

SECTION TWO

WORKING WITH PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HOARDING AND SQUALOR

CREATING SUSTAINABLE TENANCIES

FOR TENANTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

**A TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT
COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS
STRENGTHEN PRACTICE IN NSW & QLD**



A Toolkit to Support Community Housing Providers Strengthen Practice in NSW and QLD

SECTIONS AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES

SECTION ONE: Describing a sustainable tenancies approach, a policy template and a series of pathways to guide staff

SECTION TWO: Working with hoarding

SECTION THREE: Information on trauma informed care

SECTION FOUR: Tools and resources to support practice



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What is hoarding?

Many people collect items at some point or even throughout their lives. However, there are a percentage of people for whom collecting becomes an unmanageable pattern of behaviour. Hoarding disorder is a recognised mental health problem. It occurs when a person's pattern of collecting items becomes excessive and unmanageable, impacting on their daily life and social activities.

Compulsive hoarding, as it has been labelled in recent psychological literature, was defined by Frost and Hartl¹ (1996) as having three main features:

1. The accumulation of and failure to discard a large number of objects that seem to be useless or of limited value
2. Extensive clutter in living spaces that prevents the effective use of the spaces, and
3. Significant distress or impairment caused by hoarding.

People who hoard are different from collectors who deliberately accumulate and maintain specialised collections of objects that are generally well organised and considered by most people to be interesting and valuable (Danet & Katriel, 1989²). Instead, people who hoard acquire many things seemingly at random and without regard to available space in their homes.

The acquired objects become disorganised and even chaotic clutter that interferes with everyday living and is often dangerous. Other hoarders can be very organised but have significant collections of objects that can impede daily living.

Australian research estimates more than 600,000 people (2.6%) may suffer from hoarding disorder, putting themselves and their families at risk of squalor and health risks, fire hazards, evictions and homelessness³. This is in line with prevalence studies in the USA, UK and OECD countries that estimate 2-5% of people may be suffering from hoarding disorder and in need of help.

Hoarding is not the preserve of any group of people and can start at any early age but collections are likely to grow as people age and so cases are more often seen with older people. Hoarding can be exhibited by people who have other issues that might make them vulnerable such as anxiety, depression or obsessive compulsive disorders, or it can follow from a traumatic experience.

People who hoard can:

- show an unusual and strong emotional connection with material things
- have difficulty in organising or prioritising items
- experience anxiety or distress at getting rid of items.

Not all people who hoard recognise that their behaviour is negative or something that needs to be addressed. Others may be aware of it but be embarrassed and unwilling to ask for help, often feeling overwhelmed by the scale of the hoarding. Housing professionals will need to adapt their approaches to tenants according to the level of awareness the person has of the impact of their hoarding.

1. Frost, R. O., & Hartl, T. (1996). A cognitive-behavioural model of compulsive hoarding. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 34, 341-350

2. Danet, B., & Katriel, T. (1989). No two are alike: Play and aesthetics in collecting. *Play and Culture*, 2, 253-277

3. Lopez-Sola et al, Prevalence and heritability of obsessive compulsive spectrum and anxiety disorder symptoms: a survey of the Australian Twin Registry, *American Journal of Medical Genetics*

Why tackle hoarding?

The impact of hoarding can create significant management problems and requires long term input and support **in order to** resolve effectively. It is best approached through multi-agency working because of the potential impact for the wider community and other public services. Action is needed to ensure both the safety and well-being of the tenant and to secure the **long term** condition of the home.

Hoarding poses a number of risks:

- It increases the risk of fire in the property as the material hoarded can be highly flammable.
- It can impede the fire brigade and other emergency services, particularly when material blocks doors and windows.
- It increases the risks of accident and harm to the tenant and other household members.
- It can compromise the health and safety of neighbours and the wider community. This is especially the case when the tenant occupies an apartment and / or where the material hoarded encourages infestations of cockroaches, mice or other insects.
- It can lead to increased repairs and structural damage to properties (as tenants will often neglect the property, not report repairs or allow access to the property).
- It causes significant costs to the community housing provider (CHP) in terms of management and clearance / repairs to the vacant property.

Hoarding of objects occurs across western cultures, although it is not yet clear whether it is common in disadvantaged non-western cultures. Epidemiological studies in the USA and Europe have indicated that hoarding occurs in 2-5% of adults.

Beginning typically in the teenage years, hoarding appears to gradually worsen over the life span with middle aged and elderly adults most likely to have serious symptoms. Hoarding occurs across all socioeconomic strata, but it is commonly associated with lower income levels and can be a cause of people experiencing homelessness. Thus it is not surprising that hoarding is also found among homeless people despite their limited space for accumulating clutter.

Recognising the signs of hoarding

The first encounter with serious hoarding and mounds of disorganised clutter is daunting for most human service professionals. The responder is "hit in the face" by the sight and sometimes the smell of piles of newspapers, magazines, old mail, clothing, boxes and bags of new and old purchases that were never used, containers of many types intended to help the person get organised.

In many cases it will be very clear that there is a problem, where rooms are full of items, but the hoarding may initially be confined to certain rooms.

The high risk to wellbeing and life that results from hoarding means that all staff that visit properties, including contractors, should be able to identify the signs of hoarding and know how to raise concerns with the CHP.

Indications of hoarding include:

- Cluttered garden / sheds
- Piles of mail, magazines, newspapers and other paper material in the property
- Over-stuffed cupboards
- The property being dirty or in disrepair
- Smells coming from rooms
- Reluctance of the tenant to allow full access to the property and / or a preference for office based appointments
- Not allowing access for property inspections / continually cancelling property inspection appointments.

Common characteristics of hoarding and squalor

The first thing to remember is that each person who hoards and/or is living in squalor is an individual with a unique set of life experiences, beliefs and values.

Generally, a person who hoards and/or is living in squalor:

- cannot stop themselves bringing items into the home
- believes that the items are in some way part of themselves
- is unable to effectively categorise items
- is affected by indecision
- is unable to discard items without feeling distressed
- has lost control of their living environment
- feels shame about their situation
- may or may not seek help depending on their level of insight and feelings of shame.



What are some of the myths about hoarding?

