

A Place to Call Home Guidelines 2016: Loddon Area

For: Department of Health & Human Services, Transitional Housing Management and Homelessness Service Agencies.

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Introduction

The A Place to Call Home (APTCH) Program Information and Guidelines 2016: This document outlines the APTCH program and provides guidelines for the Department of Health & Human Services (The Department), Transitional Housing Management Services (THM), Homelessness Service Agencies (HSA) and client families in the Loddon Area. Information has been set out in sections that are relevant to the different participants and the different stages of the process.

There are 4 sections:

Section 1 APTCH background from the former Department of Human Services and Program Information. This document outlines the policy background, eligibility criteria and the processes in broad terms. It is the reference document for the actual processes and decision making for APTCH program. It is meant for use by the Department, THM and HSA.

Sections 2 and 3 Process guidelines for the Department and the THM. They outline the processes and transactions for the allocation of properties between the services in both flowchart and written form.

Section 4 Information and guidelines for HSA and workers/case managers about the process, eligibility criteria, referral process and case management requirements. The steps in the process are set against the relevant parts from APTCH Guidelines: September 2009 from the former Department of Human Services (Section 1 above). This column is in italics. Fact sheets for Workers and Information for Families sheets which should be read in conjunction with these guidelines can be accessed from the Opening Doors Resource Register or the LOMA (Loddon Mallee Homelessness Network) [website www.loma.net.au](http://www.loma.net.au)

Section 4 may also be used by the Transitional Housing Management Service and the Department.

Section 1

A Place to Call Home Policy Background and Program Information

Policy Background

The APTCH Program commenced as an initiative of the Federal and State and Territory Governments in 2008.

The objective of this initiative was to reduce the level of homelessness in Australia and increase the likelihood of stabilising the assisted households by providing secure housing and removing the need for them to move once their housing circumstances had been successfully stabilised.

Under APTCH, clients in need of housing assistance will be provided with access to the dispersed APTCH properties coupled with support for fourteen months. The people living in these properties will then transfer to long term Public Housing after twelve months and the property will be replaced by existing public housing stock.

Access for households

It was envisaged that the APTCH properties would be accessed by families including women and children experiencing family violence, indigenous families and families in housing crisis. Potentially any household in THM properties could transfer subject to stock management considerations. The numbers of tenancies that can transfer under the APTCH arrangement are capped by regional location.

Eligibility criteria

All households are required to be approved segmented wait list applicants, preferably Homeless with Support, and meet eligibility criteria for public housing.

Families should also have or be developing strong linkages to the local community such as children attending local schools and/or household members accessing specific health, training or work opportunities.

A critical component of the success of *A Place to Call Home* is the ability for support agencies to continue working with the family for a fourteen month period (12 months in transitional housing and 2 months in public housing).

Support agencies will be in the best position to nominate clients they are working with who meet the eligibility criteria for allocation to APTCH properties.

Identification of Suitable Households

Households enter THM under normal homelessness prioritisation arrangements. At the point when a public housing application has been prepared the HSA and THM should identify the household as a suitable candidate for the initiative.

Client Support Packages

A brokerage package will be allocated for each client/family. This is based on 12 months support in the THM tenancy and follow up support for 2 months post transfer to Public Housing.

Client support packages are available in each area and are allocated to the appropriate support providers as properties come on line.

Establishment Grants

Establishment grants are provided by the Department to the managing THM when the APTCH property has been allocated. The THM will have the ability to purchase household items for APTCH tenants. Where it is identified by the support provider that an APTCH client requires household items to help establish their household the support provider can apply to the THM for the required item to be purchased from the Establishment Grant Funds. After tenancies transfer to long term Public Housing all household items transfer to the ownership of the tenant.

The THM will receive a new establishment grant for each of these APTCH properties in the following financial year to assist with the ongoing allocation of furnishings to APTCH clients.

Client support packages and establishment grant funds are not to be expended for any other purposes other than client related expenditure and assistance. Unexpended funds must be carried over to the next financial year and continue to be available for client related items or support.

Data

APTCH clients will be recorded on SHIP in the same way as existing case management clients are recorded as they may already be an existing client of the support provider or will become a long term client of the support provider.

