

VPTA Policy Position Statement

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Transfers and mutual swaps

The VPTA contends that the current regime for transfers and mutual swaps is not working and should be overhauled.

As at December 2015, almost one in every eight public housing households was seeking to transfer.

Total Victorian transfer applications were 7,587, with 3,420 of those applications listed in the early housing category.

We interpret this high level of interest in moving to more appropriate accommodation as a clear indication of dissatisfaction among public housing tenants.

Yet the current system of transfers delivers relatively few transfers. The current system of mutual swaps facilitates alarmingly few mutual swaps.

The VPTA believes that a Transfers and Mutual Swaps Working Group should be formed. The Working Group should have the mandate of making recommendations to overhaul the system.

The Working Group should include DHHS subject matter experts and representatives from the VPTA.



Win-win approach

DHHS can benefit from an improved transfer and swap system. A proper and timely transfer system would generate savings in tenant management, particularly where this resolves conflict between tenants. Improving the quality of life for tenants should be a major aim of DHHS.

A transfer or mutual swap should be relatively cost neutral. Of course, reasonable wear and tear and depreciation must be taken out of the equation under existing departmental guidelines. Where tenants are responsible for damage, current processes allow for them to meet the costs of those repairs.

Incentives and brokerage

In many cases, tenants are willing to downsize (see example below). Where larger properties are in high demand, DHHS should have the capacity to ensure that the needs of tenants who wish to downsize are met.

For an elderly person, providing an incentives such as low

maintenance gardens, air-conditioning or perhaps a spare bedroom for relatives or for carers to stay - may be enough for them to move from their larger family home.

Where a spouse is in a nursing home - living nearer the spouse may be the most important thing. It may be simply

a matter of assisting with the move or helping to downsize or replace furniture.

The system should be able to accommodate people's needs and deal with them respectfully so that they can achieve the best outcomes for themselves and their family.

"One group on Facebook dedicated to swaps and transfers has over 9,400 members, a majority of whom are in Victoria."



Tenant led innovation

Currently the DHHS intranet database for tenants wanting to swap is inoperable and so tenants now are advertising to swap their properties on the websites like GumTree and on Facebook.

One group on Facebook dedicated to swaps and transfers has over 9,400 members, a majority of whom are in Victoria.



This is a copy of an actual post on the site; "4 bedroom property in Hastings victoria with 1 bathroom but 2 toilets, around 9yrs old this year it has general wear and tear but nothing major..just had our carpets freshly cleaned..its not in westpark estate nearer to the main street. Great neighbours all either private rentals or owned.Hastings has everything you could ever want including primary schools with high school right round the corner,all the fast food outlets,policestation,cfa,centrelink, supermarkets,kmart,reject shop,NQR,all major banks as well as being close to some of victorias best beaches. We are looking for a 3 bedroom property close to knox or in surrounds..to be close to family. please only message me if you qualify for a 4 bedroom property and have been approved via mutual swap form through dhs and have a letter from them to approve you otherwise you are wasting my time."

A priority for transfers?

There is merit in treating urgent transfers as highest priority on the wait list criteria where there is a manifest need for the transfer.

This would help create more movement and fluidity in the system and could be done without impacting on the number of new vacancies – given as one transfer occurs so too does a vacancy.

Priority should be afforded to those tenants who have kept the property in good tenantable condition and are looking to transfer to somewhere more

suitable to their needs. Tenants should be rewarded for doing the right thing long term and supported when they need assistance.

Any vacancy would be filled by someone on the waiting list. The administration of the system requires is a DHHS local area office focus to facilitate the move and to backfill the vacancy created by the move. It needs a strong focus to do this by quickly matching clients to vacancies generated by transfers.

Using new technology

In November 2015, the VPTA participated in the Future Assembly Event.

The event brought together representatives of DHHS, DPC and VPTA with technology experts including CodeforAustralia to conduct a problem solving exercise about the Mutual Swaps Program.

The premise was that currently very few swaps occur.

Three teams worked separately on the problem solving exercise about the Mutual Swaps Program. All three teams developed similar proposals, despite the fact that they were working independently from each other.

Broadly, the proposals recommended developing a platform along the lines of the existing services Airbnb and Tinder. Both

are matching services, one for holiday accommodation and the other for relationships.

We believe that that DHHS could consider developing an app to facilitate an improved transfer and swap system.

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