

NATIONAL COMMUNITY HOUSING STANDARD

RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY TO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION



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Originally developed in the late 1990s as an industry-led and industry-owned precursor to the introduction of formal regulation, the drafting of National Community Housing Standards (NCHS) was part of an early pitch to expand the capacity of the not for profit housing sector. Through three editions, the most recent dating from 2010, the NCHS served as a unifying set of good practice aspirations for the sector.

It is an ambition of the community housing sector that at some point funding will be made available for an industry-led project that aims to turn the NCHS into practical tools for improvement for the community housing industry. The vision is for a nationally owned industry-led accreditation approach that raises organisational performance through:

- the sharing of best practice
- clear and practical assessment recommendations
- professional, independent and experienced assessors.

Pending the commitment of funding to the larger project, CHIA is taking the opportunity to produce individual standards for those service areas where support has been provided.

THE FRAMEWORK

A Framework for the revitalised National Community Housing Standards (NCHS) has been previously developed to articulate the scope, purpose and eligibility requirements of the revitalised NCHS and the future operation of the accreditation process. The revitalised standards:

- **are a tool for community housing organisations** (CHOs) that are internally driven to improve their performance.
- **are not an externally imposed compliance system.** It is up to individual CHOs to decide how they use the standards and if they want to seek accreditation against them, or simply use them as a self-assessment tool. It is assumed that initially the standards will be used for self-assessment.
- **complement but do not duplicate requirements** of the National Regulatory System Community Housing (NRSCH) or equivalent state-based schemes. Organisations must be registered and of good standing in order to seek accreditation.

At this point, a formal accreditation process has not been put in place although a proposed framework has been produced and is available on the CHIA website [add link]. This document provides guidance on how performance against the standard would be assessed and will be useful for self-assessment purposes.

Refer to Appendix 1 for a copy of the draft framework for the revitalised National Community Housing Accreditation System.

STRUCTURE OF MODULES

It is intended that each of the modules will have a similar structure comprising:

STANDARD NAME: there will be approximately 5 specific standards – each with a name

WHAT WE EXPECT: the behaviour or competency an organisation must demonstrate to meet a specific standard

WHAT WE LOOK FOR: the ways we expect an organisation to demonstrate it meets the specific standard. These are usually activities

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE SOURCES: the types of evidence that could be used. These are examples – different types of evidence can be relevant to different organisations, depending on the circumstances

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE: the characteristics of an organisation that excels against the standard.

RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY TO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE: THE STANDARDS

The Responding Effectively to Domestic and Family Violence Standards have been developed to support those community housing organisations with an interest in being recognised for their work effectively responding to domestic and family violence across their housing programs to acknowledge the specific systems, staff skills and management approaches that they have invested effort in developing.

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The standards can be used as a self-assessment tool, as a basis for independent assessment of performance or subject to interest and resources, accreditation.

The standard is composed of seven elements which together cover the key aspects of responding effectively to domestic and family violence in the housing environment.

These standards are:

1. **Skilled workforce**
2. **Facilitating access to support for victim-survivors who are tenants**
3. **Access, tenancy management and maintenance**
4. **Operational performance**
5. **Advocacy and community engagement**
6. **Maintaining and/or expanding housing services to victim-survivors**
7. **Governance**

EXCELLENCE

To be accredited as 'excellent', your organisation must additionally demonstrate that it offers excellence in each of three whole of organisation aspects of service:

1. **Victim-survivor focus** (victim-survivor refers to tenants and potential tenants)
2. **Inclusive services**, and
3. **Effective collaborative service delivery models** that highlight partnerships and integrate housing and support services to deliver effective service responses

DEFINITIONS

Domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence refers to any behaviour that causes physical, sexual or emotional damage, or causes someone in the relationship to live in fear. Non-physical forms of abuse can be just as damaging as physical violence.

Social housing

Social housing is defined as a program of state subsidised rental housing for very low and low income people delivered by public housing authorities and community housing organisations. Characteristics commonly associated with social housing are:

- Strong reliance on state housing authority owned properties to deliver social housing tenancies
- Requirement to use detailed social housing eligibility and rent setting rules set by the state or territory housing authority
- Requirement to tenant vacant properties from a waiting list or housing register of eligible applicants maintained by the state housing authority either individually or in concert with participating community housing organisations.