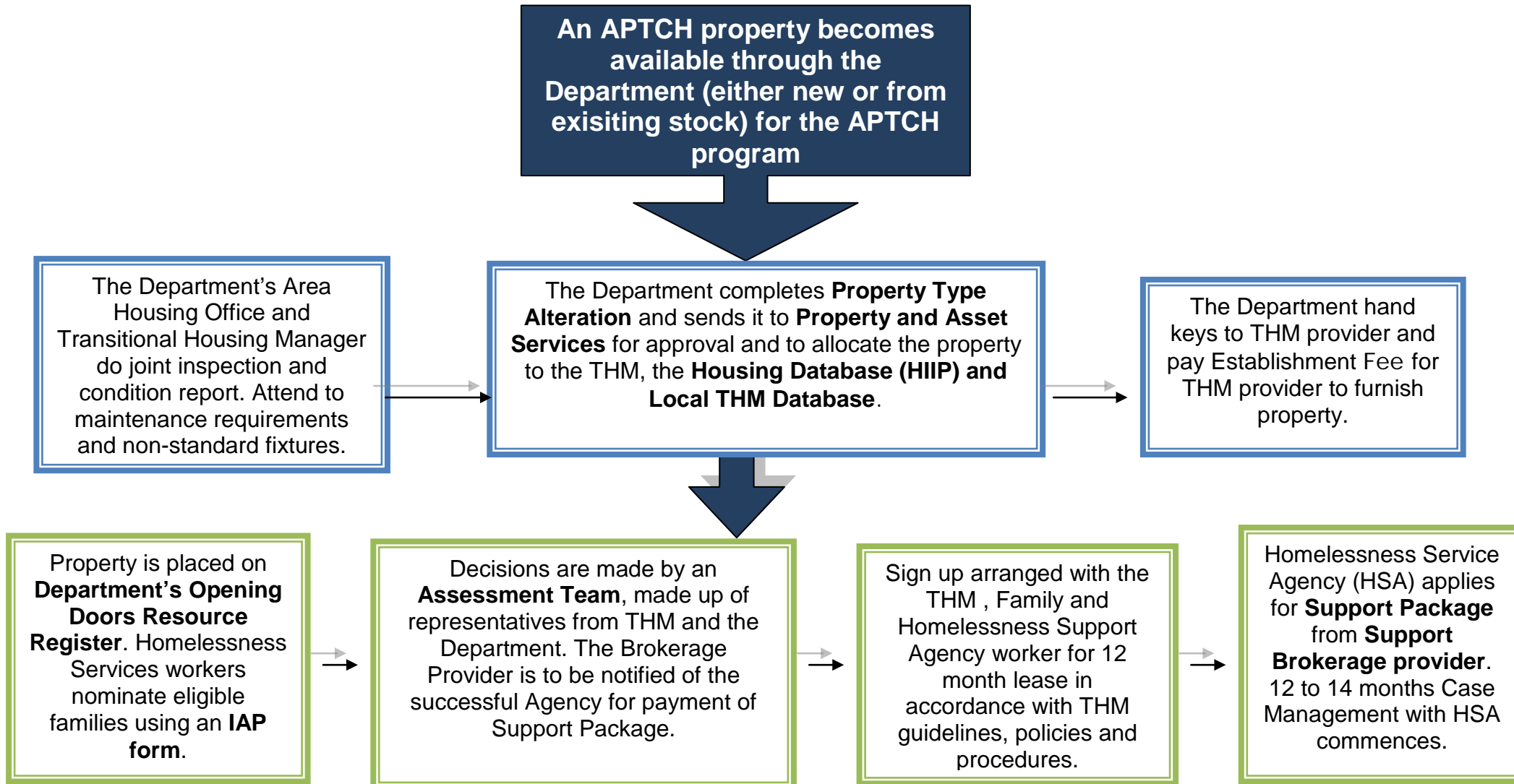
Allocation of Property Vacancies:

1. New or Replacement Properties are allocated to the THM program and are available for allocation through existing processes. Support agencies in conjunction with the THM identify an appropriate family that are currently supported and have an approved Homeless with Support application for Public Housing and are likely to receive an offer over the following 9- 12 months. If the property they are in is suitable it is then identified as an APTCH property and transferred to Public Housing at the time of confirmation.
2. As properties become available agencies in the local area, through the opening doors and allocations processes identify an eligible family for APTCH. The support agency undertakes to provide support to the family over a fourteen month period and to facilitate appropriate data collection. Within the fourteen month period the support provider agrees to provide transitional support to link the family in with a SHASP provider once the tenancy has transferred to public housing. The SHASP provider will support tenancies post the two months funded support.
3. As properties come on line support agencies nominate appropriate eligible families already allocated THM properties for APTCH. As properties become available they may be allocated to the general THM pool.

Note : All APTCH vacancies in the Loddon Area are advertised on the Opening Doors Resource Register and applications are assessed by a panel.

