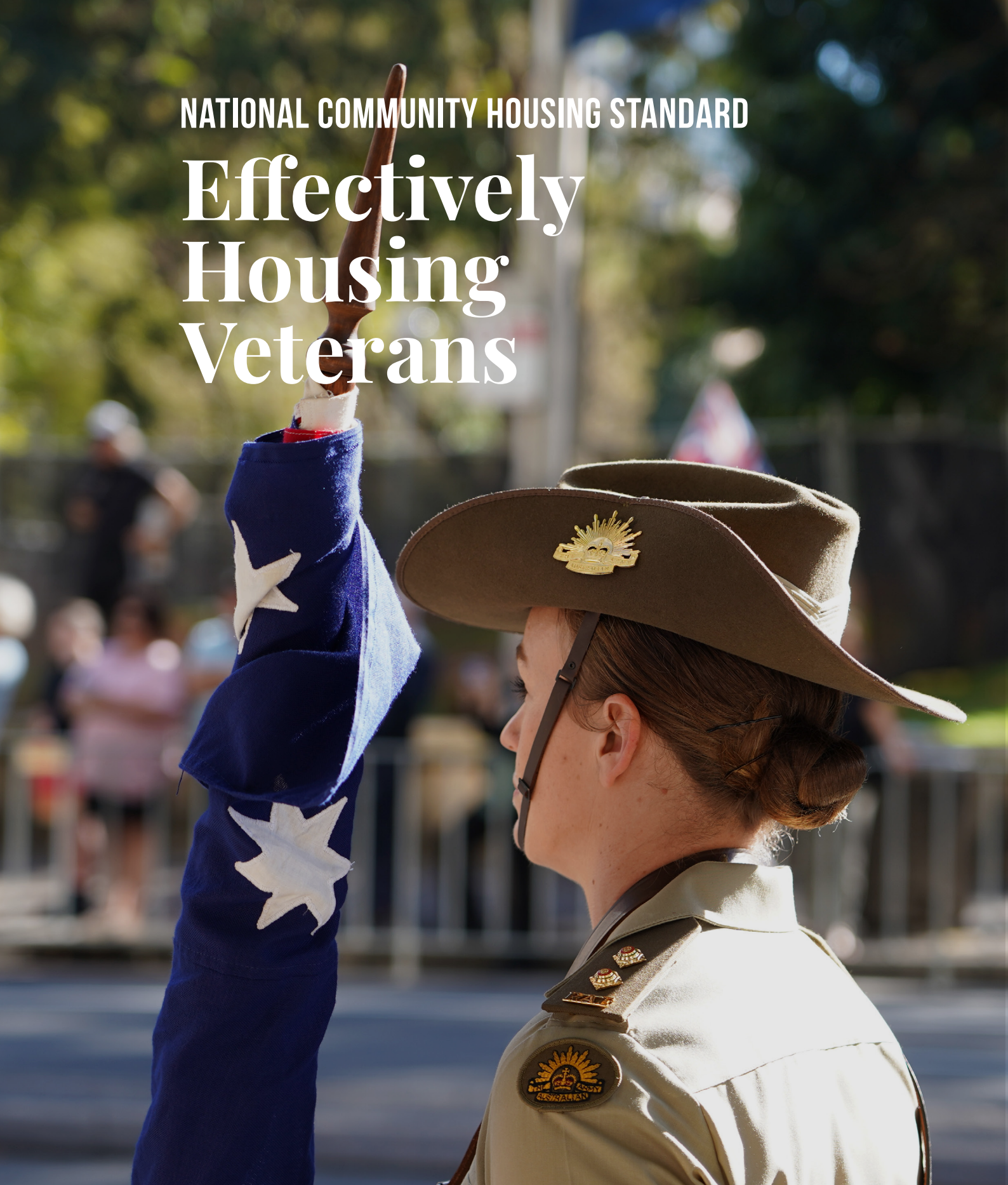


NATIONAL COMMUNITY HOUSING STANDARD

Effectively Housing Veterans



Community Housing
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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 there will be funding 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.

Financial assistance for this standard, the development of the Effectively Housing Veterans module, has been provided by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

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](#). This document provides guidance on how performance against the standard would be assessed and will be useful for self-assessment purposes.

Structure of modules

Standard name: there will be about 5 specific standards – each with a name

What we expect: the behaviour or competency an organisation needs to 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.