There are plenty of mistruths, myths, and inaccurate assumptions made about people who hoard, hoarding behaviour, and hoarded homes.

Here are some of the most common myths and the truths that dispel them.

MYTH: Hoarded homes are filthy and the people who live in them are dirty.

TRUTH: The term hoarding refers to the volume of clutter or quantity of objects in a given space. It does not refer to cleanliness. Instead, the term squalor describes filth or the ruin of a space due to neglect. It is possible, and in fact quite common, to have an environment that is filled with clutter but is relatively clean.

MYTH: People who hoard are lazy and choose to live the way they do.

TRUTH: Hoarding disorder is a mental illness recognised by the American Psychiatric Association. People who hoard express shame, sadness, guilt, remorse, and embarrassment at how their illness negatively impacts their lives and those they love.

MYTH: Living through an experience like the Great Depression causes hoarding.

TRUTH: Hoarding is a complex problem with many factors contributing to the onset and course of the illness including: genetic predisposition, neurobiological factors, difficulties with cognitive processing, problematic thinking, and strong emotions. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that deprivation or trauma alone cause hoarding.

MYTH: A mass clean-out involving garbage bags, shovels, and dumpsters is the best way to solve a hoarding problem.

TRUTH: A large scale, one-time clean-out of a hoarded home will most likely result in feelings of helplessness, violation, and resentment that may lead to further hoarding behaviour or serious mental health problems. Instead, the best way to help a person with hoarding disorder is through slow, systematic exposure to sorting and discarding possessions and resisting the acquisition of new items.

How can housing professionals help people who hoard?

Historically, the reaction to hoarding has been reactive – often contractors were sent in to clear the property without the involvement of, or any control by, the tenant as to what is removed.

It is now well recognised amongst professionals that work with people who hoard that agency intervention has a low success rate and that reoccurrence of hoarding is high.

Housing professionals can play a significant role, working with support partners, in assisting tenants to address their hoarding issues. Use of sensitive language and skilled tenant assessment and engagement approaches can have a considerable and positive impact for both the tenant and neighbours.

Multi-agency responses are often the most effective, with partnerships with other local agencies that can provide therapeutic support important to developing strategies to address the hoarding behaviour.

Active intervention to enter a property and make it safe is still likely to be required where the hoarding includes food stuff, waste or animals to a degree that poses a health or safety risk. However, taking only an enforcement approach does not directly help the tenant; instead it is likely to exacerbate their anxiety and distress leading to continued and increased hoarding, and a lack of trust and engagement with housing professionals in the future.

Finding support services that have the expertise to work with people who hoard can be difficult. The best approach is to use your interagency network to explore what services might be available across your district.

Where family and friends are already involved and willing to cooperate, their assistance can be valuable and it can give useful insight into the case. However, it is important to manage this sensitively as there can be family tensions in these situations. The priority for the housing worker has got to be on engaging the tenant whenever possible as plans are made to address the issue.

Where an individual is already engaging with a support service, it would be practical to work alongside that service, establishing a joint planning process to addressing the situation with the tenant.

Where a tenant is not engaged with a support service and support is offered and refused, it is important to note this in the tenant's record as this will be important if legal action is required.

Resources to support your engagement and practice when working with people who hoard or who live in squalor

Hoarding can often get to such a scale that people are overwhelmed by it and don't know where to start. Taking only an enforcement approach does not directly help the tenant and can exacerbate any anxiety and distress the tenant feels, leading to increased hoarding. Taking the time to engage with the tenant, explore their understanding of the hoarding issues impacting their tenancy and building a picture of the level of hoarding can be a useful process in assisting the tenant to identify, understand and change any unhelpful thoughts and behaviours that lead to hoarding.

A number of resources are included in this toolkit that are used internationally to undertake point in time assessments of the extent of hoarding. This can be useful to assist a tenant to see the extent of their problem. They can also be useful when referral is made to a support service for assistance. **They include:**

THE HOARDING SCREENING ASSESSMENT TOOL⁴ that can be used during the routine property inspections if it becomes clear there are hoarding issues on inspection. CHPs might consider including this in their pack of tools utilised as part of the routine property inspections so that it is available immediately for use if needed.

THE CLUTTER IMAGE RATING SCALE⁵ was developed in the USA and assists practitioners and individuals get an accurate sense of a clutter problem via a series of pictures of rooms in various stages of clutter – from completely clutter-free to very severely cluttered. People can just pick out the picture in each sequence that comes closest to the clutter in the living room, kitchen, and bedroom. This requires some degree of judgment because no two homes look exactly alike, and clutter can be higher in some parts of the room than others.

This rating works well as a measure of clutter. In general, clutter that reaches the level of picture # 4 or higher impinges enough on people's lives that it would be considered they need to get help for their hoarding problem.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANLINESS CUTTER SCALE⁶ was developed in Australia. This form has been designed for service providers to respond to situations involving squalor. This form assists with rating the cleanliness of a person's accommodation.

A SAMPLE LETTER that can be customised to communicate your concerns to a tenant who is hoarding and / or living in squalor so that you are able to clarify your approach and the issues that you need the tenant to start engaging with you on.

4. Nottingham Community Housing Association Hoarding Policy

5. Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding, Oxford University Press 2009

6. Halliday, G., & Snowden, J. (2009). The Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale (ECCS). *International Psychogeriatrics*, 21(6), 1041-1050

CASESTUDY : Homes Out West

Exploring practice approaches in responding to tenants who hoard and/or live in squalor



Mental Health & Hoarding (Regional NSW)

A tenant with a paranoid mental health issue was living in a block of units. Over the years, the tenant's hoarding increased. She had the electricity turned off because she was paranoid about electricity. She also believed that there were young men living in her ceiling.

Due to structural issues at the property, the ceiling in her lounge room collapsed. Upon the Housing Officer and Client Service Manager attending the property the tenant said "I told you that there were young men living in my ceiling".

Due to the unstable state of the property regarding the ceiling collapse, there were work health and safety concerns about the tenant remaining in the property whilst the ceiling was repaired. The tenant refused to leave the property. Whilst she was linked with the local mental health team, she did not give Homes Out West permission to contact her mental health worker.