Section 2

A Place to Call Home Guidelines Flowchart



Three months prior to transfer of property and tenancy back to the Department commences

At transfer

The Department (Field Services Officer) and THM conduct a joint maintenance inspection.
HSA may be required to attend the inspection.
THM organises maintenance works to be completed.

Note: A final joint maintenance inspection may be required at time of transfer at the discretion of THM and Department.

Once completed (if required) and further maintenance works are completed:
The Department completes a **Property Type Alteration** form and sends it to **Property and Asset Services** for approval and to allocate the property to the Public Housing and the **Housing Database (HIIP)**.

The Department performs the necessary actions in order to print a tenancy agreement. The Department's Tenancy and Property Officer in conjunction with THM organise a joint meeting with tenant and HSA support worker at the property to sign the tenant up to Public Housing tenancy.

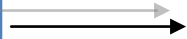
NOTE : Tenant should have 2 weeks rent in advance at time of sign up to Public Housing.

Home visit is conducted within the first six weeks of the new tenancy (as per Departmental policy) with the HSA support worker. Another home visit is conducted within the first twelve months of the new tenancy.

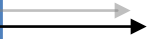
HSA Support worker to continue support to the tenant/family for 2 months after the transfer to Public Housing

Property changeover and replacement

The Department's Allocation Officer identifies a potential APTCH property for allocation to THM stock.



Allocations Officer notifies THM of property for inspection.
An inspection of the property occurs within 2 days of the offer.
Properties need to be like for like.



If property approved for transfer to the APTCH THM stock then the Department complete **Property Type Alteration** and send it to **Property and Asset Services** for approval and to allocate the property to the THM, the **Housing Database (HIIP)** and **Local THM Database**.



Process begins again.

Section 3

Loddon Area *A Place to Call Home* Procedures

A potential APTCH Property comes on line for allocation within Transitional Housing Management Program stock:

The Department and the Transitional Housing Management (THM) provider do joint property inspection and condition report. Agree on maintenance requirements and possible removal of any non-standard fixtures.

The Department completes a Property Type Alteration and sends it to Property and Asset Services for approval and to allocate the property to the THM, the Housing Database (HIIP) and Local THM Database.

Allocation of APTCH property to eligible tenant:

- Property put up for nomination via Opening Doors Resource Register.
- Eligible family is allocated a property - either the new THM property or an existing THM property becomes the APTCH property as per guidelines.
- THM provider signs tenant/family up to a Rental Tenancy Agreement with a 12 month lease agreement and becomes property manager. (See Section 4 for further details)
- Existing HSA supporting the tenancy is then allocated support funding from the Department via Support Brokerage provider. (See Section 4 for further details)
- Tenancy is supported/managed by HSA for 12 to 14 months and the THM until property handover to Public Housing at 12 months. (See Section 4 for case management details.)

Handover of APTCH property to Public Housing:

Three months before transfer of the property/tenancy to Public Housing a joint maintenance inspection between the Department and the THM occurs. The THM undertakes any required maintenance. Note: The HSA worker may be required to attend this inspection and/or assist in facilitating access to the property for the inspection and maintenance completion.

At Transfer to Public Housing, the Department will;

- Fill in a property type transfer form – Transitional Housing Manager to Rental General Stock – send to Property and Asset Services for approval, and update Housing Database (HIIP) and Local THM Database.
- Perform the necessary actions in order to print a tenancy agreement and sign the tenant up to Public Housing.
- Arrange (Via Tenancy and Property Officer) a joint visit in conjunction with THM manager and the HSA support worker, to terminate the Transitional Housing Management agreement and sign necessary paperwork to become a Public Housing tenant.

Post Transfer to Public Housing the Department and HSA Support worker will;

- Conduct a joint home visit within the first six weeks of the new tenancy (as per departmental policy). Another home visit to be will be conducted by the department within the first twelve months of the new tenancy.
- Support worker to retain support for family for 2 months after the changeover to Public Housing (14 months in total).

Allocating General Rental Stock to Transitional Housing Stock:

- The department's allocations officer will identify possible property for allocation to APTCH THM stock.
- Allocations officer notifies the THM of property for inspection and THM carries out inspection within 2 working days.
- THM either approves or rejects the stock for allocation to APTCH THM stock. **Note: THM must advise departmental management of the reasons for rejection of a stock offer.**
- The department completes Product Type Alteration form and forward to Property and Asset Services for approval, and update HIIP and Local THM Database.
- **Note : Properties need to be like for like or equivalent.**