Effectively Housing Veterans: the Standards

The Effectively Housing Veterans Standards have been developed to support those community housing organisations with an interest in being recognised for their work engaging with and effectively housing veterans to acknowledge the specific systems, staff skills and management approaches that they have invested effort in developing.

The standards can be used as a self-assessment tool, as the basis for an 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 effectively housing veterans.

These standards are:

1. Skilled workforce
2. Facilitating access to support for veteran tenants
3. Access, tenancy management and maintenance
4. Operational performance
5. Marketing and promotion
6. Maintaining and / or expanding housing services to veterans
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. Veteran focus (veterans refers to tenants and potential tenants),
2. Service inclusiveness, and
3. Value for money.

We understand that your organisation will articulate, apply and demonstrate these values uniquely based on its history, culture, mission and values. We look to your organisation to demonstrate how its specific practices relating to customer focus, service inclusiveness and value for money deliver the characteristics of excellence that define an excellent social housing business in relation to effectively housing veterans.

Further information about the Standards and areas of excellence are outlined in the tables on the following pages.

Definitions

Veterans

For the purposes of the National Community Housing Standards Effectively Housing Veterans module, the specialist homelessness services definition of what constitutes a veteran will be used. This definition is:

‘A current or former Australian Defence Force (ADF) member. This includes both full-time and part time ADF members. This does not include non-Australian defence forces, or reservists who have never served full-time in the ADF¹.’

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 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.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing is defined as rental housing appropriate for the needs of very low, low and moderate income households where rent is set below market rent. It is not social housing or state funded homelessness responses such as crisis or temporary accommodation.

¹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/specialist-homelessness-services-collection/shs-data-definitions>

STANDARD ONE:
Skilled Workforce

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Your organisation has a workforce that is skilled and capable as it engages with veteran housing applicants and tenants	• Staff across your organisation's program areas are trained in understanding veteran specific matters and know how to engage in developing an effective housing relationship • Tenancy management staff are trained and understand the impact of trauma on veterans and are able to implement trauma informed responses in their dealings with veteran tenants • Staff working with veterans are familiar with the entitlements and services available to veterans	Veteran focus • Staff are trained in how to work effectively with veterans to increase workforce skills and capacity • Staff are knowledgeable of the range of veteran support services available both nationally and in their local community Inclusive services • Veteran tenants report they feel understood and respected Value for money • Low turnover due to veteran tenancy being unsustainable. Majority of moves are positive e.g. purchasing a property, planned move to alternative rental, changes to life circumstances requiring supported accommodation etc.

STANDARD TWO:
Facilitating Access to Support for Veteran Tenants

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Your organisation supports sustainable tenancy practice to maximise successful outcomes for vulnerable veterans	• Staff are able to articulate sustainable tenancy practice approaches utilised by your organisation • Staff utilise a range of tenant engagement practice approaches with vulnerable veteran tenants and are able to articulate specific approaches when asked	Veteran focus • Skilled staff who utilise a range of practice approaches to create and support sustainable tenancies with veteran tenants • Relationships are established with veteran specific and mainstream support services to facilitate referral for support services where needed Inclusive services • Evidence of a range of practice approaches being implemented to strengthen engagement with vulnerable veteran tenants Value for money • Low turnover due to veteran tenancy being unsustainable. Majority of moves are positive e.g. purchasing a property, planned move to alternative rental, changes to life circumstances requiring supported accommodation etc.

STANDARD THREE:

Access, Tenancy Management and Maintenance

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Your organisation provides transparent and accountable access, tenancy management and maintenance services in line with its stated objectives and commitments for housing services	- Partnerships are established with veteran support services, such as DVA, Open Arms or ex-service organisations to increase awareness of the housing application, assessment and allocation process to strengthen appropriate referral pathways - Housing options and the housing application process are clearly explained to veterans and assistance is provided where appropriate / necessary to strengthen veterans' understanding of what is available - A transparent approach to allocations that: - supports tenant diversity and social mix - achieves financial viability of the housing service and delivers social and organisational objectives - complies with specific housing program requirements and relevant government guidelines - appropriately matches veterans to suitable properties for their needs and where possible their preferences including where needed their assistance animals - User friendly tenancy establishment processes including income assessment and facilitation of bond processes - Your organisation is aware of and has a working relationship with relevant veteran specific services and other mainstream services to facilitate effective referral for veterans when appropriate	Veteran focus - Based on a strategic approach, veterans are identified as a priority group during the allocation process through such initiatives as a local allocation strategy - Partnerships are established with veteran support services that focus on building housing awareness and collaborative tenancy support processes to maximise successful tenancies - Referral pathways are established - Information about veteran specific services and other mainstream services is understood to support effective referral when needed - Information about access, tenancy management and maintenance services are available to veteran tenants in a range of formats and languages and through a range of channels - Veterans say that it is easy to access information about the housing application and allocation process - Veteran tenants say it is easy to request services and report issues - Veterans understand the housing products and services provided, their options and their obligations - Veterans views about services are regularly sought e.g. through tenant surveys, when doing routine property inspections etc. - Working links to support networks, such as veteran networks, tenant networks, local community networks and activities

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
	- Veteran tenants understand the extent to which they have security of tenure and the factors that affect the length of their tenancy - Veteran tenants understand the need for income reviews (if relevant) and what is required of them when they occur - Discussion is entered into with veterans about the ability to have assistance animals in your properties - Veteran tenants get a timely and complete response to maintenance requests in line with published service standards - Veteran tenants get a timely and complete response to non-maintenance requests in line with published service standards - End of tenancy processes place a focus on enabling veteran tenants to move successfully / retain their bond (if relevant) - Front line staff use systems, processes and tools to: - implement and monitor compliance with specific social and/or affordable housing program requirements, legislative responsibilities and government guidelines - respond to events that threaten the sustainability of the tenancy, such as domestic and family violence, household breakdown, mental health issues, substance use, behavioural matters relating to trauma - Veteran tenants have a range of opportunities to provide feedback on access, tenancy management and maintenance services and veteran tenants are regularly reminded of their options - Front line and executive staff can identify service improvements introduced in response to feedback from veteran tenants	Veteran focus - Examples of tailoring the way services are provided in order to improve the veteran experience - Examples of service changes that have resulted in measurably improved veteran experiences - Organisation uses a trauma informed approach with veteran tenants - Well informed referral networks, particularly to veteran specific advocates and services - Links to education and employment opportunities for veteran tenants - Veterans have trust and confidence in the organisation - High customer satisfaction ratings (veteran tenants would recommend to other veterans) - Veteran tenants attain their housing goals - Veteran tenants are able to have an assistance animal where this is an identified part of their therapeutic plan Inclusive services - Your organisation leverages extensive community links and partnerships (in relation to veterans) to inform and enhance the service - Your organisation demonstrates commitment to cultural capability and safety Value for money - Properties are well maintained, are in good condition and repair - Low turnover due to veteran tenancy being unsustainable – majority of moves are positive e.g. purchasing a property, planned move to alternative rental, changes to life circumstances requiring supported accommodation etc. - Issues are promptly acted on and resolved, and risk management strategies are implemented to reduce likelihood of reoccurring

STANDARD FOUR:
Operational Performance

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Your organisation provides transparent and accountable access, tenancy management and maintenance services in line with its stated objectives and commitments for housing services	- Partnerships are established with veteran support services, such as DVA, Open Arms or ex-service organisations to increase awareness of the housing application, assessment and allocation process to strengthen appropriate referral pathways - Housing options and the housing application process are clearly explained to veterans and assistance is provided where appropriate / necessary to strengthen veterans' understanding of what is available - A transparent approach to allocations that: - supports tenant diversity and social mix - achieves financial viability of the housing service and delivers social and organisational objectives - complies with specific housing program requirements and relevant government guidelines - appropriately matches veterans to suitable properties for their needs and where possible their preferences including where needed their assistance animals - User friendly tenancy establishment processes including income assessment and facilitation of bond processes - Your organisation is aware of and has a working relationship with relevant veteran specific services and other mainstream services to facilitate effective referral for veterans when appropriate	Veteran focus - our organisation sets and monitors KPIs relating to veteran engagement, housing access and experience Inclusive services - Your organisation sets and monitors KPIs relating to service inclusivity - Your organisation seeks feedback from veterans' organisations on service performance - Examples of using effective networking and / or collaborative partnerships to reach and assist veteran communities with diverse housing needs Value for money - Veteran tenancies are effectively sustained with the level of support required