The Housing Officer and Client Service Manager explained to the tenant that due to safety issues, it was not an option to remain in the property whilst the repairs were undertaken and gave the tenant several options of where she could temporarily live. The tenant became increasingly distressed about the prospect of needing to temporarily move and the Housing Officer and Client Service Manager showed empathy towards the tenant and expressed concern for her distress but were consistent with their approach that remaining in the property whilst the repairs were being undertaken was not an option.

From the range of options being presented to the tenant, she decided to accept a temporary move to

a vacant unit across the road. The Housing Officer organised with the local Vinnies service for the unit to be furnished with basic furnishing. It was anticipated it would take several weeks for the property to be repaired. In order for the work to commence, the hoarding issues needed to be addressed. The Housing Officer worked with a cleaner and the tenant to assist the tenant to decide which items she would be prepared to throw away and which items would be stored in the bedrooms. The tenant was remarkable and within a few days, most of the hoarding items were removed from the property. (The tenant had always maintained that she wasn't attached to the items, she just hadn't gotten around to throwing them away).

Over the several weeks she was in her temporary unit, the tenant's mental state improved considerably. She liked the temporary unit because it had nice big windows that let in a lot of light; it wasn't cluttered; she liked the neighbours and wanted to stay in the temporary unit. This was an option available to the tenant.

This example shows that even without the support from a support worker, having a sensitive and persistent approach with a tenant can have a very positive outcome, making a significant difference to a tenant's life.

CASESTUDY : BHC

Exploring practice approaches in responding to tenants who hoard and/or live in squalor



Working with a tenant who had Hoarding and Squalor Issues (Metropolitan QLD)

BHC acknowledges that this condition is one of the most difficult to manage within our tenant population. There isn't a quick fix, but rather, a long staged process to work with the tenant and support agencies to achieve any level of success.

Without the commitment on the part of the tenant to engage with supports on an ongoing basis and to have the ability to self reflect and deal with the emotional traumas that creates this condition, very little change can be achieved. However, we acknowledge that everyone has a right to have a home and to be treated with respect and dignity. To then begin working with our tenants who have issues with hoarding and squalor requires patience and a consistent approach with realistic expectations within agreed timeframes. The following case study highlights this approach.

Jack had been a long term tenant of 5 years. He lived in a 2 bedroom unit and had been managed by a number of Housing Managers over that time, who at differing times had attempted to deal with his ever growing issue of hoarding and squalor. What Jack was hoarding, amongst other goods, were mostly fish tanks. He was a breeder of fish and had won ribbons for his fish and also supplied pet shops with fish. While this is an admirable career, his unit was full of tanks, both big and small, breeding tanks scattered over kitchen benches, tanks filling the lounge room and

bedrooms, extension leads running across floors and power boards galore. One of his bedrooms was filled with papers, magazines, clothes etc. that covered most of the floor and bed, making the room non habitable, his kitchen was filled with bags of rubbish and his sink full of dirty dishes. His lounge area was scattered with empty bottles of soft drinks, cartons and packets of goods consumed. His other bedroom had old fish tanks, broken furniture and boxes etc. His bathroom was mouldy and floors and shower in need of a good clean. The moisture from all the tanks and motors running was evident on the walls which dripped with moisture. He also had acquired 4 snakes that he kept in individual plastic boxes.

While Jack usually presented in a reasonable manner and would be engaging, he could at times become aggressive if he was questioned too much about his living environment. However the condition of the unit needed to be addressed and a focused concerted effort on the part of the Housing Manager was needed to begin addressing so many issues in the unit.

Initially a Notice to Remedy was sent after an inspection, noting that the unit required attention. A letter was then sent that noted with Jack the areas of concern under specific headings, eg. Fire Safety, Personal Health and Wellbeing, Pest Management. A conversation was also had with Jack around the risk for him of losing his accommodation, should he not begin to address these concerns. Referrals were given to Jack to consider in relation to engaging supports. The Housing Manager had the knowledge of a service that could assist and a direct contact was made by the Housing Manager on behalf of Jack and this then assisted to begin the working relationship that occurred. After each inspection, a letter would be sent to Jack and the Support Worker that outlined the cleaning issues that Jack needed to attend to.

In the 12 months that followed, Jack engaged in a sporadic way with the support worker. He attended a couple of sessions of the Buried in Treasures program and then refused to attend. He would attend to some of the cleaning issues and only remove the rubbish out of the kitchen in time for the inspections. The broken furniture was never removed and the piles of books and papers remained on the floor. Over time he disengaged from the Support Worker and we then needed to progress with a Notice to Leave, due to the deteriorating condition of the unit environment.

The good news story for Jack, is that he found a private rental that had a garage where he was able to set up all of his fish tanks, which was a far more appropriate and workable space for his needs.

As we know, there is always a tension between the role of the Landlord and the rights and needs of the tenant.

Working alongside the most vulnerable and at risk is always about finding the balance, and ensuring that we remain fair and reasonable in all of our dealings.



POLICY NAME: WORKING WITH TENANTS WHO HOARD

APPLIES TO:

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY:

VERSION:

DATE APPROVED:

REVIEW DATE:

1. Policy statement

(Service name) is committed to ensuring that our houses and communities are places where people want to live and feel safe. It is necessary to ensure that the safety of tenants is paramount and that they all live in comfortable conditions.

The Hoarding Policy supplements (Service name) fire safety policy arrangements and contributes to the health and safety management system established and in place.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in managing tenants and household members who are identified as people with hoarding tendencies.

They also have obligations which include:

- To care for the premises
- To pay for any damage caused by the tenant or their guests
- To report the need for any repairs or maintenance
- Not to make alterations or additions without the landlord's permission
- Not to alter, remove or add a lock or security device without the landlord's consent (except in certain domestic violence situations)
- Not to cause or permit a nuisance
- Not to interfere with the peace, comfort or privacy of neighbours.

2. References

Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW)

3. Definitions

HOARDING DISORDER is a psychiatric condition (Diagnostic Statistical Manual V) characterised by excessive collecting and extreme inability to discard worthless objects. In some cases it can lead to squalid conditions that interfere with normal living, which in turn can affect the health, safety and quality of life for the sufferer and those who live with them, their neighbours and the community.

