146  Tenant Absence from Property Policy

1. Policy

Link Housing expects tenants and residents to occupy the homes they rent from Link Housing. Link Housing also recognises that tenants will sometimes be away from their properties from time to time.

Link Housing requires that tenants advise us if the period of absence exceeds six consecutive weeks.

2. Scope

This policy relates to all Link Housing tenants living in social housing properties.

This policy does not include Affordable Housing tenants.

Tenants who live in transitional housing programs or who are living in supported housing programs will also need to seek permission from their support service for a long absence.

3. Approval

Link Housing will generally approve an absence from the property for up to six consecutive months, if it is satisfied that:

- The tenant has made arrangements to pay their tenancy charges, such as rent and water usage, while they are away.
- The property is securely locked and will be adequately cared for while the tenant is away.
- The tenant has an acceptable reason for going away.
- The tenant has provided contact details in case of emergency.

4. Period

Each request is dealt with on a case by case basis but acceptable reasons for absences of up to six months include:

- Caring for sick/frail family members
- Hospitalisation, institutional care, nursing home care or rehabilitation
- Escaping domestic violence, harassment or threats of violence
- Assisting with immigration matters in the country of origin
- Holidays
- Employment, education or training
- Imprisonment (unless this is related to a breach of the tenancy agreement)

5. Repeat absences

Link Housing will not approve repeat absences relating to holidays, assisting with immigration matters in the country of origin or employment/training.
6. Extended Absences

Tenants can be away for period of up to six months and in acceptable circumstances can apply for an extension. Each application for an extension will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Link Housing will not approve absences from social housing properties that exceed twelve months in total over a five-year period.

Tenants who will be absent for periods exceeding this will be required to return possession of the property to Link Housing. Three weeks’ notice of the tenant’s intention to vacate will be required in keeping with the Residential Tenancies Act 2010.

Re-instatement of tenancy may be possible subject to the conditions outlined in the Tenancy Re-instatement policy.

7. Responsibility

It is the tenant’s responsibility to ensure that they fulfill their obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 while they are away.

8. Legislation & Regulatory Framework

- Residential Tenancy Act 2010
- Tenancy Re-instatement Policy
- National Community Housing Standards

9. Privacy and Confidentiality

Link Housing will keep applicants’, tenants’ and residents’ information and feedback confidential, in line with privacy laws and standards.

10. Complaints and Appeals

A tenant who is not happy with a decision made by Link Housing or who believes that Link Housing has not followed this policy can complain or appeal using the complaints and appeals policies that are available on the Link Housing website www.linkhousing.org.au or by phoning Link Housing on 9412 5111.

11. Quality Assurance

The Tenant Absence from Property Policy will be formally reviewed every three (3) years, or when necessitated through a sufficient change in circumstances, eg due to legislative change.