

# Victorian Renters Helpline **Program Guidelines**



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# 1. About the VRH Guidelines

The Victorian Renters Helpline Program Guidelines (VRH Guidelines) define and describe the role and responsibilities of the Provider funded by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) to provide rental support to renters and community workers.

The VRH Guidelines are the contractual service and reporting requirements of the Victorian Renters Helpline (VRH) and form part of the terms and conditions of the funding agreement for delivery of the VRH to be entered by CAV and the agency (Funding Agreement).

**Note:** All guidelines documents are available to download at [consumer.vic.gov.au/renter-rights](https://consumer.vic.gov.au/renter-rights).

The VRH Guidelines describe:

- the purpose and operation of the VRH
- the Victorian Renters Helpline
- reporting requirements.

The VRH Guidelines may be updated by CAV from time to time to reflect current service requirements and practices. CAV will notify the provider whenever the VRH Guidelines are revised and make the latest version available.

The VRH Guidelines should be read in association with:

- The service delivery requirements listed in Table 1
- The VRH Request for Service Guidelines.

**Table 1: RRS – Service delivery requirements**

No.	Service delivery requirement
<b>1</b>	The Provider must provide and report on the Victorian Renters Helpline set out in Section 3 of the VRH Guidelines
<b>2</b>	The Provider must comply with the Program Management requirements set out in Section 4 of the VRH Guidelines
<b>3</b>	The Provider must comply with the reporting requirements set out in Section 5 of the VRH Guidelines

## 2. Introduction to the VRH

### Overview

The Victorian Renter Rights Program (VRRP) supports Victorian renters and older people most at risk of renting and housing issues. There are four components:

- Renter Rights Service (RRS)
- Renter Central Service (RCS)
- Older Persons Housing Rights Service (OPHRS)
- Victorian Renters Helpline (VRH)

The VRH is a state-wide phone and web-based renter helpline service which acts as a central intake point. The VRH provides all renters with support and actionable advice based on personal circumstances.

### The VRRP's objective

The objective of the VRRP is to keep Victorians in safe and secure housing.

### VRH service model

The VRH service model is designed to complement and strengthen the existing rental support sector. The VRH will be provided through a telephone and a web-based service and act as a key intake, triage and referral point for renters requiring support.

## 3. The Victorian Renters Helpline

### Eligibility

All Victorians are eligible to access the Victorian Renters Helpline.

### Components

The VRH comprises two components:

- the VRH telephone service
- the VRH website.

### VRH telephone service

The Provider is required to ensure that VRH telephone support service is accessible by the public, from Monday to Friday 9:30 am – 5:00 pm (excluding public holidays and days between Christmas and New Year). The Department of Government Services (DGS) will work with the appointed VRH provider on the setting of relevant quality and timeliness indicators relating to the operations of the call line.

Renters calling the phonenumber, through the interactive voice response message, should receive updated information about their indicative wait time and queue position.

When the public call after-hours, an appropriate after-hours message and a referral number for emergencies will be available. Any messages left after hours will be responded to either by phone or email by 5:00 pm the next business day.

### VRH website

The Provider is responsible for providing Victorian specific content to establish and maintain the VRH website. The VRH website will include an ability for clients to discuss their issues with a staff member online, through either a webchat or through email.

The VRH provider will be responsible for ensuring:

- web content is reviewed and updated, and any content is written in plain English, with accessibility considerations taken into account
- emails received from the website are responded to within a reasonable timeframe
- brochures or promotional materials developed by the VRH provider can be ordered by community agencies, with the VRH distributing these in response to requests.

### Services to be provided

Services provided to clients include:

- early intervention support through intake and triage
- information provision
- referral to other agencies or support services
- service enhancement

### Intake and triage

The VRH will act as a central intake point for renters requiring support, connecting clients to the appropriate service at the earliest opportunity. This ensures clients receive the appropriate level of support quickly.

## Information and referral

Information and referral is intended to be a low intensity service type that ensures renters are aware of their rights and responsibilities, along with alternative options to resolve issues early, and includes:

- Provision of general residential rental information, such as copies of the CAV rental guidebooks, or directing renters to the relevant pages of the CAV website
- Initial or one-off tailored rental advice based on the renters' circumstances
- Referral to another support service.

As the VRH is intended to only provide low-intensity information and advice, if the client requires further casework, the client can be referred to another services, such as the Renter Rights Program, subject to eligibility criteria.

### Renter supports knowledge

The provider of the VRH is expected to maintain ongoing contemporary understanding of the full range of supports that are available to renters, especially those ineligible for the RRS and OPHRS.

This should include knowledge of where self-help resources are available, and what options are available for renters to pursue legal assistance independently.

Consistent with a no wrong door approach, the provider of the VRH should also ensure they can refer any callers with inquires relating to public or social housing issues to the relevant service.

## Service enhancement

Service enhancement is a non-client service type activity that improves the effectiveness of the service in the renter support service ecosystem. This includes:

- uplifting staff knowledge
- refining the call intake and referral system
- establishing partnerships and referral pathways with other renter support service organisations
- program promotion activities to raise awareness and understanding of the service

## Referrals

The Provider will work with other community sector agencies to ensure robust referral processes and frameworks are developed and maintained.

This will include ensuring that the technology infrastructure is in place that best supports the referrals out to the RRS, RCS and OPHRS. Consideration should also be given to how direct appointment bookings might be facilitated through the 4 components of the VRRP.

## 4. Program management

- acknowledges the requirements of a prescribed Information Sharing Entity under the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*.

### Insurance

All RRS agencies must have professional indemnity and public risk insurance, as detailed in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement.

The Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) provides insurance to most community service organisations funded by DGS.

### Client satisfaction survey

CAV may from time to time evaluate the quality of services. The design and development of the evaluation process and techniques will be done in consultation with agencies.

### Complaints handling

All VRH agencies must have in place a client complaints policy. Renters who use the service (and others acting on their behalf) can make a complaint to either the agency or to CAV.

### Privacy policy

RRS agencies must have a privacy policy that explains how client information will be managed, and that the policy:

- aligns with current privacy legislation, including the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*
- includes information on how conflicts of interests can occur and what the agency will do if a conflict is identified

## 5. Reporting requirements

Under the funding agreement, the Provider must provide a number of reports to assist DGS to assess service delivery performance. The VRH provider will be required to provide the following reports:

- quarterly data reports
- six-monthly narrative reports
- annual acquittal certificate
- annual audited financial statement regarding the agency's finances

The timeframes and reporting requirements are outlined in the VRH Request for Service Guidelines.