Tenants in New South Wales have rights under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010.

4. Procedure

It is recognised amongst professionals that work with hoarding that agency intervention has a low success rate and that reoccurrence of hoarding is high.

Multi-agency approaches are often the most effective and long-term support is recommended.

Hoarding can be brought to (Service name) staff attention through many different ways including:

- Tenancy visits
- Maintenance visits
- Complaints from neighbours
- External agency contact
- Fire service initiatives.

When a hoarding issue is first identified, review the tenant management record to see if a previous issue has been identified. It is important to see if any support agencies are involved with the tenant already.

UNDERTAKING AN ASSESSMENT OF A TENANT WITH HOARDING ISSUES

It is important to use all the avenues available to you to undertake an assessment of the tenant's care of the property.

(Service name) will utilise the Hoarding Screening Assessment Form as a standard tool that can be utilised during routine property inspections. This tool will provide an initial assessment to inform **(Service name)** as it plans intervention with the tenant to manage the hoarding or squalor identified.

(Service name) may also utilise the Clutter Image Rating Scale and the Environmental Cleanliness Clutter Scale as a means of accurately recording the extent of hoarding or squalor at a given point in time within a property.

INTERVENTION

Support

Where family and friends are already involved and willing to cooperate, their assistance can be valuable and it can give insight into the tenant's situation. It is important to manage this sensitively. The priority has to remain on engaging with the tenant personally where ever possible.

Where an individual is already engaging with a support service, work with the tenant and support service to establish a discussion about the hoarding issues.

Where an individual is not engaged with a support service, but appears to be open to accepting a referral for support, explore with them a referral to a relevant support service for assessment.

Short, sharp solutions might resolve immediate issues that need to be dealt with but tend not to be sustainable. Hoarding behaviour can often return if the underlying cause is not dealt with.

Some support solutions include:

- Development of an action plan to guide planning and intervention
- Establishment of a support package
- More frequent visits from the tenancy manager
- Regular updates / meetings with relevant agencies
- Homecare or health care package
- Counselling support
- Cognitive behaviour therapy (such as the Buried in Treasures program available through some areas in NSW)
- Assistance with moving home or property adaption
- A home safety check by the local fire service
- Power of attorney provision.

Where support is offered and refused, it is important to note this in the tenant's records as this may be crucial evidence later if legal action is required. A joint meeting with any agencies attempting to offer support to the tenant might be useful at this stage to explore options.

Enforcement

In some cases, enforcement action may be required in line with the Residential Tenancy Act 2010 (NSW).

This may be to:

- gain access to the property
- examine / execute necessary work
- gain possession of the property.

Enforcement action should only be taken where:

- other action has been attempted and refused or failed
- the case poses serious and immediate risks that require a legal resolution.

Partnership working

Where the tenant is already known to one or more agency, establish a meeting to discuss concerns and explore possible action, including the tenant in discussions.

Where the tenant is not engaged with any support services, with the support of the Tenancy Specialist Officer or equivalent, explore referral to relevant support services.

Fire and Rescue NSW should be informed of any high risk hoarder, especially if they are within a property which may affect others, such as an apartment block. Referrals should be made through the Specialist Tenancy Officer or equivalent.

5. Related documents

- List appropriate policies
- List appropriate strategies

REVIEWING AND APPROVING THIS POLICY

APPROVAL:	[How often will this policy be reviewed]
PERSON RESPONSIBLE	[Position of person responsible for reviewing policy]
APPROVAL:	[Position of person/group who approves this policy]

POLICY REVIEW AND VERSION TRACKING

REVIEW	DATE APPROVED	APPROVED BY	NEXT REVIEW DATE
1.			
2.			
3.			

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The Hoarding Policy supplements (Service name) fire safety policy arrangements and contributes to the health and safety management system established and in place.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in managing tenants and household members who are identified as people with hoarding tendencies.

2. References

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (QLD)

3. Definitions

HOARDING DISORDER is a psychiatric condition (Diagnostic Statistical Manual V) characterised by excessive collecting and extreme inability to discard worthless objects. In some cases it can lead to squalid conditions that interfere with normal living, which in turn can affect the health, safety and quality of life for the sufferer and those who live with them, their neighbours and the community.

Tenants in Queensland have rights under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 and the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009.

They also have obligations which include:

- To care for the premises
- To pay for any damage caused by the tenant or their guests
- To report the need for any repairs or maintenance
- Not to make alterations or additions without the landlord's permission
- Not to alter, remove or add a lock or security device without the landlord's consent (except in certain domestic violence situations)
- Not to cause or permit a nuisance
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4. Procedure

It is recognised amongst professionals that work with hoarding that agency intervention has a low success rate and that reoccurrence of hoarding is high.

Multi-agency approaches are often the most effective and long-term support is recommended.

Hoarding can be brought to (Service name) staff attention through many different ways including:

- Tenancy visits
- Maintenance visits
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It is important to use all the avenues available to you to undertake an assessment of the tenant's care of the property.

(Service name) will utilise the Hoarding Screening Assessment Form as a standard tool that can be utilised during routine property inspections. This tool will provide an initial assessment to inform **(Service name)** as it plans intervention with the tenant to manage the hoarding or squalor identified.

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Where an individual is not engaged with a support service, but appears to be open to accepting a referral for support, explore with them a referral to a relevant support service for assessment.

Short, sharp solutions might resolve immediate issues that need to be dealt with but tend not to be sustainable. Hoarding behaviour can often return if the underlying cause is not dealt with.

Some support solutions include:

- Development of an action plan to guide planning and intervention
- Establishment of a support package
- More frequent visits from the tenancy manager
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- Cognitive behaviour therapy (such as the Buried in Treasures program available through some areas in QLD)
- Assistance with moving home or property adaption
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Where support is offered and refused, it is important to note this in the tenant's records as this may be crucial evidence later if legal action is required. A joint meeting with any agencies attempting to offer support to the tenant might be useful at this stage to explore options.

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In some cases, enforcement action may be required in line with the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (QLD).

