

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Who is Evolve Housing VIC?**

Evolve Housing Vic is a registered Community housing provider. We offer social and affordable housing services to Victorians who are unable to afford private market rents.

Our social housing is for people on low incomes who need housing, especially those who recently experienced homelessness, family violence or have other special needs.

### **What are my Rights and Responsibilities as an Evolve Housing VIC tenant?**

Community housing renters sign a *Residential rental agreement* before they enter the tenancy. The agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of the community housing organisation (as residential rental provider) and renters.

Community housing renters have the same rights under the *Victorian Residential Tenancies Act 1997* as public housing renters and private renters. You can find more information about the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 on the renting section of the *Consumer Affairs Victoria* website.

### **Will my new lease conditions be different from my current lease with Public housing?**

For the term of your Residential rental agreement with Evolve Housing VIC until such time as a change of tenancy occurs, subject to an exception regarding Commonwealth Rent Assistance, or a new person entering your lease agreement, we will apply tenancy management policies and conditions which are consistent with the Homes Victoria policies which apply to all Public Housing renters.

### **What is Commonwealth Rent Assistance?**

Commonwealth Rent Assistance is a non-taxable payment from the Australian Government to people in receipt of an eligible Department of Human Services (Centrelink) payment who are paying rent in the private market, or renting from non-government organizations such as community housing providers.

### **Am I eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance?**

Tenants receiving a Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs payment are likely to be eligible for CRA. Eligibility depends on your individual circumstances, such as your household income, and the rent you are charged.

We will provide further information about your eligibility for CRA once we have assessed your rent. You can also visit Centrelink's website for more information on '*Rent Assistance eligibility and payment rates*'.

### **How do I apply for Commonwealth Rent Assistance?**

Applying for CRA is a simple and easy process. When you sign your Residential rental agreement, you will be provided with an Evolve Housing VIC letter to take to Centrelink. You can also upload this letter through myGov to claim for CRA. For more on how to apply, speak to your Housing manager or see Centrelink's information on '*claiming Rent Assistance*'.

### **Why do I have to pay Commonwealth Rent Assistance?**

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is a payment from the Australian Government to assist with paying your rent. This CRA becomes part of your community housing rent charge and is used by your community housing providers to fund rental subsidies for low and moderate-income households. Public housing tenants are not eligible to receive CRA because they pay rent to a government housing authority.

### **Will my rent increase if I am eligible for CRA?**

Yes, your rent will increase if you receive the CRA. If you are eligible and your tenancy is managed by a community housing landlord, your rent will increase by the amount of CRA for which you are eligible. However, your rent will only increase by the new amount of CRA your household receives, and your 'after-rent income' will be the same as if you had stayed with public housing.

### **How much rent will I pay?**

The amount of rent you pay depends on your individual and household income and circumstances. Your rent will be the amount currently charged for Public Housing renters (currently 25% of primary income and 15% of Family Tax Benefits) plus 100% of Commonwealth Rent Assistance for which you and your household members are eligible. If you receive a Centrelink payment, you are most likely eligible for Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

### **What does my household income include?**

It is the combined incomes of all household members 18 years of age or over. When working out your rent, we take most of your income into account. Some income, such as carer allowances or payments made for specific purposes, will not be taken into account.

### **When do I pay my rent?**

Rent is charged on a weekly basis. Renters are expected to always be two weeks in advance to comply with their *Residential Rental Agreement* (RRA). We encourage all renters to pay their rent on time to avoid falling in arrears or breaching their RRA. To avoid arrears, most tenants choose to pay on a fortnightly basis when they receive their Centrelink or Department of Veterans Affairs payments, or when they get paid by their employer.

### **How do I pay my rent?**

There are five ways that you can pay your rent: Centrepay from your Centrelink payments, direct debit from your bank account, Eftpos payment over the phone or by visiting our office, online through BPay, and at the Post office using your rent payment cards.

### **Will I have to pay for Utilities?**

As a community housing renter, you are responsible for how much water, gas and electricity your household uses. You are also responsible for paying the bill for these utilities.

**Water:** all community housing renters must contribute to the cost of the water they use – whether or not they have a separate water meter. If your home has a separate water meter, you pay the bill that your local water company sends you. The bill will show how much water you have used. If your home does not have a separate water meter, you pay a standard weekly service charge to cover the cost of the water you use.

**What am I required to bring when I attend lease agreement sign-up appointment?**

Please expect to pay 2 weeks advanced rent and 2 weeks bond when you attend the office to sign your residential rental agreement. You will be advised of the exact amount prior to your appointment.

**How much Bond do I have to pay?**

Bond payment will be the equivalent of 2 weeks rent. You will be advised of the bond amount once you have accepted an offer of housing from us.

**What if I need help with paying for my Bond?**

Bond assistance is available with an interest-free bond loan. You will be required to complete an application for RentAssist bond loan and submit to Housing VIC for approval. If you require assistance, please let us know at the time you accept the offer of housing.

**What if I have pets?**

If you want to keep a pet at the rental property, you must seek the Evolve Housing VIC's consent. You are required to submit a Pet request form for each pet that you want to keep. For more information please visit Consumer Affairs Victoria website or speak to your Housing Manager.

**What if my household situation changes?**

If your household or circumstances change, you need to tell Evolve Housing VIC immediately. Changes in household members or household income may affect your rent. We need to keep this information up to date so that you pay the right rent and we know the correct size of home for your household.

**What if I have difficulties paying?**

If you can't pay your rent, please contact us straight away. We will help you work out what to do. You can also ask for help from our Tenancy Support team. We offer support to help you keep your tenancy.

**What happens if I have maintenance or repairs issues?**

Contact MyEvolve Contact Centre on **1800 693 865** for any maintenance or repairs request. The time it takes to do the repairs depends on how urgent or complex the maintenance issue is.

**How long can I stay?**

Evolve Housing provide long term social housing. Renters are required to re-sign a lease on the agreed timeframe with their housing manager. Your tenancy with Evolve Housing will be at risk if; you are in arrears, breach any conditions on your residential rental agreement, display anti-social behaviour and a risk to anyone in your property or neighbours.

**What if I want to move out?**

It's important you notify Evolve Housing of your intention to move out of the property. You will need to provide intended date to vacate, new address and contact details (including phone number and email address).

**Who can I contact for more information?**

For more information about your tenancy please contact us on **1800 693 865** or by emailing [myevolve@evolvehousing.com.au](mailto:myevolve@evolvehousing.com.au). You may also telephone the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing on **1300 475 170**.