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| Access to communal areas on public housing estates operational guidelines |
| Effective date: November 2023 |
| OFFICIAL |

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# **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 [Homes Victoria](mailto:enquiries@homes.vic.gov.au) <enquiries@homes.vic.gov.au>.

This guideline contains some links to internal resources which will not be accessible for external parties reading this document.

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Available at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Providers website. <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/tenancy-management-manual-access-communal-areas-public-housing-estates-operational-guidelines-word>

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# Revision history

Revision history

| Version | Amended section | Effective | Details |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.0 |  | December 2013 | Date of issue |
| 1.1 | Throughout | May 2015 | Accessibility tag and imprint |
| 2.0 |  | July 2017 | Incorporation of ’version control table’ |
| 2.1 |  | January 2018 | Includes information about a register |
| 2.2 | Minor updates to headings | October 2022 | Reviewed to ensure version is current |
| 2.3 | Throughout | December 2022 | Includes COVIDSafe requirements |
| 2.4 |  | November 2023 | Section numbers included  Removal of COVID-Safe related requirements while keeping some measures to support infection control |

# 1. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance for:

* staff of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) who manage multi-unit housing estates who receive requests to use communal areas
* community and not-for-profit organisations who manage community facilities located on public housing estates on behalf of the department.

# 1.1 Guiding principles

Communal areas on public housing estates are private property and for the use, benefit and peaceful enjoyment of estate residents.

Public housing residents have the right to privacy, safety and security consistent with the broader Victorian community.

The department reserves the right to restrict the entry and access of organisations or individuals to communal areas on public housing estates.

# 1.2 Definitions

## Communal areas

Communal areas on public housing estates are separated into three categories:

* common outdoor areas - gardens, walkways, open playgrounds, sporting areas and general estate grounds
* community facilities – general-use meeting areas, halls, kitchens and community rooms
* common residential zones - foyers, hallways, stairs, car parks, laundries, utility areas and mailrooms

## Community and not for profit organisations

* organisations which provide community programs and/or not-for-profit services or activities. Examples are community health centres, neighbourhood houses, charitable organisations, religious groups, child care centres, kindergartens, clubs and tenant groups

## Residents

* public housing renters and listed residents of the estate.

## Visitors

* invited guests of residents.

## Tenant groups

* incorporated tenant groups funded through the department’s Tenant Group Program.

## External organisations

Organisations excluding:

* Departmental staff and contractors
* emergency services including Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Fire Services, State Emergency Services and Rescue Services
* essential services that supply electricity, gas or water (excluding energy and water retailers)
* government agencies in the course of their regular business.

# 1.3 Access and use of common outdoor areas

Organisations or individuals wishing to access common outdoor areas must observe the following:

* Requests for meetings and events held by community and not-for-profit organisations and external organisations must be made in writing via the A*pplication for event in communal areas on public housing estates*. This form is available on the [department's housing site](https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/booking-communal-areas) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/communal-areas-public-housing-estates>. The *Application for event in communal areas on public housing estates* form must be submitted to the Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the local office managing the estate with all required information. No approvals will be granted without completion of this form.
* Outdoor events should not disrupt residents’ quiet enjoyment of their communal open spaces.
* The department requires individuals or organisations holding events in common outdoor areas to have public liability insurance.
* Where necessary, organisations holding public events are also required to have suitably qualified staff/volunteers that hold a current *Working with Children Check* card.
* Advertising, posters, signs or promotional material must not be placed on walls, buildings or outside surfaces.

# 1.4 Access and use of community facilities

Tenant groups and departmental programs such as *Cooler Places* will have priority in the reservation and use of community facilities on public housing estates.

Requests to reserve and use community facilities must be made in writing via the A*pplication for event in communal areas on public housing estates.* This form is available on the [department's housing site](https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/booking-communal-areas) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/communal-areas-public-housing-estates> and must be submitted to the Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the local office managing the estate or the organisation that manages the community facility on behalf of the department. No approvals will be granted without completion of this form.