This may be to:

- gain access to the property
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- gain possession of the property.

Enforcement action should only be taken where:

- other action has been attempted and refused or failed
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Partnership working

Where the tenant is already known to one or more agency, establish a meeting to discuss concerns and explore possible action, including the tenant in discussions.

Where the tenant is not engaged with any support services, with the support of the Tenancy Specialist Officer or equivalent, explore referral to relevant support services.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services should be informed of any high risk hoarder, especially if they are within a property which may affect others, such as an apartment block. Referrals should be made through the Specialist Tenancy Officer or equivalent.

5. Related documents

- List appropriate policies
- List appropriate strategies

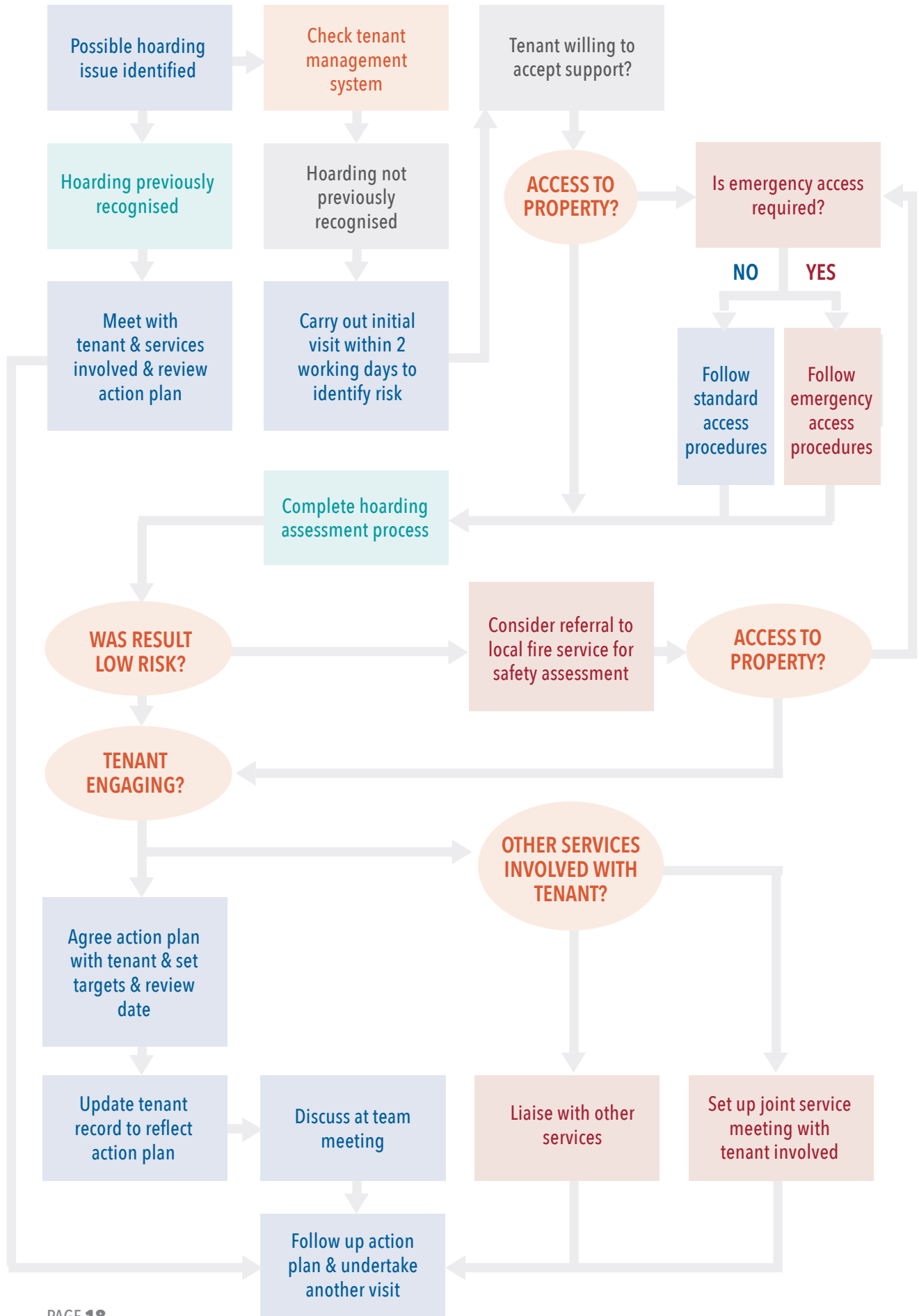
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APPROVAL:	[How often will this policy be reviewed]
PERSON RESPONSIBLE	[Position of person responsible for reviewing policy]
APPROVAL:	[Position of person/group who approves this policy]

POLICY REVIEW AND VERSION TRACKING

REVIEW	DATE APPROVED	APPROVED BY	NEXT REVIEW DATE
1.			
2.			
3.			

Managing hoarding pathway



TOOLS AND CHECKLISTS TO SUPPORT PRACTICE

Hoarding Screening Assessment Form

REFERENCE #		STAFF NAME	
HOUSING OFFICE		DATE	

TENANT DETAILS

NAME			
AGE		GENDER	
ADDRESS			

IMPAIRMENT

DISABILITY	YES	NO	HEARING	YES	NO	MENTAL HEALTH	YES	NO
MOBILITY ISSUES	YES	NO	SIGHT	YES	NO	DEMENTIA	YES	NO
			OTHER	YES	NO			

Please remember to take photos of the property if possible

SCREENING QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Are items limiting the free movement and / or entrance or exit to the property?		
Is the functionality of the bathroom / kitchen limited?		
Is the person living in one room?		
Are items spilling over into the garden?		
Is there damage occurring to the property?		
Are items spilling over into the communal area?		
Are items stacked in such a way that they are a risk?		
Are there pets within the property?		
Have there been complaints from the neighbours?		
Are neighbouring properties affected in any way?		
Are there pest control issues?		
Are there any urgent WHS issues e.g. outstanding smoke detector safety check?		
Does this person have a history of hoarding?		
Are there any agencies already involved?		