Section 4

A Place to Call Home: Information for Homelessness Service Agencies

<i>A Place to Call Home Guidelines Sept 2009</i>		
<p>A vacancy in the <i>A Place to Call Home</i> (APTCH) program becomes available and is made available via the Department's Resource Register, as with THM vacancies.</p>	<p>Vacancy will not specify particulars such as location and number of bedrooms to allow for flexibility in the allocation options, as outlined in the <i>A Place to Call Home Guidelines Sept 2009</i>.</p>	<p><i>New properties are allocated to the THM program and are available for allocation through existing processes. Support agencies in conjunction with the THM identify an appropriate family that are currently supported If the property they are in is suitable it is then identified as an APTCH property and transferred to Public Housing at the time of confirmation.</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>As properties become available agencies in the local area, through the opening doors and allocations processes identify an eligible family for APTCH.</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>As properties come on line support agencies nominate appropriate eligible families already allocated THM properties for APTCH. As properties become available they may be allocated to the general THM pool.</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>Combination of the above options.</i></p>
<p>Homelessness Support Agency worker applies on behalf of Family using the IAP form.</p> <p><i>A family is defined as an adult/s with dependant child/ren.</i></p>	<p>Applications are made by filling out the <i>Initial Assessment and Planning</i> (IAP) Form, with the APTCH additional section filled in.</p> <p>The questions on the <i>Initial Assessment and Planning</i> IAP Form for APTCH will demonstrate that the family meet eligibility criteria and that the worker has confirmed with Department's Housing Advice and Assistance Team that the family are eligible for Public Housing.</p>	<p><i>It is envisaged that the APTCH properties would be accessed by families including women and children experiencing family violence, Indigenous families and families in housing crisis.</i></p> <p><i>All households are required to be approved segmented wait list applicants, preferably Homeless with Support, and meet eligibility criteria for public housing. Please note post 2009 guidelines the Department introduced an Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy - applicants subject to the ASB policy will only be considered for the APTCH Program if they have signed a Deed of Acknowledgement with the Department, have successfully completed a housing support plan with their worker and have provided evidence of changed behaviour.</i></p>

	<p>Information for HSA support workers about the APTCH program i.e. the full guidelines, eligibility and information that can be given to Families can be found on the Loddon Mallee Accommodation Network (LOMA) website. www.loma.net.au</p>	<p><i>Families should also have or have quickly developed strong linkages to the local community such as children attending local schools and or household members accessing specific health, training or work opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>A critical component of the success of A Place to Call Home is the ability for support agencies to continue working with the family for the fourteen month period.</i></p>
<p>Nominations are passed onto an Assessment Team for decision.</p> <p><i>A family is defined as an adult/s with dependant child/ren.</i></p>	<p>Decisions by an Assessment Team are made against the eligibility criteria from <i>A Place to Call Home Guidelines</i>, the Opening Doors Framework and within the targets:</p> <p>50% Families experiencing Family Violence 30% Indigenous families 20% Families in housing crisis</p> <p>Workers will be notified by email whether they were successful or not.</p>	<p><i>It is envisaged that the APTCH dispersed properties would be accessed by families including women and children experiencing family violence, Indigenous families and families in housing crisis. Potentially any household in THM properties could transfer subject to stock management considerations.</i></p> <p><i>Households enter THM under normal homelessness prioritisation arrangements which should prioritise those in greater need. At the point when the public housing application has been prepared, the relevant support agency and THM should identify the household as a suitable candidate for the initiative. Consultation should then occur between the support agency and the THM with local housing office management.</i></p>
<p>Sign up arranged with the THM, the Family and HSA worker(s) in accordance with THM guidelines, policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Family advised of process regarding length of tenancy with THM and HSA and of the handover to Public Housing after 12 - 14 months by HSA support worker.</p> <p>Family advised of the responsibilities and roles of each party. Information for workers to give to families is available from the Opening Doors Resource Registe and the LOMA website www.loma.net.au</p>	

<p>Support Package allocated to Homelessness Service Agency.</p>	<p>Homelessness Services Agency contacts Support Brokerage provider administration to arrange payment of Client Support Package.</p>	<p><i>Successful agencies will be allocated client support packages. This is based on 12 months support and follow up for 2 months post transfer to Public Housing</i></p>
<p>Case Management with Homelessness Service Agency commences.</p>	<p>APTCH tenancy managed in accordance with THM guidelines, policies and procedures.</p> <p>Case plan as per Homelessness Service Agency and HASS standards.</p> <p>Worker is expected to support family for 14 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 months while with THM lease, and • 2 months after transfer Public Housing. <p>General issues with tenancy are to be dealt with as per THM guidelines and referred to Departmental Management if tenancy becomes unsustainable.</p>	<p><i>A critical component of the success of A Place to Call Home is the ability for support agencies to continue working with the family for up to fourteen month period.</i></p> <p><i>12 months support and follow up for 2 months post transfer to Public Housing</i></p>
<p>Data Collection</p>	<p>Homelessness Support Agency</p>	<p><i>The Homelessness Support agency is required to record the client or family in SHIP as they would for any case management client.</i></p>

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the Loddon Area; Fact sheet for Support Workers and Information for Families sheets which are available from the Opening Doors Resource Register and the LOMA website www.loma.net.au.

