

146 Tenant Absence from Dwelling Policy

1. Customer Statement

At Link Wentworth our customers and communities are at the centre of what we do. We are committed to:

- treating our customers with compassion and respect
- communicating clearly so that our customers can make informed choices
- providing fair service by following the right process
- working openly with customers to find shared solutions; and
- following all relevant laws and regulations.

2. Purpose

Link Wentworth expects tenants to occupy their property. Link Wentworth also recognises that tenants will sometimes be away from their properties from time to time.

Link Wentworth requires that tenants advise us if their period of absence will exceed six consecutive weeks.

3. Policy

This policy relates to all Link Wentworth tenants living in social housing properties.

This policy does not include Affordable Housing tenants.

Tenants who live in transitional housing programs or who are living in supported housing programs will also need to seek permission from their support service for a long absence.

Approval

Link Wentworth may approve an absence from the property for up to six consecutive months, if:

- The tenant has made arrangements to pay their tenancy charges, such as rent and water usage, while they are away
- The property is secure and will be adequately cared for while the tenant is away
- The tenant has an acceptable reason for going away; and
- The tenant has provided contact details in case of emergency.

Reasons for absence

Each request is assessed on a case-by-case basis. Reasons for absences may include:

- Caring for sick/frail family members
- Hospitalisation, institutional care, nursing home care or rehabilitation
- Escaping domestic and family violence, harassment or threats of violence
- For Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tenants, travelling to another place to fulfill cultural obligations such as Sorry Business, Ceremony, mediation, celebrations, illness or maintaining cultural connections
- Assisting with immigration matters in the country of origin

- Holidays
- Employment, education or training; and
- Imprisonment (unless this is related to a breach of the tenancy agreement).

Repeat absences

Link Wentworth will not approve repeat absences relating to holidays, assisting with immigration matters in the country of origin or employment/training.

Extended Absences

Tenants may be absent for up to six months, however may apply for an extension under extenuating circumstances. Each application for an extension will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, Link Wentworth will not approve absences from social housing properties that exceed twelve months in total over a five-year period.

Tenants who will be absent for periods exceeding this may be required to return possession of the property to Link Wentworth. Tenants must provide the required notice period of their intention to vacate the premises.

Tenancy reinstatement may also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

4. Legislative Framework and Related Policies

- Tenant Initiated Transfer Policy

5. Complaints and Appeals

An Applicant for social housing who is not happy with a decision we make or who believes that we have not followed this policy can complain or appeal using the complaints and appeals policies that are available on the Link Wentworth website www.linkwentworth.org.au or by phoning Link Wentworth on 9412 5111.

6. Responsibility

An **employee** is responsible for performing their duties in accordance with this policy and related procedures.

Senior managers are responsible for proactively overseeing compliance with this policy and addressing any non-compliance by their direct reports in a timely manner,

Executive leaders are responsible for ensuring the policy is well designed to address the purpose it is necessary for, that it is clearly drafted in a way to make it implementable, and that it is kept current and approved by the ultimate approving body in accordance with the required review cycle.

7. Privacy and Confidentiality

Link Wentworth has obligations and responsibilities under its Privacy Policy. Before releasing any information relating to the subject matter of this Policy, first refer to the Link Wentworth Privacy Policy and/or seek guidance from a member of the Executive Leadership Team or Head of Legal.



Approval, Policy Owner and Review Frequency

Policy type:	Management Level
ELT owner:	Chief Customer Officer
Business owner:	Head of Tenancy
Ultimate Approval body:	Executive Member
Review Frequency:	Every two years or more frequently if circumstances warrant.

Approved by –Chief Customer Officer