

C1.13 Vacant Property Management Policy

1. Purpose

1.1. This policy provides guidelines for the management of vacant properties to ensure that CENSW and Housing Co-operatives meet obligations under our contracts, agreements, and best practice.

1.2. The purpose of this policy is to:

- a. support decision making about vacant properties
- b. reduce vacancy timeframes
- c. increase rental income
- d. manage vacancies as efficiently as possible
- e. reduce risks related to vacant properties including property damage and squatting

2. Scope

This policy applies to all properties being managed by CENSW or a Housing Co-operative.

3. Definitions

3.1. CENSW - Common Equity NSW Ltd

3.2. Landlord - the person or organisation who grants the right to occupy residential premises under a residential tenancy agreement.

3.3. Housing Co-operative/Co-op - governance structure where tenants become 'members' of the co-operative and play an active part in running the organisation.

3.4. Tenant - the person who has the right to occupy residential premises under a residential tenancy agreement.

3.5. Tenantable vacant - a property that is unoccupied and the 'untenantable period' is less than 7 days, usually only requiring cleaning and minor repairs.

3.6. Untenantable vacant - a property that is unoccupied and the 'untenantable period' is 7 days or more, usually due to upgrade work.

3.7. Vacant property - A property is considered vacant from the day after a property is returned to the landlord.

3.8. DCJ - Department of Communities and Justice

4. Exceptions

N/A

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5. Policy Statement

5.1. Managing Vacant Properties:

- 5.1.1. The Landlord will seek to maximise the use of available housing stock through the control of vacant properties and maximise the collection of rent.
- 5.1.2. The Landlord will continue to meet housing needs and maximise rent income by repairing and letting properties within strict turn around targets of 14 days where possible
- 5.1.3. All Co-op vacant properties will be inspected by the Co-op's Maintenance Officer and where possible the CENSW Property Officer.
- 5.1.4. Repair orders will be issued promptly to bring the property up to a rentable standard as agreed by the Co-op and/ or CENSW.
- 5.1.5. The tenant will be invited to an outgoing inspection and be given the opportunity to bring the property to standard prior to moving out. Alternatively, any cost of repairs or cleaning required will be recharged to the tenant.
- 5.1.6. A photographic record of the property will be taken and retained on the tenancy file for future reference.

5.2. Monitoring

The Landlord will monitor on a monthly basis the:

- 5.2.1 Number of void properties
- 5.2.2 Rent loss due to voids
- 5.2.3 Number of vacant properties and reason.
- 5.2.4 Average turnaround timeframes for filling vacancies
- 5.2.5 Cost of repairs per vacancy
- 5.2.6 Vacancy timeframes and management will be discussed with Tenants/members through the general meeting.

5.3. Reporting

- 5.3.1. CENSW reports to DCJ quarterly on vacancies, turnaround timeframes and reasons for any delays
- 5.3.2. Co-ops are required to advise CENSW of any vacancies as they occur and as the vacant property is tenanted
- 5.3.3. CENSW and Co-ops are expected to fill vacancies which are tenable within 14 days and vacancies which are untenable within 28 days.
- 5.3.4. Some vacancy exemptions may apply under the Community Housing Contract Compliance and Performance Management Framework.
- 5.3.5. Vacancy turnaround times for new properties start from the acquisition date.

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6. Procedure

See attached Vacant Property Flow Chart

7. Data Collection

Data is collected on tenancies, vacancies, exits, maintenance works being completed, and tenant charges. This data is required to fulfil reporting obligations, improve service delivery where possible and capture the historical data of the property. All data is stored securely in accordance to privacy legislation.

8. Responsibilities

8.1. Operations Manager

8.1.1. Oversight of process, reporting and complaints escalation.

8.2. Manager, Co-op Development Team / Co-operative Board

8.2.1. Staff and Co-op competency, monitoring adherence to policy contract obligations, reporting.

8.3. Property Manager

8.3.1. Review of tenant charges on property damage

8.4. Co-op Development Officer

8.4.1. Management of the tenant selection process of directly managed properties.

8.4.2. Joint inspection with Property Officer

8.5. Co-op Maintenance Officer/ CENSW Property Officer

8.5.1. inspect, report and action on vacancies, in particular, if there are to be any delays in completing work and bringing the property to standard.

8.5.2. Recommend any tenant charges to the Property Manager/ Co-op Board.

8.6. All Staff

8.6.1. To apply this policy and adhere to best practices

9. External references

9.1. Company Co-operative Agreement (CCA)

9.2. Regulatory Framework - National Regulatory System Community Housing (NRSCH)

9.3. Community Housing Contract Compliance and Performance Management Framework

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10. Internal related documents, policies or forms

10.1. Vacant Property Flow Chart (attached)

10.2. Ending a Tenancy Policy

10.3. Abandoned Premises Checklist

10.4. Tenant Charge Policy

Name, Designation and Signature of Approver	Corine Addison, Operations Manager
Contact/Responsible Delegation	Manager, Co-op Development Team
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Date Committee/Board Approved	n/a
Date Staff Informed	15 December 2020
Upload to Website and Date	
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