The department requires all hirers of community facilities to have public liability insurance.

Where necessary, the provision of suitably qualified staff/volunteers that hold a current *Working with Children Check* card will be required when holding public events in community facilities.

All hirers of community facilities will be responsible for maintaining the peaceful and quiet enjoyment of local residents and families living on the estate.

## 1.4.1 Supporting infection control and safety when using facilities

To support infection control and safety, the department will ensure all indoor facilities have the following items available:

* disposable face masks
* disposable cups
* alcohol wipes
* paper towels
* cleaning products

After an event, hirers are expected to replenish from a facility’s stores, cups, toilet paper, paper towels, alcohol wipes and cleaning products.

**1.4.2 Cleaning of facilities**

Generally, hirers are responsible to clean the facility after the event based on the department’s cleaning schedule. Decisions can be made locally about whether the full schedule is completed based on the duration of the event and the number of people who attended.

When bookings are made sufficient time is to be allocated for cleaning. In circumstances where the hirer doesn’t have capacity to clean the facility, for example, they are elderly public housing residents, the local office may arrange a clean through their existing cleaning contracts.

The department’s cleaning schedule must be displayed in all community facilities. The schedule is available on the [Tenancy and estate management page](https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/Publichousingresources/SitePages/Tenancy-management.aspx) at the Public Housing Resources SharePoint < https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/Publichousingresources/SitePages/Tenancy-management.aspx>.

**Note:** the hirer is expected to advise the local office when cleaning and other products need to be reordered.

**1.4.3 Ventilation when using indoor facilities**

When air conditioners are in use, the health advice is they are placed on the highest outdoor air exchange to reduce recirculation of air. If unable to increase outdoor air exchange, consider opening windows to promote air movement/exchange as an alternative measure. Ensure systems are maintained and if the air conditioner has a high efficiency filter, change it as per the manufacturer’s instructions. Standalone fans are not recommended. For further information staff can refer to [Ventilation in the workplace](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/ventilation-in-the-workplace) <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/ventilation-in-the-workplace>.

# 1.5 Access to common residential zones

Common residential zones on public housing estates are primarily for the use of residents and their visitors.

General access will be granted to:

* Departmental staff and contractors
* Emergency services including Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Fire Services, State Emergency Services and Rescue Services
* essential services that supply electricity, gas or water (excluding energy and water retailers)
* government agencies in the course of their regular business.
* To access secured residential zones on high rise estates, a person must do one of the following:
* use their resident access swipe card
* be “buzzed” in by a resident through the intercom security system for the purposes of visiting the resident in their apartment
* be signed in as a visitor at the concierge desk for the purposes of visiting the resident in their apartment.

Foyer notice boards are for the benefit of residents. The Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the office managing the estate or the organisation that manages the community facility on behalf of the department should be contacted to access community notice boards. Material for notice boards should be of reasonable size, preferably A5 or A4 to accommodate the limited space. Priority will be given to material from not-for-profit organisations, local employment and training providers, tenant and community groups. All material should be date-stamped and out-of-date material removed.

Local newspapers must be placed in the newspaper stands situated in high rise accommodation foyers. It is the responsibility of the company producing the newspaper to provide and maintain the stand. Out-of-date issues of newspapers will be removed and recycled by the estate cleaners as part of their general duties.

Where there is a need to provide information, promote a program, activity or event, access will be provided to secure mail rooms for letter box drops. Organisations must ensure that information is prepared to easily fit in mail boxes and there are sufficient volunteers or staff to distribute the material in a timely manner. The department reserves the right to recover the costs of providing and supervising access for letter box drops.

A request to access secure mail rooms must be made at least five working days in advance. This request must be made in writing via the A*pplication for event in communal areas on public housing estates*. This form is available on the [department's housing site](https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/booking-communal-areas) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/communal-areas-public-housing-estates> and must be submitted to the Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the office managing the estate. Access will be subject to the discretion of the Client Support and Housing Services Manager and availability of departmental staff to monitor that access.

