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Tenant Engagement and Community Building Manual

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1. Purpose

This Manual guides Bethanie Housing's approach to tenant engagement.

2. Scope and Applicability

This Manual applies to all Bethanie Housing staff, staff from the Bethanie Group and contractors in as much as they are involved in Bethanie Housing tenant engagement.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Engagement	Planned and issue-based communications to and from Bethanie Housing tenants aimed at adequately tailoring services and supporting continuous improvement activities.
Tenant Advisory Groups	Voluntary advisory groups consisting of mixed gender, age and aboriginality tenants from each Bethanie site representing the tenant collectives in consultations with Bethanie Housing management.

4. Policy

4.1 Tenant Advisory Groups

Each Housing Manager will actively promote the organisation of a sitting Tenant Advisory Group for their portfolio. The Tenant Advisory Group may sit at the discretion of the members, with consideration being given to the quantity and complexity of issues to be discussed. Tenant Advisory Groups may initiate meetings of tenants with Bethanie Housing representatives.

4.1.1 Printed information and advice

- Bethanie Housing will continue to regularly communicate with tenants by way of printed newsletters and pamphlets inviting feedback (Refer to Appendix 1, Complaints, Reviews and Appeals Policy).
- All policies impacting on tenants will be made available in printed form on the request of the tenants.
- Housing Managers will make hard copies of all the policies impacting tenants available for consultation at an accessible place within the Bethanie Site.
- Housing Managers will ensure all services provided to tenants are quality controlled by inviting specific feedback, e.g. by providing a feedback card after a repair or similar activity undertaken at tenant's residence.

4.1.2 Online information and advice

- Bethanie Housing must maintain a webpage at www.bethanie.com.au/housing containing:
 - All corporate statements, codes, and standards of service.



- All policies and procedures affecting tenants.
 - An online complaint or feedback form.
 - Contact details for submitting complaints or review requests in accordance with the Complaints, Reviews and Appeals Policy.
 - Contact details of external bodies with a role in aged care issues.
- Bethanie Housing will maintain a mailing list of residents, to be used for newsletter and other communications.

4.1.3 Strategic directions

Bethanie must pursue, with support from and in cooperation with Tenant Advisory Groups, the following six main strategic directions.

4.1.4 Community integration

Facilitate tenant involvement and active participation in the social and administrative life of the local community. Measures in support of this strategic direction may involve:

- The provision of a comprehensive portfolio of information about the local community, including the local government and specific of ways of participating in the local administrative decision making.
- The provision of information about Social Clubs and other forms of local socialising.
- Supporting the organisation of interest groups open to external memberships, such as Men's Sheds, Hobbies, Arts and Book Clubs and sporting/wellbeing groups.

4.1.5 Partnerships:

Support tenants' active life by

- Identifying and institutionally engaging with local organisation such as Lions' and Rotary Clubs to facilitate the participation of our tenants as either beneficiaries of volunteering or active volunteers.
- Identifying and engaging with local community groups such as local environment protection groups, historical societies etc.

4.1.6 Property

Support tenants' safety and wellbeing by creating partnership relations with local police and public administration to address potential tenant concerns with the level of amenity and security Bethanie Housing provides to tenants.

4.1.7 Engagement

Support the activity of tenant Advisory Committees, monitor and report to the Executive and Board on a yearly basis the outcomes of implementing the approaches and initiatives outlined in this manual.

4.1.8 Surveys

- Bethanie Housing must survey all tenants at least once a year.



- All managers must ensure information collected by way of a survey will be used to improve services to tenants and other supporting activities.
- The Board of Directors will be informed of the results of the survey and the actions the Executive proposes to be taken.

4.1.9 Complaints

- Bethanie Housing must maintain a complaints system in accordance with the Accessibility, Assistance, Flexibility, Confidentiality and Timeliness standards contained in Clauses 4.3.1-4.3.5 of the Complaints, Reviews and Appeals Policy.
- Complaints data will be assessed at least once every year by the Manager of Housing or a person designated by him or her with a view to extract performance improvement data.

