

## Hoarding and Squalor

### Purpose

Salvation Army Housing Victoria (SAHV) has a responsibility to respond carefully and effectively to suspected cases of hoarding and squalor in properties within its portfolio. This policy how SAHV will work to maintain the safety and wellbeing of tenants and others affected by hoarding behaviour and/or squalid living conditions.

### Scope

This policy applies to all staff within SAHV, and to all types of properties managed and/or owned by SAHV.

This policy will apply to all tenancies where it has been identified that there is possible hoarding and/or squalor present or a risk of same.

### Policy Statement

1. SAHV will adopt a preventative approach to hoarding and squalor and act as soon as possible after a risk or actual instance of the same is identified.
2. SAHV acknowledges that hoarding and squalor has serious implications from a tenancy management perspective, including:
  - risk management challenges – particularly in instances of high-density living, or rooming house accommodation where larger populations of tenants may be affected
  - health and safety concerns – including possible impact on individuals and property
  - high associated costs – the costs associated with addressing hoarding and squalor can be excessive
3. SAHV acknowledges hoarding as a distinct mental health disorder, according to the International Diagnostics Statistical Manual 5 (Hoarding and DSM-5, 2012).
4. SAHV will adopt a range of approaches in attempting to address hoarding and squalor, including but not limited to:
  - Early intervention – staff will identify potential issues from the beginning of a tenancy, via routine inspections of properties that will establish the tenant's and SAHV's expectations with regards to maintaining properties in good repair and a suitable clean state.
  - Assessment – staff will utilise appropriate risk assessment tools to explore the extent and impact of suspected hoarding and squalor, in collaboration with other stakeholders as identified as necessary.
  - Timely response – staff will use completed risk assessments to determine appropriate actions to minimise the risk to the person with hoarding behaviours and/or others in the community that may be affected. Actions may include referrals to appropriate services, such as Tenancy Plus, and notification to Fire Safety Victoria (formerly Metropolitan Fire Brigade) under their At Risk Persons Program.
5. SAHV will adopt a person-centred approach to responses to hoarding and squalor, if there are no concerns about a person's mental capacity and/or there is serious and imminent risk.
6. In instances where intervention attempts are not successful, SAHV may consider action according to the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 as a reasonable measure provided the person's human rights have been considered in decision-making.

## Definitions

Hoarding	Compulsive hoarding (often described as 'hoarding disorder') is a pattern of behaviour characterised by the excessive acquisition of an inability or unwillingness to discard large quantities of objects that are seemingly useless/of limited value and/or animals. Hoarding is constituted by living spaces that are cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed
Squalor	Squalor describes an unsanitary living environment that has arisen from extreme and/or prolonged neglect and poses substantial health and safety risks to people residing in the affected premises, as well as others in the surrounding community. Hoarding and squalor are different situations although they can co-exist. Prolonged or extreme hoarding may lead to squalor but does not always occur
Tenant	The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) refers to the individual/s as 'tenant', 'resident', 'occupant' or 'renter' that is dependent on the type of legal agreement in place between the individual, SAHV and the type of premises. For the purpose of this policy all individuals are referred to as a tenant.

## Related Documents

Policy:	Complaints and Appeals Policy Ending a Tenancy Policy Issuing a Notice to Vacate Policy
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Legislation:	Residential Tenancies Act 1997 Residential Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
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## Document Control

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