

# Tenant participation

## General

The primary aim of tenant involvement is to maximise individual satisfaction with the service provided by the Company and promote best practice.

The Company encourages the involvement of its tenants in the planning, delivery, evaluation and management of the Company services. The Company ensures that tenants are well informed and have the opportunity to participate in decisions concerning the management of the Company and its tenancies.

Tenants are kept well informed of the operations and policies of the Company by:

- Provision of written and oral information at the beginning of a tenancy outlining ways in which tenants can participate in the management of the Company.
- The invitation to attend relevant meetings, forums and information sessions.
- Staff ensuring that policies and procedures are fully explained to tenants wherever necessary
- The public availability of documents relating to the policies and procedures of the Company.

## Appropriateness

Appropriate tenant involvement includes:

- Consultation and input into decision-making about policies and Company activities and participation in Tenant Forums
- Control and decision making about the management of the tenant's own complex or dwelling
- Encouragement of informal feedback from tenants, on an individual level, about the service being received and of the policies of the Company
- Formal feedback through satisfaction surveys, evaluations, suggestion boxes etc.

## Acknowledgment of Tenant Rights to Decline Participation

The Company acknowledges the barriers that exist to tenant participation. Such barriers may include time management and resource limitations. Acknowledgment is also made of the barriers faced by tenants themselves and the Company does not want participation by tenants to be tokenistic or exploitative. In this sense, the Company views tenant participation as a voluntary activity and respect the rights of tenants to decline participating in any initiative of the Company.

The Company further recognises that the exclusive or over-represented involvement of one group of tenants can result in the disempowerment or exclusion of others and care must be taken to ensure that there are not foreseen or unwanted outcomes in any aspect of the involvement of tenants in the Company's operations.

## Addressing Barriers to Tenant Participation

The Company understands there may be a number of reasons why tenants would not participate in the activities of the Company. These reasons may vary according to personal preference, cultural background, language difficulties, expense etc.

The Company understands that lack of information about tenant participation may influence a tenant's decision about taking part in the Company's activities. For this reason, the Company will provide both written and oral information about tenant participation options to tenants at the start of a tenancy. Regular updates about tenant participation strategies will also be provided throughout a tenancy.

Where possible, the Company will implement strategies to address these barriers. Such strategies may include:

- ensuring meetings or forums are affordable by providing travel subsidies
- setting meetings in locations accessible to public transport.
- ensuring meetings are accessible to less mobile tenants (e.g. wheelchair accessible venues).
- respecting the rights of tenants not to participate.
- establishing models of participation that do not require attendance (e.g. surveys).

## The Importance of the NCCHC Approach to Client Service

NCCHC acknowledges that often the most effective method of meaningful participation by tenants is often by direct involvement in decisions concerning their own tenancy. Further, tenants can often participate in broader decisions being considered by the Company through direct approaches by staff during general service delivery.

The company will seek to consolidate this approach to participation through:

- Ensuring that position descriptions for all staff involved in direct client service work include a responsibility for seeking feedback from tenants
- Ensuring that performance appraisals for all client service staff include the measurement of their effectiveness in including tenants in their decision-making processes
- Wherever possible, develop systems that will capture any informal feedback provided through direct contact with staff

## Annual Plan

The Company will, in each annual Business Plan or similar document, include a schedule of all participatory activities, events and opportunities for tenants during the next 12-month period.

## Tenant Management of Own Housing

Wherever practicable, the Company will ensure individual tenants participate in the control of their own housing environment.

The Company will always endeavour to consult with tenants in the following areas.

### Allocation of Stock to New Tenants:

Applicants at allocation stage of waiting list will be asked to view any properties identified by the Company prior to an offer being made. This will provide an opportunity for the applicant to feedback to the Company any maintenance issues, security concerns etc. they may have about a particular property offered to them and give the Company the opportunity to rectify the problems if necessary.