STANDARD FIVE:
Marketing and Promotion

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Your organisation understands the housing needs of veterans and effectively gears marketing and promotion towards veterans	- Your organisation does research to understand the diversity of the veteran community likely to be interested in social and/ or affordable housing opportunities and has an understanding of veteran specific risks factors related to housing - Your organisation actively markets its housing services to veterans. For example, this could include: - working in partnership with other organisations, including veteran specific organisations, to identify prospective veteran tenants - establishing a relationship with veteran services such as the local ADF bases, DVA, Open Arms or ex-service organisations - using a variety of marketing tools including on websites, brochures, information sheets, information packages - proactive outreach - distributing marketing materials to relevant local veteran specific and mainstream services - holding 'open days' with your local transition team - Your organisation's promotions are tailored for veterans	Veteran focus - Your organisation uses a range of formats and channels to promote housing opportunities - Your organisation has informed veteran customers who understand the products and the services provided, their housing options, and their obligations - Your organisation is aware of local veteran support services and conducts engagement and/or promotional activities. - Your organisation identifies when a veteran client needs additional support and provides referrals to veteran support services as required. Inclusive services - Culturally competent service delivery - Well informed referral networks, particularly to veteran specific advocates and services Value for money - Housing offers are suitable to prospective veteran tenants and there are low refusal / rejection rates

STANDARD SIX:

Maintaining and/or Expanding

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Your organisation's housing management and / or development planning reflects the needs of veterans	- Properties managed by your organisation address the needs of veterans - Research and planning inform the development of strategies to meet identified needs of veteran applicants and tenants that might include the development of Local Allocation Strategies - Your organisation honours and respects your veteran tenants through hosting veteran specific events - Home modifications are undertaken as needed to enable veteran housing needs to be met	Veteran focus - Your organisation does research to understand the housing needs of veterans in the geographical area covered by your organisation, including characteristics of housing supply needed (location, property type, size) - Staff have an understanding of veteran specific risk factors and how these might impact on their housing needs - High level of veteran tenant satisfaction with properties - Veteran tenants express a sense of community - Well-designed housing that meets the housing type and locational needs of veterans - Research and planning inform the development of strategies to meet identified needs of veteran applicants and tenants that might include new build/s targeting veterans - Veteran views inform the standard for potential property acquisitions / developments / modifications - Your organisation improves its services for veterans through its relationships and partnerships Inclusive services - Veteran tenants are given opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement on their housing Value for money - Current or new housing is adaptable and able to be modified cost effectively for veterans with specific needs. Where modifications are injury related, DVA can pay for home modifications

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Development (where applicable) Your organisation's housing development decisions reflect consideration of veteran needs and asset management outcomes	Development (where applicable) - Your organisation designs and builds housing for veterans that meets legislative and regulatory requirements - Your organisation applies strategies to maximise both long term asset management, and tenant satisfaction when designing and building housing for veterans - Your organisation understands the needs of veterans who require social and affordable housing and seeks to reflect those needs in new developments where possible	Veteran focus - High level of tenant satisfaction with properties - Veteran tenants express a sense of community - Veterans and veteran organisations are consulted on future property developments Inclusive services - Property standards 'raise the bar' with regard to innovative features - The portfolio is diversified and offers housing suited to a range of veterans, household sizes and household complements Value for money - Development design decisions are geared towards achievement of value for money in the long term – high quality specifications that see veteran tenancies sustained

STANDARD SEVEN:

Governance

WHAT WE LOOK FOR	WHAT WE EXPECT	CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE
Your organisation understands the housing needs of veterans and has identified strategies to support veteran housing needs	• Your organisation's senior executive and Board are committed to strengthening the housing response for veterans • A range of reporting is available to senior executive and Board to inform understanding of the service response to veterans	Veteran focus • Your organisation applies a methodology for measuring success in assisting veterans achieve their housing goals • Strategic and operational planning identifies veterans as a target group for housing planning • Research and data analysis about veteran need inform housing strategy and planning • A whole of organisation focus on understanding and improving the veteran customer experience Inclusive services • A service response tailored to meet veteran specific needs • A whole of organisation focus on cultural competence / delivering inclusive services • Your organisation has practices to support affordability and sustaining tenancies Value for money Your organisations social and / or affordable housing business is regularly and effectively scrutinised by senior management and the Board to monitor for effectiveness with veteran tenants

