is why we want to work with you to find you a home that meets your current and future needs.

#### Where can I move to?

We want to work with you in order to better understand your housing needs.

Once we have agreed on the type of home and location that is appropriate, we will provide you with a number of different options to choose from.

Some people have chosen to live in areas that are located closer to friends and family. Others have chosen to move to smaller and easier to maintain homes, in areas that are closer to public transport and frequently used facilities. The choice is yours.

Sometimes we might be unable to immediately find you another public housing home in the area that you want to live in. If that this is the case we will offer you a home close by.

In some instances we may be able to delay needing to move you to a new home. If you really do not want to move from your current property you will need to advise your local Housing Officer.

It is possible that your home needs to be redeveloped to provide better and new housing on the block. In these circumstances you will have the option of returning to a new home at the same location once the construction is complete.

We understand that in some cases you may have developed links to your local community and that moving can be stressful. If you wish to come back to the area we encourage you to register your interest with your Housing Officer, and if there is a home available that is suited to your needs it is likely that you would be able to come back.

#### If I move, will I be assisted financially to cover the costs of the move?

You are not expected to be out of pocket for any costs associated with the move.

If you agree to move the Department will pay your electricity, gas and telephone connection fees, mail redirection fees and removalist fees.

If you have special and important features that you would like to take with you to your new home, then make sure that you let your Housing Officer know prior to the move.

#### When will I need to move?

We will work with you to arrange a suitable date and time for you to move into your new home. This generally occurs within three months of first being contacted about relocating.

It usually takes about three months to present you with housing options and to give you time to decide on where best to live.

#### What do I do if I don’t want to move?

It is important that you move to a more modern home that will meet your current and future housing needs.

In some instances we may be able to defer your move to a new home. If you wish to continue to live in your current property you will need to advise your local Housing Officer.

Some homes need to be disposed of because the site needs to be redeveloped in order to increase newer and better public housing. In these circumstances, if all our efforts to help residents find a new home have been rejected and exhausted, it may be necessary for us to take legal action and go to the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal to recover the property and relocate residents.

If you are one of these rare cases, you will have the option of returning to a new home at the same location once construction is complete.

#### If I choose public housing, will I get the same type of home?

The Department wants to work with you to ensure that your new home is in good condition, comfortable and well located.

By being able to choose a new home, you will have the opportunity to consider different factors that may be important to you. This includes living closer to friends or family, or being near to public transport and community facilities.

We will work hard to ensure that your new home meets your needs and is as close as possible to your preferred location.

#### Where do I go for further information?

If you wish to obtain further information, or have concerns about this process please make contact with your regional Housing Manager or equivalent.

#### Can I come back if my property is redeveloped?

If your home needs to be disposed of because the site needs to be redeveloped to build more new public housing, then you can register your interest to return with your local Housing Officer. This will provide you with the option of returning to a new home at the same location once construction is complete.

#### Is this related to my rental payments?

The need for you to move to a new home is not connected to your rental agreement.

An improvement program has been set up to move people who live in homes that are very old and outdated, to more modern and comfortable homes.

After careful consideration we have determined that your property is very old and no longer meets adequate quality of living standards. As a result we would like to move you to a new and more comfortable home.

#### I have lived in my home for more than 10 years, why do I have to move now?

We understand that having to move homes can be stressful.

This program will move residents from properties that are old and in very poor condition to new and more comfortable homes.

A recent review of public housing in the area has found that your property no longer meets acceptable quality standards and as a result you will be provided with the opportunity to move into a new home.

# Appendix 3

## Tenant Relocation Form