TOOLS AND CHECKLISTS TO SUPPORT PRACTICE
Hoarding Screening Assessment Form

TENANT QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Are there any rooms you cannot get in to?		
Are your utilities / heating disconnected?		
Do you have any urgent repairs that need to be done?		
Do you have any regular visitors such as family?		
Do you have any supports in place from family, friends or a support service?		

Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale

This form has been designed for service providers to respond to situations involving squalor. This form assists with rating the cleanliness of a person's accommodation. The first page may be removed if it is desirable to de-identify the person when communicating with other agencies⁷.

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

NAME OF PERSON						
DOB / APPROX.				GENDER	MALE	FEMALE
MARITAL STATUS	SINGLE	MARRIED	WIDOWED	DIVORCED	SEPARATED	NOT SURE
ADDRESS						

DOES HE/SHE LIVE ALONE?					YES	NO
IF NOT, WHO WITH?						
NUMBER & TYPE OF PETS						
HOME OWNERSHIP	Owner	Tenant private	Tenant social housing	Other e.g. lodger		
ACCOMODATION	House	Unit	Bedsit	Other		
How long has she / he been living like this?	Less than 1 year	1 - 3 years	4 - 10 years	Over 10 years		
Known medical illnesses or disabilities						
Mental disorders now or in the past						

7. Source: Halliday G, Snowdon J, 2006 Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale (ECCS) based on the version devised by Snowdon (1986), which mostly used items listed by Macmillan & Shaw (1966). Some descriptions used by Samios (1996) in her adaption of the scale have been included.

Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale

Raters should circle the box or number that best fits their observations in relation to the different items. These descriptions are meant to be indicative, but raters may decide between one category and another based on aspects not mentioned in the boxes.

NAME OF RATER			
RATER'S PHONE NO.		DATE	

A	ACCESSIBILITY (CLUTTER)			
	0	1	2	3
	EASY TO ENTER and move about dwelling	SOMEWHAT impaired access, but can get into all rooms	MODERATELY impaired access. Difficult or impossible to get into one or two rooms or areas	SEVERELY IMPAIRED access, e.g. obstructed front door. Unable to reach most or all areas in the dwelling
	0-29%	30-59%	60-89%	90-100%
Of floor space inaccessible for use or walking across				

B	ACCUMULATION OF REFUSE OR GARBAGE			
	In general, is there evidence of excessive accumulation of garbage or refuse, e.g. food waste, packaging, plastic wrapping, discarded containers (tins, bottles, cartons, bags) or other unwanted material?			
	0	1	2	3
NONE	LITTLE Bins overflowing and / or up to 10 emptied containers scattered around.	MODERATE Garbage and refuse littered throughout dwelling. Accumulated bags, boxes and / or piles of garbage that should have been disposed of.	LOTS Garbage and food waste piled knee high in kitchen and elsewhere. Clearly no recent attempt to remove refuse and garbage.	

Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale

ACCUMULATION OF ITEMS OF LITTLE OBVIOUS VALUE					
In general, is there evidence of accumulation of items that most people would consider are of little use or should be thrown away?					
		0	1	2	3
C	NONE		SOME ACCUMULATION , but collected items are organised in some way and do not much impede movement or prevent cleaning or access to furniture and appliances.	MODERATE EXCESSIVE ACCUMULATION: items cover furniture in most areas and have accumulated throughout the dwelling so that it would be very difficult to keep clean.	MARKEDLY EXCESSIVE ACCUMULATION: items piled at least waist high in all or most areas. Cleaning would be virtually impossible. Most furniture and appliances are inaccessible.

CLEANLINESS OF FLOORS AND CARPETS (excluding toilet and bathroom)					
		0	1	2	3
D	ACCEPTABLE CLEAN IN ALL ROOMS		MILDLY DIRTY Floors and carpets look as if not cleaned or swept for days. Scattered rubbish.	VERY DIRTY Floors and carpets very dirty and look as if not cleaned for months. Rate 1 if only one room or small area affected.	EXCEEDINGLY FILTHY with rubbish or dirt throughout the dwelling. Excrement usually merits a 3 score.

CLEANLINESS OF WALLS & VISIBLE FURNITURE SURFACES & WINDOW SILLS					
		0	1	2	3
E	ACCEPTABLE CLEAN IN ALL ROOMS		MILDLY DIRTY Dusty or dirty surfaces. Dirt comes off walls on damp rag or finger.	VERY DIRTY Grime or dirt on walls. Cobwebs and other signs of neglect. Greasy, messy, wet and/or grubby furniture.	EXCEEDINGLY FILTHY Walls, furniture and surfaces are so dirty (for example with faeces or urine) that rater wouldn't want to touch them.

Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale

F	BATHROOM AND TOILET			
	0	1	2	3
	REASONABLY CLEAN	MILDLY DIRTY Untidy, uncleaned, grubby floor, basin, toilet, walls and so on. Toilet may be unflushed.	MODERATELY DIRTY Large areas of floor, basin, shower / bath are dirty, with scattered rubbish, hair, cigarette ends and so on. Faeces and/or urine on outside of toilet bowl.	VERY DIRTY Rubbish and/or excrement on floor and in bath or shower and/or basin. Uncleaned for months or years. Toilet may be blocked and full of excreta.

G	KITCHEN AND FOOD			
	0	1	2	3
	CLEAN / HYGIENIC	SOMEWHAT DIRTY AND UNHYGIENIC Cooktop, sink untidy and surfaces dirty, maybe with some spilt food. Refuse mainly in garbage bin. Food that could go off (e.g. meat, remains of meal) left uncovered and out of fridge. Rate 1 if no food but fridge dirty.	MODERATELY DIRTY AND UNHYGIENIC Oven, sink, surfaces, floor are dirty, with piles of unwashed crockery and utensils and so on. Bins overflowing. Some rotten or mouldy food. Fridge unclean.	VERY DIRTY AND UNHYGIENIC Sink, cooktop, insides of all cupboards filthy. Large amount of refuse and garbage over surfaces and floor. Much of the food is putrid, covered with mould and/or rotten and unsafe to eat. Rate 3 if maggots seen.

