



Community Engagement Policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline SouthEast Housing Cooperative's (SouthEast) commitment and approach to community engagement.

Definitions

Community engagement refers to the broad range of activities and strategies registered housing agencies such as SouthEast use in order to better connect their members to their local communities. Community engagement provides local communities and other key stakeholders (e.g. service providers, philanthropic trusts, government, funding bodies and neighbours) with the opportunity to engage with SouthEast and its members through a variety of means.

Social inclusion is defined as those activities that assist people to fully participate in social and economic life. These activities may include access to education, training and employment services. They may also include better connecting tenants into the local community.

Place renewal is defined as strengthening the connections between people and the places they share. Place renewal activities may range from working with tenants and neighbours to improve local amenities, through to consulting with neighbours and prospective tenants on new developments and facilities.

Informing refers to activities undertaken by SouthEast that revolve around communication, such as developing supporter newsletters, or appearing regularly in local newspapers or advertising events on websites or through Facebook. They are also actions that can be used to inform or educate the wider community.

Collaborating/enabling refers to activities that SouthEast undertakes alone or in partnership with others that actively work to overcome the social exclusion of tenants and build strong linkages with the local community.

Leading refers to activities SouthEast is undertaking that are designed to influence service provision or government policy or are activities that are breaking new ground, such as research or the development of new programs.

Policy Statement

SouthEast Community Engagement: Present Context

SouthEast is committed to community engagement. The cooperative has a long history of promoting the community housing sector and forming working partnerships with other relevant organisations. For example, SouthEast:

- Partnered with Launch Housing for many years to manage their rental housing properties located in SouthEast's areas of operation,
- Has a current Memorandum of Understanding with Common Equity Housing Ltd (CEHL) that covers sharing of resources, expertise and skills,
- Partners with Westernport Accommodation Youth Support Services Ltd. (WAYSS) Housing and Support Services, for the provision of support to members and their families struggling to maintain their tenancies,
- In partnership with CEHL presented to the City of Greater Dandenong (CoGD) to promote the benefits of cooperative Housing, and to evidence its capacity to provide affordable housing in the CoGD,
- Meets monthly with other cooperative housing providers as a member of the Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) co-op sector,
- Contributed to the production of research promoting the benefits of cooperative housing through the "Borderlands Report" and a sister publication "Rental housing cooperatives ... an essential option in a renewed social housing system",

- Has its CEO sit on the Board of CHIA Vic and chair the Asset Renewal Working Group,
- Arranges for its Directors to meet periodically with other cooperative Directors to discuss common issues,
- As the lead agency partnered with United Housing Cooperative to successfully apply for Victorian Property Fund support which saw 224 solar panel systems installed for United and SouthEast members, and;
- Promotes vocational and other welfare support services in the south and east regions through its newsletter *Housing Futures*.

Who is affected by this policy?

SouthEast's Directors, advisors, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers, members, prospective members and stakeholders are affected by this policy.

Reasons for policy

To:

1. guide SouthEast Directors and staff as they endeavour to undertake meaningful community engagement activities to the benefit of the cooperative's members, and;
2. provide a framework for the SouthEast Community Engagement Plan that ensures compliance with the Victorian Housing Registrar (VHR) Community Engagement Standard and Good Practice Guide.

Scope

This policy is applicable to SouthEast in all its operations and functions.

The Victorian Housing Registrar Community Engagement Performance Standard and Good Practice Guide provides the framework. The Key Performance Indicators of the Performance
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Standard provide the benchmarks used to evaluate the efficacy of SouthEast’s Community Engagement practices:

Community Engagement Key Performance Indicators

SouthEast will:

- Engage with relevant organisations using appropriate communication tools to promote community housing and benefits of partnership,
- Work with others to maximise positive economic and social outcomes for members and the community through place renewal, and;
- Work with others to maximise positive economic and social outcomes for members and the community through social inclusion.

Transparency and Accessibility

This policy will be available on the SouthEast website www.sehc.org.au

Related Policies

Member Engagement Policy

Communications Policy

Partnership Policy

Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

Legislation and Standards

Victorian Housing Registrar Community Engagement Good Practice Guide

Review

Policy Category: Community Development

Title: Community Engagement Policy

Date adopted: CEO: Board: 2308 2019

Review Period: Annual: Other: Triennially

Date reviewed: Next review: 23 08 2022

Implementation

- Establish CEO and Board approval.

CHIMES ACTIONS (x 2)

1. Upload to CHiMES library post approval by 06 09 2019 and
 2. Ensure CHIMES response loaded prior to 30 09 2019.
- Identify sharing options (e.g. other coops) - place on website – add to review alerts.
 - Place on Governance Committee (GC) agenda as per the GC work plan (standing item).
 - Set the review date and add to schedules.