4.2 Principles

- The Bethanie Code of Conduct places a responsibility on Bethanie Housing to deliver services “as we would like them to be delivered to ourselves”.
- Bethanie Housing values feedback and creates its own engagement systems to capture and satisfy tenant housing and associated services needs and demands.
- Bethanie Housing understands that tenant involvement in shaping and scrutinising services is a necessity for a modern housing provider, and will actively seek tenant involvement and feedback opportunities
- Bethanie Housing aims to act to ensure a successful local integration of tenants to support their overall health and wellbeing.

5. Consequences of Policy Breach

- This policy is binding on Bethanie staff, as per Section 2: Scope and Applicability.
- Roles and Responsibilities in relation to this policy are set out in Section 6 below.
- Failure to comply with the policy may constitute a breach of the Bethanie Code of Conduct and business practices.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Housing Manager will (regarding the Tenant Advisory Group):

- Brief the Group members on proposed changes in service delivery.
- Brief the Group members on proposed changes to policy and governance arrangements.
- Collect the views of the Group members on any issue they may see fit to discuss.
- Seek solutions and communicate Group views to Executive and the Board of Directors as required.
- Tenant Advisory Groups may use in their activity, the forms attached as Appendices 1 to 4 to this Manual, either unchanged or amended as they see fit.



7. Document History

Approved by:	Executive Team	Next review:	January 2028
Document owner or author:	Manager of Housing	Review cycle:	3 yearly
Version number:	1.1	Version date:	January 2025



8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Code of Conduct

TENANT ADVISORY GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Purpose of a Tenant Advisory Group

- (1) Bethanie Housing seeks to work cooperatively with tenants for the betterment of services offered and to support the overall health, welfare and quality of life of our residents.
- (2) TAGs are created to:
 - (a) Act as a communication conduit between tenants and the Bethanie Housing Management.
 - (b) Assist Bethanie Housing in correctly assessing the needs and wants of the tenants, and take joint responsibility with the Bethanie Housing Management for the establishment of priorities in a way that optimally balances the delivery, development and improvement capabilities of Bethanie Housing, with the tenant change and improvement priorities.

2. Membership of Tenant Advisory Groups

- (1) Membership is open to any resident of a Bethanie Housing-operated site.
- (2) Membership will be determined on the basis of the applications lodged by tenants.
- (3) The site Housing Manager will organise a request for expressions of interest to serve on a TAG.
- (4) The successful applications will be selected by the site Housing Manager, who will first separate applications into three separate categories:
 - (a) Male and female candidates; and
 - (b) Aboriginal and non-aboriginal candidates; and
 - (c) Under 64 years old or over 64 years old
 - (d) Any other identifiable subgroup that makes a reasoned submission to the sitting TAG to be considered as a subgroup, and that submission is approved by the sitting TAG.
- (5) Once received, applications are sorted as per subclause (3). The Housing Manager will use a random selection method to extract 3 members from each category.
- (6) The site Housing Manager will organise and chair the first meeting of the TAG until such time as a TAG Chair and a TAG Vice-chair are elected from the participants by way of simple majority vote, exercised on every member who volunteers for the Chair position.
- (7) Once the Chair is elected, the site Housing Manager will provide the TAG with the unsuccessful applications, with a view to being utilised, should the TAG decide in favour of creating consultative issue-based committees on areas such as repairs and maintenance, policies and procedures, safety, community relations, etc.



- (8) If a member is absent for three consecutive meetings without appropriate excuse, he or she is deemed to have resigned.
- (9) The length of TAG mandate is three years, with a maximum of two consecutive ones acceptable.

3. Functioning of TAG

- (1) The site Housing Manager will ensure TAG sittings received adequate support in terms of agenda, Minutes and other procedural and secretarial support.
- (2) TAG minutes must be sent to all participants and disseminated online and in print form.
- (3) TAGs will sit at minimum four times every year.
- (4) Consistent with Clause 10 *Strategic Directions* of the Tenant Engagement and Community Building Manual, each Agenda will contain either discreet items or free discussion time dedicated to each of the four strategic **Directions - Community Integration, Partnerships, Property and Engagement**.
- (5) TAGs must engage both formally and informally with tenants and take ownership of issues of interest for tenants on their behalf.
- (6) TAG members, tenants and Bethanie Housing employees can propose agenda items to be included on a TAG's next meeting. Such items will be accepted at the discretion of the Chair.
- (7) On behalf of a TAG, the Chair may invite internal and external participants to the meeting, including other tenants, external persons or Bethanie Housing staff.
- (8) Voting in TAG meetings is by simple majority.
- (9) On request by the Bethanie Housing management, the Chair of a TAG must call extraordinary meetings, should strategic or operational obligations or priorities require Bethanie Housing to seek and obtain urgently, tenant input into new initiatives. If such a meeting is called, the Chairperson's right to refuse an agenda items is suspended.
- (10) Housing Managers, or their representative, may participate in TAG meetings if they so wish or by invitation from the Chair.

