

A Place to Call Home Guidelines September 2009

Background

To signal a reviewed commitment to end homelessness in Australia the incoming Rudd Government committed to deliver 600 additional dwellings across Australia. Over a period of five years commencing in 2008, this housing known as the A Place to Call Home initiative will provide approximately \$150M funds from the Commonwealth linked to significant support funding and some capital contribution from respective States or territory Governments.

The objective of this initiative is to reduce the level of homelessness in Australia and increase the likelihood of stabilising the assisted households lives by providing secure housing and removing the need for households to move once their housing circumstances have been successfully stabilised.

In Victoria the Federal Government has provided \$29.4 million and the Victorian State Government have contributed \$25.47 million over five years to this initiative.

In Victoria the initiative will see 118 accommodation units, this includes 50 places for singles within the Elizabeth Street Supportive Housing development and a further 68 additional properties will be provided to the Transitional Housing Management (THM) Program located in outer metropolitan and rural/regional Victoria. These guidelines largely relate to the 68 accommodation units, separate guidelines/policy documents are being established for the Supportive Housing model.

Under APTCH, clients in need of housing assistance will be provided with access to the 68 dispersed APTCH properties coupled with support for twelve months. The people living in these properties will then transfer to long term Public Housing after twelve months and be replaced by existing public housing stock.

Nation Building

The Australian Government has committed \$5.65 billion over three years to June 2012 to public and community housing through its Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan. Nationally, this will boost the supply of public and community housing by 19,200 homes and provide much-needed repairs and maintenance to existing housing.

Victoria is responsible for delivering \$1.265 billion of the social housing program over the three years to June 2012. This biggest ever investment in social housing in Australia will fund over 4500 new rental homes for Victorians on low incomes, as well as upgrades and repairs benefitting a further 5600 homes. The State Government is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the housing package in Victoria. It is envisaged that additional APTCH properties for families will be provided throughout this initiative.

Access for households

It is envisaged that the APTCH dispersed properties would be accessed by families including women and children experiencing family violence, Indigenous families and families in housing crisis. Potentially any household in THM properties could transfer subject to stock management considerations. The numbers of tenancies that can transfer under the APTCH arrangement are capped by regional location.

Eligibility criteria

All households are required to be approved segmented wait list applicants, preferably recurring homelessness, and meet eligibility criteria for public housing. Families should also have or have quickly developed strong linkages to the local community such as children attending local schools and or household members accessing specific health, training or work opportunities.

A critical component of the success of *A Place to Call Home* is the ability for support agencies to continue working with the family for up to fourteen month period.

Therefore support agencies will be in the best position to nominate clients they are working with who would meet the eligibility criteria for allocation to APTCH properties.

Identification of Suitable Households

Households enter THM under normal homelessness prioritisation arrangements which should prioritise those in greater need. At the point when the public housing application has been prepared, the relevant support and THM should identify the household as a suitable candidate for the initiative. Consultation should then occur between the support agency and the THM with local housing office management.

Client Support Packages

A total of \$9,500 will be allocated for client support packages. This is based on 12 months support and follow up for 2 months post transfer to Public Housing.

Client support packages are available in each region and should be allocated to the appropriate support providers as properties come on line.

Establishment Grants

Establishment grants will be provided by Office of Housing & Community Building to the managing THM when the APTCH property has been allocated. THM will have the ability to purchase household items for APTCH tenants. Where it is identified by the support provider that an APTCH client requires household items to help establish their household the support provider can apply to the THM for the required item to be purchased from the Establishment Grant Funds. After tenancies transfer to long term Public Housing all household items may transfer to the responsibility of the tenant.

Establishment grants will be provided to THM's when each new APTCH property is allocated. The THM will receive a new establishment grant for each of these APTCH properties in the following financial years to assist with the ongoing allocation of furnishings to APTCH clients.

Client support packages and establishment grant funds are not to be expended for any other purposes other than client related expenditure and assistance. Unexpended funds must be carried over to the next financial year and continue to be available for client related items or support.

Data

Organisations will need to collect NDCA data for APTCH households. Data can be collected through the SAAP NDCA process using the SMART 5.3 application using the agencies existing NDCA Agency ID.