Department of Health and Human Services

A Place to Call Home Program

Loddon Area

Fact sheet for Support Workers

A Place to Call Home

is a housing program that allows clients to be supported for 14 months in Transitional and then Public Housing to ensure a successful tenancy. At the end of a successful 12 months in a Transitional tenancy, clients will be transferred from the Transitional Housing provider (Haven; Home, Safe) to the Department of Health and Human Services (Public Housing), but they **DO NOT** have to move.

Support workers are funded by the program to assist clients through this process and continue to support them for another 2 months in Public Housing.

Clients must be public housing eligible and maintain a current public housing application throughout the program period.

The advantages for clients are:

- they will be able to stay in their Transitional property and it will become their ongoing Public Housing property.
- they will have 12 months support from you, their support worker to ensure that their Transitional tenancy is a success and a further 2 months support to ensure their Public Housing tenancy gets off to a good start and continues successfully.
- they will have you assisting them throughout the transition from their Transitional Housing tenancy to their Public Housing tenancy.

Your support responsibilities are:

- to remain in regular contact with your client;
- to ensure that your client understands their obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* that applies to all Transitional and Public Housing tenants in Victoria.
- to assist with ensuring that clients allow timely access to the property 3 months prior to transfer to Public Housing so that a maintenance inspection can be carried out and any required maintenance can be undertaken before the transfer occurs.
- to work with clients throughout the program period to ensure they have two weeks rent in advance at the time of transfer to Public Housing.

It is important for you to support your client to understand that after a successful 12 months their landlord will change from a Transitional Housing Organisation (Haven; Home, Safe) to Public Housing and that this will entail some changes to the rules of their tenancy, even though they do not move house. There will be a new way of assessing their income to calculate rent and property maintenance issues will be reported to the Public Housing Call Centre.

Ask the Haven; Home, Safe Tenancy Worker for more information;

Your client's Haven; Home, Safe Tenancy Manager is _____

Telephone _____

Contact the Department of Health and Human Services on telephone 5434 5555.

The Housing Advice and Assistance Team (HAAT) can assist you with further information about applications and eligibility criteria.

The Residential Client Services Allocations officer can assist with further information about income testing for rent calculation/maintenance/ transfer to public housing.

Department of Health and Human Services

A Place to Call Home Program

Loddon Area

Information for Families

A Place to Call Home

is a housing program that allows you to be supported for 12 to 14 months. At the end of a successful 12 months in Transitional housing your tenancy will be transferred from the Transitional Housing provider (Haven; Home, Safe) to the Department of Health and Human Services (Public Housing), but you **DO NOT** have to move. Your support worker will assist you through this process and continue to support you for another 2 months.

You must be public housing eligible and have a current application. Your support worker will help you with the application.

The advantages for you and your family are:

- you will not have to move from your Transitional property to a Public Housing property it will become your ongoing Public Housing;
- you will have 12 months support to ensure your Transitional tenancy is successful and a further 2 months to ensure your Public Housing tenancy gets off to a good start and continues successfully.
- your support worker will also assist you throughout the transfer from your Transitional Housing tenancy to the Public Housing tenancy.

Your responsibilities are:

- to remain in regular contact with your support worker and notify them if your circumstances change;
- to comply with the usual tenancy responsibilities under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* that apply to all Transitional and Public Housing tenants in Victoria.
- to allow timely access to the property 3 months prior to transfer to Public Housing so that a maintenance inspection can be carried out and any required maintenance can be undertaken before transfer.
- to have two weeks rent in advance at the time of transfer to Public Housing.

It is important for you and your support worker to understand that after 12 months your landlord will change from a Transitional Housing Organisation (Haven; Home, Safe) to Public Housing and that this will entail some changes to the rules of your tenancy, even though you do not move house. There will be a new way of assessing your income to calculate your rent and property maintenance issues will be reported to the Public Housing Call Centre.

Ask your support worker or your tenancy manager for more information.

Your Support Worker is _____

From _____ Telephone _____

Your Haven; Home, Safe Tenancy Manager is _____

Telephone _____