H	ODOUR			
	0	1	2	3
	ACCEPTABLE CLEAN IN ALL ROOMS	UNPLEASANT e.g. Urine smell, unaired.	MODERATELY MALODOROUS Bad but rater can stay in the room.	UNBEARABLY MALODOROUS Rater has to leave room very soon because of smell.

Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale

	VERMIN PLEASE CIRCLE: RATS MICE COCKROACHES FLIES FLEAS OTHER			
	0	1	2	3
I	NONE	FEW (For example, cockroaches).	MODERATE Visible evidence of vermin in moderate numbers for example, droppings & chewed newspapers.	INFESTATION Alive and / or dead in large numbers.

	SLEEPING AREA			
	0	1	2	3
I	REASONABLY CLEAN AND TIDY	MILDLY UNCLEAN Untidy, bed unmade, sheets unwashed for weeks.	MODERATELY DIRTY Bed sheets unclean, stained for example with urine or faeces Clothes and/or rubbish over surrounding floor areas.	VERY DIRTY Mattress or sleeping surface unclean or damaged. Either no sheets or (if present) extremely dirty bedding / linen.

RESULTS NB: A score of greater than 12 indicates moderate or severe squalor.

Add up circled numbers to provide a total score				
Do you think the person is living in squalor? (circle one)	NO	YES mild - not cluttered	YES, moderate - not clutter	YES severe - not clutter
	CLUTTER (lots) not squalor	YES mild + clutter (lots)	YES moderate + clutter (lots)	YES severe + clutter (lots)

Comments or description to clarify, amplify, justify or expand on above ratings:

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Environmental Cleanliness and Clutter Scale

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS - TO ADD TO DESCRIPTION, BUT NOT TO SCORE

PERSONAL CLEANLINESS			
Describe the clothing worn by the occupant and their general appearance			
0	1	2	3
CLEAN AND NEAT. Well cared for.	UNTIDY, CRUMPLED. One or two dirty marks and in need of a wash.	MODERATELY DIRTY. With unpleasant odour, stained clothing.	VERY DIRTY. Stained, torn clothes. Malodorous.

Is there running water in the dwelling?	YES	NO
Is electricity connected and working?	YES	NO
Can the dwelling be locked up and made secure?	YES	NO

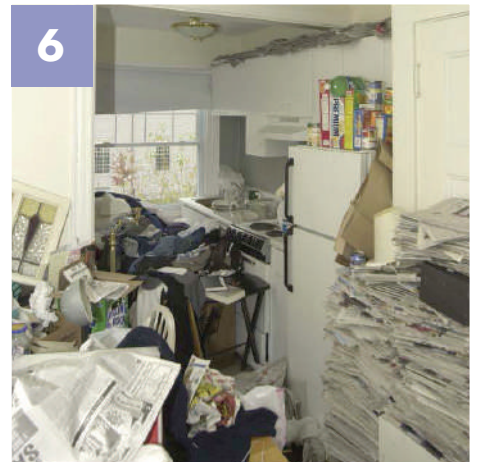
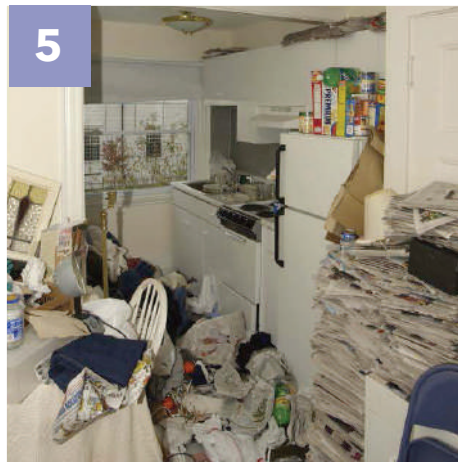
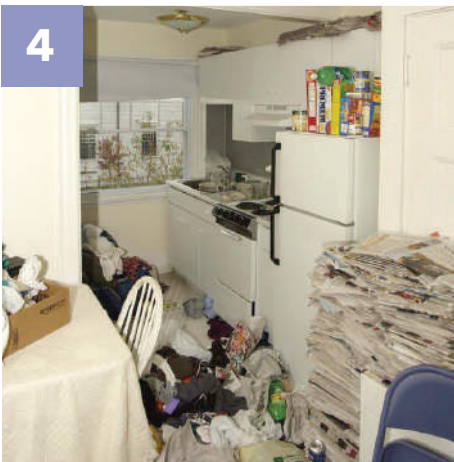
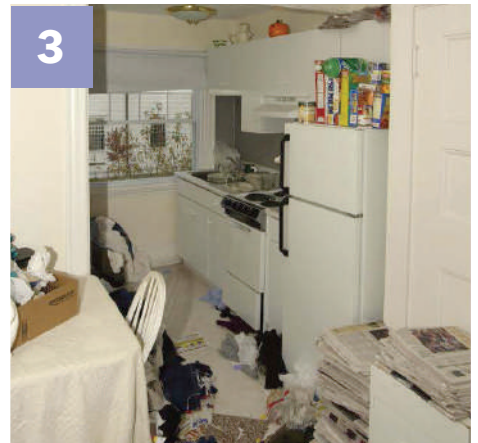
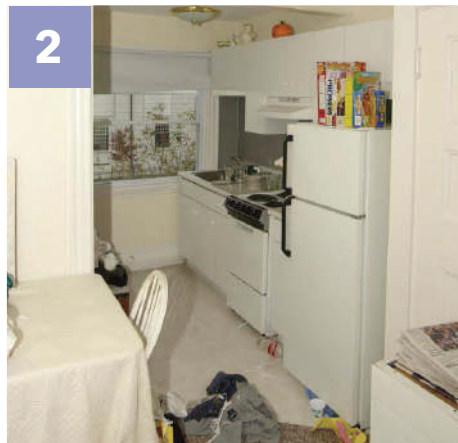
MAINTENANCE, UPKEEP AND STRUCTURE			
This rates the state of repair and upkeep by owner / landlord. If the accommodation was cleaned up as much as possible, to what extent would the dwelling require painting, refurbishment, structural repairs and so on before it would be reasonably habitable?			
0	1	2	3
NONE	LITTLE - minor repairs and some painting.	FAIR AMOUNT - some structural repairs plus painting.	LOTS - major structural repairs required, then painting.