Agencies are able to modify SMART screens to collect additional information. To enable identification and reporting of APTCH clients within SMART (without creating a new Agency ID) agencies will be required to modify the client details screen in SMART.

This function is outlined in the SMART Advanced Training Manual and is supported by the NDCA Hotline. To ensure consistency of data for this program across APTCH funded agencies all agencies will be required to enter the same question with the same drop down items.

Agencies will be required to participate in a formal evaluation. It is envisaged that this will occur during 2010-2011. Agencies will be able to extract the relevant client records in a report format from SMART for evaluation purposes using the newly created field.

Minimum data that will be required for collection by services providers will include:

- Number of APTCH properties
- Number of APTCH properties transferred to Public Housing
- Number of unsuccessful tenancies
- Number of tenancies maintained

Evaluation

Agencies will be required to participate in a formal evaluation. It is envisaged that this will occur during 2010-2011. Agencies will be able to extract the relevant client records in a report format from SMART for evaluation purposes using the newly created field.

Allocation of New Properties *A Place to Call Home*

As the properties come on line they will be allocated to the relevant area based THM Program. Access will then be negotiated with a nominated support provider agreeing to assist the household for up to 14 months. The properties will need to include an identifier for APTCH as Housing & Community Building (H&CB) is required to track the tenancies and outcomes for families allocated to these properties or to other properties identified as in the APTCH initiative including any existing THM properties and the replacement Public Housing properties.

Once a THM tenancy has been identified to be managed under a Place to Call Home, the regional housing office and THM should agree on the type of public housing property and location to be transferred as a replacement to THM. The property to be transferred should best meet clients needs on a case by case basis, maintaining the effective capacity of the THM program. For example, a five bed-room property that was formerly two properties, might require replacement via two rather than one property. Or, a four bedroom property may be replaced by a two bed-room property where there is limited demand from larger families.

This transfer may involve more than one housing office within the region (if the THM property is going to one office, but the agreed replacement is managed by another office.) The one for one principal should be measured at the regional not the housing office level. The location of the property should to be tailored to local needs and within a reasonable geographic proximity to the existing property.

The transfer of the vacant public housing property will often be opportunistic, that is when a suitable property is vacated by its long term tenant.. It will ideally occur prior to the transfer of the THM property to public housing but should occur no later than two months after the THM property enters public housing. It can only occur once the THM and Housing Office have agreed that the client's tenancy will move to public housing and there is a proposed date for this to occur. Should the THM property transfer not proceed, when a public housing property has already been provided, the next suitable vacant THM property should be transferred to public housing.

Options:

1. New properties are allocated to the THM program and are available for allocation through existing processes. Support agencies in conjunction with the THM identify an appropriate family that are currently supported and have an approved Segment 1 recurring homelessness or Segment 3 family violence application (note forthcoming changes to Segmented Applications will occur in 2010/11) for Public Housing and are likely to receive an offer over the following 9- 12 months. If the property they are in is suitable it is then identified as an APTCH property and transferred to Public Housing at the time of confirmation.
2. As properties become available agencies in the local area, through the opening doors and allocations processes identify an eligible family for APTCH. The support agency undertakes to provide support to the family over a fourteen month period and to facilitate appropriate data collection. Within the fourteen month support the support provider agrees to provide transitional support to link the family in with a SHASP or Indigenous Tenants at Risk (ITAR) provider once the tenancy has transferred to public housing.
3. As properties come on line support agencies nominate appropriate eligible families already allocated THM properties for APTCH. As properties become available they may be allocated to the general THM pool.
4. Combination of the above options.

Adding a new question in SMART – 'A Place to Call Home'