If an applicant at allocation stage identifies a leasehold property that they are satisfied meets their particular needs, the Company will endeavour to view that property as soon as possible and, wherever appropriate, will place an application to lease the property.

### Cyclical Maintenance, Property Upgrades & General Maintenance

Whenever the Company undertakes a maintenance upgrade on a Capital property, the tenant of the property will be consulted throughout the process in terms of design preferences, maintenance priorities etc.

Tenants in Capital properties will be asked to provide the Company with feedback about any cyclical maintenance work they would like to have carried out at their property. Wherever possible, the Company will endeavour to include the tenant's maintenance request in cyclical planning.

Where a tenant in a Capital property has reported general maintenance at their property, the Company staff will contact the tenant at the completion of the maintenance to gain feedback on whether they were satisfied with the standard of work undertaken by the Company's contractors.

### Special Purpose Projects

Wherever the Company enters into a joint venture with specialist service providers in the area to provide special purpose housing projects, the Company will consult widely with other relevant organisations in the community throughout the planning and development stages of the project. The Company will endeavour to create strategic links with any organisations that may work directly or indirectly with future Company tenants.

If the Company intends to develop special purpose housing projects to meet local need (eg aged or disability housing), relevant community organisations will be consulted throughout the process.

### Acquisitions and Developments

Where the Company intends to acquire or develop stock to suit particular interest groups (e.g. aged or disability housing), those tenants likely to be housed in such stock will be consulted throughout the planning, purchase and development phases of the process. Such consultation, where possible, will include tenants targeted for housing on the Company's waiting list as well as existing Company tenants.

## Policy Changes and Tenant Needs

Tenants will be consulted wherever the Company is planning to introduce major policy changes that may adversely impact upon tenants.

Tenants will be asked to provide feedback to the Company prior to any such policy changes being implemented.

The Company will undertake a consultation process, which is transparent and informative. The feedback from tenants about proposed changes will be fully disclosed to the Company's Board of Directors prior to any policy changes.

## Formal Evaluation / Feedback

The Company will provide formal avenues for consultation and feedback about Company practices that will involve tenant input.

### Tenant Questionnaires

The Company will seek information from tenants about the quality of the services provided to them by Company staff through the use of formal, written questionnaires. These questionnaires will be produced at least annually and topics covered will vary according to tenant need.

### Tenant Telephone Surveys

In order to collect qualitative data on tenant needs and to assess the level of tenant satisfaction with Company activities, tenants themselves will be asked to undertake telephone surveys with other tenants of the Company. Notwithstanding the Company's policy on Privacy and Confidentiality, tenants will be asked to assist with telephone services as a means of collecting data that is culturally sensitive and relevant.

### Personal Contact

Each household managed by the Company at least once per year. The purpose of the visit will be twofold - to undertake an interim property inspection and to ensure individual tenants are informed about Company activities and consulted on Company initiatives.

To ensure transparency, the Company will publish the results of any surveys, questionnaires, evaluations and other information in correspondence to tenants via standard mail-out and the Annual report.

The Company will seek feedback from tenants, consult on management changes that may negatively impact on tenants housing and encourage participation in the decision making of the organisation.

# Tenant participation

INFORMATION	
Title	Tenants participation
Section	Housing Services
National Regulatory Code Evidence Guideline	Performance Outcome 1: Tenant and Housing Services
National Community Housing Standard	Standard 3.2 Tenant participation
Last review	31 October 2014
Next review	31 October 2016
<p>This document can be copied or redistributed in any medium or format and NCCH encourages not-for-profit organisations to re-use the information provided, as required. NCCH approves its remix, transformation or the building upon the material included on the condition that it is not used for commercial purposes and provided that appropriate acknowledgement is given to NCCH.</p> <p>If you use this document, or parts of it, we recommend the wording "Acknowledgement: The North Coast Community Housing Company Ltd, adapted by permission".</p>	



NCCH acknowledges the Bundjalung, Arakwal, Gumbaynggir and Yaegl peoples who are the traditional custodians of the land that comprises the Northern Rivers