4. Code of Conduct

- (1) Members will abide by these terms of reference and Code of Conduct.
- (2) Each and every member of the Committee will:
 - a. Commit to listening to others.
 - b. Respect others' opinions.
 - c. Contribute to and share the responsibility for the Regional Committee's decisions.
 - d. Commit not to bring individual cases for discussion, except by way of an example.
 - e. All issues should be resolved through the normal procedures.
 - f. Promote Bethanie Housing in a positive way when attending appropriate events on behalf of Bethanie Housing;
 - g. Not misrepresent Bethanie Housing or claim to represent Bethanie Housing without express permission.



- h. Declare any relevant conflicting interests.
- i. Respect confidentiality of information.

(3) Disputes

- a. Disputes between members of the TAG should be avoided wherever possible. Members in dispute with one or more members should seek to resolve the issues without involving other TAG members.
- b. If the dispute cannot be solved, then the disputing parties should arrange a meeting to include all disputing parties, the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson of the TAG and a relevant Bethanie Housing staff member.
- c. The decision of the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson shall be final and binding on the disputing parties, and may include sanctions, such as suspending the members of the Committee.
- d. If the dispute is between the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, then the decision of the Chief Operating Officer shall be final and binding.

Appendix 2 – Membership Acceptance Statement

Membership Acceptance Statement	
I, _____,	hereby attest to my acceptance to join the
(name, surname)	
Tenancy Advisory Group representing the tenants of _____.	
(Name of Bethanie Site)	
I will scrupulously abide by the Terms of Reference and the Code of Conduct of the Tenant Advisory Group.	
Name: _____	Date: _____

Appendix 3 - What is the Bethanie Housing Tenant Advisory Group?



The Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) has been established to provide advice to the Bethanie Housing, and to represent the views of tenants to the management and staff of Bethanie Housing. The TAG comprises representation from a cross-section of tenants, housing types and demographics.

The purpose of TAG is to contribute so that Bethanie Housing decision making processes are tenant focused, and that housing decisions take full account of the views of tenants, along with other business, policy and political factors. Additionally, if and when required, an elected member of TAG will represent tenants' views to the Bethanie Housing Board of Directors.

Would you be interested in becoming a member of Bethanie Housing's Tenant Advisory Group (TAG)?

Yes ☐ (Please see below)

No ☐

If **YES**:

Please provide the following details:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____

Gender: Male ☐

Female ☐

Aboriginal descent Yes ☐

No ☐

Over 64 years Yes ☐

No ☐

Would you like some more information before you make up your mind?

Yes (☐ Please see below)

No ☐

If **YES**:

Please provide your contact details!

Name: _____

Phone No: _____

Please deliver this form to your Housing Manager once completed.

Appendix 4 - Tenant Advisory Group meeting agenda



(Date)

1. Declaration of opening (Chairperson)
2. Attendance and apologies (Chairperson)
3. Minutes of previous meetings (Chairperson)
4. **Strategic direction 1: Community Integration**
 - 4.1 Discussion Item 1: [Title] (Initiator)
 - 4.2 Discussion item 2: [Title] (Initiator)
5. **Strategic direction 2: Partnerships**
 - 5.1 Discussion item 1: [Title] (Initiator)
 - 5.2 Discussion item 2: [Title] (Initiator)
6. **Strategic direction 3: Property**
 - 6.1 Discussion item 1: [Title] (Initiator)
 - 6.2 Discussion item 2: [Title] (Initiator)
7. **Strategic direction 4: Engagement**
 - 7.1 Discussion item 1: [Title] (Initiator)
 - 7.2 Discussion item 2: [Title] (Initiator)
8. **Other items**
 - 8.1 Discussion item 1: [Title] (Initiator)
 - 8.2 Discussion item 1: [Title] (Initiator)
9. Establishment of next meeting date.
10. Closure of meeting.