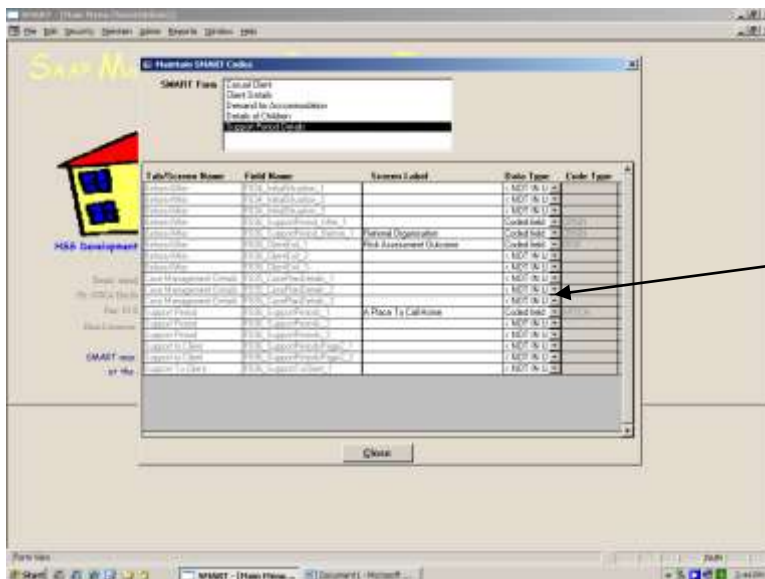
To assist with reporting requirements, SAAP services providing support to designated 'A Place to Call Home' (APTCH) properties are able to add a new question in SMART 5.3. The question will record information about clients supported through the APTCH initiative in the SAAP support period data. To ensure consistent reporting please use the Code names and Drop Down list names as outlined in these instructions.

The question is titled 'A Place to Call Home' and is placed on the Support Period Details form/screen because it is not static, and may change from support period to support period.

The first step is to determine which Tab/Screen name to place the question on. The question is positioned on the Support Period Tab/Screen Name, close to the Reasons for Seeking Assistance question.

To add this question in SMART:

- From the main menu, go to **Maintain – Local Fields**, and open the **Maintain SMART Codes** window
- Select **Support Period Details** in the **SMART form** box
- Go to the first available **Screen Label** in the Support Period screen that has a **Data Type** that is NOT IN USE. This should be **F036_SupportPeriods_1** unless the agency is already using the field for another drop down list. If so choose the next available Data Type NOT IN USE.



Choose a Data Type Not in Use to add the Entry Point Label

- Drop down the **Data Type** list and select **Coded Field**, which will enable a drop-down list to be created. A box will pop up asking if you wish to overwrite any existing data in this field. Click on **Yes** if the field was empty.
- Enter a **Screen Label** 'A Place To Call Home'. This is what will appear on your SMART screen
- In the **Code Type** column enter 'APTCH' for the code name of the screen label.
- Click somewhere else inside the Maintain SMART Codes box and another box will pop up, asking you to enter a description of the new code. Enter the description A Place To Call Home.

Adding a New Coded List

You have successfully created the question 'A Place To Call Home' and a new drop-down list, but at present there are no options inside this list. You now need to create the list of options for the new drop-down list.

- Go to **Maintain – Codes**
- Scroll through the **Code Type List** and find '**A Place To Call Home**'.

The screenshot shows the 'Maintain SMART Codes' window. The 'Code Type' dropdown is set to 'A Place To Call Home'. The 'Code Description' list includes 'Tenancy Maintained', 'Tenancy Transferred Public Housing', 'Tenancy Transferred Other Housing', and 'Unsuccessful Tenancy'. The 'Sort Order' column is numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. Callout boxes point to the 'A Place To Call Home' dropdown and the 'Sort Order' column.

- Begin entering the Code and Code Descriptions using the following list.

Code	Code Description
TMAINT	Tenancy Maintained
TTSFPH	Tenancy Transferred Public Housing
TTSFOH	Tenancy Transferred Other Housing
UNSUCCT	Unsuccessful Tenancy

- Number the fields in the Sort Order column to set the order of the drop down list.
- Click on Close to return to the Main Menu.

Applying a New Field

- Open a client's support period.
- See if the new drop-down list appears on the Support Period Screen.

APTCH Field Descriptions

Tenancy Maintained: Refers to support being provided to a client in APTCH designated property until the tenancy is transferred to Public or Other Housing.

Tenancy Transferred to Public Housing: Refers to the tenancy arrangements for the client being transferred to Office of Housing.

Tenancy Transferred to Other Housing: Refers to the tenancy arrangements for the client being transferred to another service such as Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Housing Association or community managed housing organisation.

Unsuccessful Tenancy: Should be selected if the client leaves the APTCH designated property without being transferred to Public or Other Housing.