To what extent do the living conditions make the dwelling unsafe or unhealthy for visitors or occupant(s)?			
0	1	2	3
NOT AT ALL	POSSIBLE RISK - of injury for example by falling.	CONSIDERABLE RISK - of fire, injury or health problem.	VERY UNSAFE - the dwelling is so cluttered and unhealthy that people should not enter it (except specialists with appropriate clothing and equipment) and/or there is a high fire-risk.

Clutter Image Rating Scale

KITCHEN

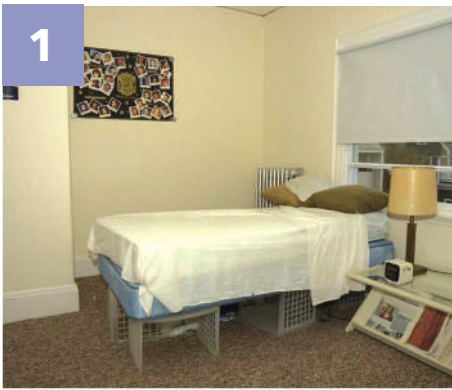
Please select the photo below that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room



Clutter Image Rating Scale

BEDROOM

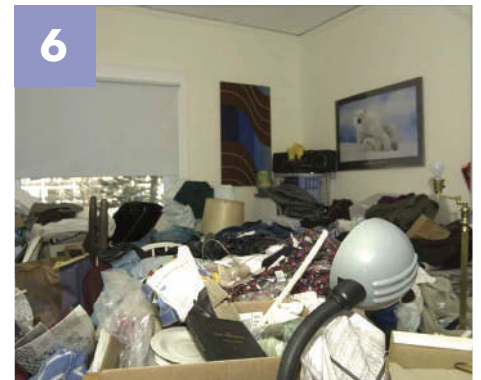
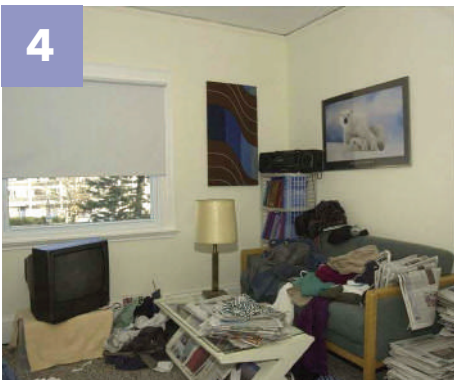
Please select the photo below that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room



Clutter Image Rating Scale

LIVING ROOM

Please select the photo below that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room



Sample letter

Customise to communicate concerns about hoarding and squalor to a tenant post property inspection

Dear [add tenant name]

RE: Hoarding and Squalor Issues

This letter is in response to the inspection that I conducted on [add date]. It has become evident that you are struggling to maintain your property to a standard that would be beneficial to your own well-being and the well-being of others who reside close to you. It is also evident that you are struggling to maintain the property to a standard that does not cause damage and deterioration to the property.

We understand that you may need to engage assistance to support you to attend to the following matters, and we will work with you to provide referrals to services that may assist you. Due to the seriousness of this situation, you are strongly encouraged to make contact with these services and to continue to work with us, so that you can sustain your tenancy into the future.

I am putting the issues that we have noted in this inspection into dot points. These are the issues that you will need to begin to attend to and that I will be noting with you at the next inspection. You will see the issues noted under headings. This is so you clearly understand why I am making note of these issues with you.


Fire Safety

It is important that all tenants are mindful of reducing the risk of fire occurring in their unit. It is our duty of care to you and others, that any risk of fire is managed.

- At the next routine inspection, I will be looking at the amount of goods that you have in your unit and how these are stored. It is noted that you currently have a significant amount of goods in your unit that will require sorting and safe storage.
- I will be looking to ensure that you have clear walkways around your unit and that doors can be opened sufficiently to allow a safe exit, especially in an emergency situation.
- The storage of flammable goods, in the form of papers and other flammable materials and rubbish can be a fire hazard. I will be ensuring that you are mindful of where these goods are stored.

Health and Safety

I have noted that you had a significant amount of items stored in your unit. This included empty containers, food stuffs, packages and papers etc. The storage of such items (particularly perishable goods) can become a health risk, in that vermin and bacteria can breed in this material. This then becomes a health risk for yourself and potentially for others around your unit.



All future inspections will be taking note of how you are managing to clear items we have noted from your unit to minimise the health risk to yourself and others.

Property Damage

The tenancy legislation indicates that a unit should be kept in a similar condition to how it was first received, fair wear and tear accepted. What this means is that a tenant should continue to live within a property in a manner that does not cause damage to the property due to deliberate or neglectful acts.

- It is noted that you have a large amount of belongings and other items on benchtops, against walls and other fixtures. This is causing moisture build up and damage to walls, cupboards, draws, benchtops and other fixtures. The next inspection will be taking note of how you are ensuring no further damage to the property is being caused.
- It is noted that your unit requires further cleaning. This is causing damage to the property and as noted above it is a health risk. The next inspection will assess the degree to which the property is being cleaned and maintained to reduce any further damage to the structure.
- There is a build-up of dirt and mould in your unit that has not been cleaned and removed. Allowing this to remain on surfaces will cause deterioration to the inclusions of this property.

Commitment to Engaging with Support

Due to the significant issues that need resolving in your unit, and the potential risk to your tenancy being terminated, you are being strongly encouraged to engage with this support.

There are a number of services that provide support to those who are struggling to maintain their tenancy due to hoarding issues and some information is attached on services that are available to you. Please speak with me if you require any further support or referral advice. **[Service name]** strongly encourages you to make contact with these services for assistance.

Thank you for your commitment to work with us as we look to support you to sustain your tenancy.

Yours sincerely,

.....

CREATING SUSTAINABLE TENANCIES

FOR TENANTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

A TOOLKIT TO SUPPORT
COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS
STRENGTHEN PRACTICE IN NSW AND QLD

SECTION TWO

WORKING WITH PEOPLE AFFECTED
BY HOARDING AND SQUALOR



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