# 1.6 Register

Political parties may request access to high rise estates’ secure mail rooms in order to distribute their political material. These requests are considered by the Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the office managing the estate and once approved, are recorded on a register which is updated and published on a quarterly basis on the [department's housing site](https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/booking-communal-areas) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/communal-areas-public-housing-estates>.

# 1.7 Frequently asked questions

## How do organisations apply for access to communal areas on public housing estates?

Requests for access to common outdoor areas, community facilities, mail rooms and notice boards on public housing estates must be made in writing via the *Application for event in communal areas on public housing estates* form and addressed to the Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the office managing the estate. Approvals require completion of this form. Where a community facility is managed by a community group or not-for-profit organisation on behalf of the department, the request may go directly to the organisation’s designated community facility manager.

## Who has priority in the use of community facilities on public housing estates?

Tenant groups and departmental programs will have preference in the reservation and use of community-use areas and meeting rooms. When making reservations, tenant groups should also be considerate of the needs of the broader community. In the event of a scheduling clash, the Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the office managing the estate or the organisation that manages the community facility will have the final decision.

## Are there costs involved in using community facilities?

Fee structures for the use of community facilities such as meeting and community rooms will be determined by the department or its managers based on local applicable rates.

Guide to room hire charges:

* residents – no charge
* tenant groups who use the facility for meeting and community purposes – no charge
* other organisations - an hourly fee appropriate to a local community facility to be determined and implemented on a location-by-location basis.

An appropriate refundable deposit may be charged for meeting rooms against possible repairs and cleaning.

Reimbursement of costs for departmental staff time associated with supervised letter box drops may be charged per staff member at the applicable hourly rate.

External groups and organisations granted permission to hold events on common outdoor areas will be charged a fee appropriate to the nature, size and type of event.

Fees and charges should be agreed in writing prior to the event or activity and should be paid in advance.

Charges **will not** apply to:

* departmental staff and contractors
* emergency services including Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Fire Services, State Emergency Services and Rescue Services
* essential services that supply electricity, gas or water (excluding energy and water retailers)
* government agencies in the course of their regular business.

## Are media, film crews and photographers allowed on estates?

Requests by media, film crews and photographers to access communal areas should be made in writing via the Application for event in communal areas on public housing estates and the Application for filming/photography location agreement and addressed to the Client Support and Housing Services Manager of the office managing the estate. These application forms are available on the [department’s Housing site](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/communal-areas-public-housing-estates) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/communal-areas-public-housing-estates>.

The privacy, security and amenity of residents must be protected at all times. Special consent procedures apply to any application which will involve the filming or photography of children (in particular, children who are subject to court orders) and the department’s Legal Services Branch should be consulted in respect of any such application.

Access will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

## Can material be hand-delivered to the mail boxes of residents?

Yes, but permission must be sought from the department for access to secure locked mail areas. Delivery to the secure locked mail areas will only be at times when departmental staff are available to supervise.

## Can material be mailed directly to residents via Australia Post?

Yes. This is the preferred option to hand delivery and letter box drops.

## Do community facility hirers or external organisations holding events in common outdoor areas need to have public liability insurance?

The department requires all hirers of community facilities and external organisations holding events in common outdoor areas to have public liability insurance.

Residents upon signing the application form and payment of any associated fees will be covered by the department’s Facility Hirers Liability Insurance Scheme.

Community service organisations receiving recurrent departmental funding may have public liability cover through Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA). Enquiries can be made at [VMIA](http://www.vmia.vic.gov.au) <www.vmia.vic.gov.au> for information.

Any other organisations or individuals will be required to provide evidence of their public liability insurance coverage upon request. The insurance cover, which should be at least $10 million for any one occurrence, will need to be current for the period of the booking/s.

## Are there consequences for organisations or individual who breach these policies and guidelines?

Departmental employees are required to report acts or behaviours that violate laws, rules or regulations to the appropriate governing body (*Public Administration Act 2004*). This may include laws upheld by local councils and/or Victoria Police.