**2018-2019**

**Business Plan**

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Table of Contents

[1. OBJECTIVES 3](#_Toc520709875)

[2. COMPANY OWNERSHIP/LEGAL IDENTITY 3](#_Toc520709876)

[3. LOCATION 3](#_Toc520709877)

[4. HOURS OF OPERATION 3](#_Toc520709878)

[5. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 3](#_Toc520709879)

[6. MANAGEMENT 4](#_Toc520709880)

[7. ORGANISATIONAL CHART 4](#_Toc520709881)

[8. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2017-2018 4](#_Toc520709882)

[a. Tenancy and Housing services 4](#_Toc520709883)

[b. Housing Assets 5](#_Toc520709884)

[c. Community Engagement 5](#_Toc520709885)

[d. Governance 6](#_Toc520709886)

[e. Probity 7](#_Toc520709887)

[f. Financial Viability 7](#_Toc520709888)

[9. 2018-2019 7](#_Toc520709889)

[a. Community Engagement 7](#_Toc520709890)

[b. Tenancy and Housing Services 8](#_Toc520709891)

[c. Asset Management 8](#_Toc520709892)

[10. STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION 8](#_Toc520709893)

[11. FINANCIAL FORECASTS 8](#_Toc520709894)

**Our house, your home**

## OBJECTIVES

At Eastcoast Housing we aim:

To provide equality of access to affordable housing for middle and low income earners. The housing must be suitable for their needs, offer security of tenure and promote tenant participation and control.

To provide a choice of community services in tenancy, property and asset management which is available to all and to support special accommodation groups within the Eastcoast region of Victoria.

## COMPANY OWNERSHIP/LEGAL IDENTITY

Eastcoast Housing is a Company Limited by guarantee.

Eastcoast Housing has signed up under a General Lease with the Director, Office of Housing, and Department of Health and Human Services from 01 July, 2013. This arrangement determines Eastcoast is responsible for managing all monies received by the agency in tenant rents. We will be responsible for payment of land and service charges across all properties under our management. We will also continue to be responsible for property upgrades under this agreement.

## LOCATION

Business location: Eastcoast Housing operates their business from shop front premises located at 2/57 Lloyd Street, Moe.

Buy/lease: Eastcoast Housing is in the process of purchasing the land and building known as 2/57 Lloyd Street, Moe.

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Eastcoast Housing is open to the public Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Eastcoast Housing has its financial books audited annually. Eastcoast Housing engages the services of an independent financial advisor on a regular basis throughout the year. The agencies income is derived from tenant rents, government grants and donations.

## MANAGEMENT

A board of directors, elected annually at the Annual General Meeting is responsible for the governance and monitoring of the financial viability of the organisation. The Managing Director manages the day to day operations and staff within the agency.

Board of Director and staff training is considered critical to the success of our agency and is prioritised as a budget item annually.

## ORGANISATIONAL CHART

Board of Directors

Managing Director

Property Manager

Housing Officer

Housing Officer

Office Manager

Figure 1: *Organisation Chart*

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2017-2018

## Tenancy and Housing services

All tenants and prospective tenants have received an information leaflet on how their rent is calculated. Every six months when a rent review is undertaken some tenants need another explanation as to why and how this is undertaken. The leaflet developed has been a useful tool to aid in the tenant’s understanding.

Eastcoast Housing has been pleased with the feedback from tenants about staff’s handling of breaches and the assistance rendered to support tenants to remedy any breaches, which includes the extension of time frames and the provision of practical information on how to fix the problems.

Feedback from tenants is less than encouraging about the support offered by local support providers. This has been mirrored by the responses given by the support providers Eastcoast Housing contact when attempting to make referrals, especially in regional areas.

This year Eastcoast Housing has continued to monitor the developments that are occurring with the Victorian Housing Register. The directors and staff have developed policies in anticipation of opting into the Victorian Housing Register system.

## Housing Assets

This year has been spent refining the asset management policy and processes adopted and introduced by Eastcoast Housing last year. An Asset Plan was developed after inspection of all properties in our management portfolio. The plan took into account the expected life cycle of appliances and items, along with tenant’s expectations and demand. This plan detailed maintenance priorities for the next five years. Tenants were notified after inspection of what maintenance items were to be placed on this forward plan. The plan was reviewed by the Board of Directors and approved. All staff and directors were again provided training in Asset Management theory, approach and practice.

It is understood that with any Asset Plan, and attendant budgets, it needs to be fluid and flexible enough to enable a prompt reaction to the emergence of unforeseen circumstances that require immediate responses. The board of directors has also prioritized a ‘sinking fund’ specifically for emergency maintenance requiring the expenditure of larger amounts of money to rectify ie. Fire, flood etc.

Staff were trained in the use of the new digital inspection forms using IPads during the past year. Feedback from tenants on the new information and reports they receive after inspections has been positive. Tenants are given copies of the pictures and the digitized reports. Their engagement in remedying breaches has been excellent in all but a couple of instances. Staff are encouraging and non-threatening in their approach enabling tenants to ring and negotiate time frames and ask questions.

Feedback from mental health support providers has also been incorporated into the breach notices to ensure they are detailed and provide a step by step methods of remedying any of the problem for the tenant/s. This has helped alleviate any confusion over what is a problem and how to go about fixing things. It breaks down the issue into manageable steps for the tenant.

## Community Engagement

Eastcoast is actively engaged in being a vital part of the local communities in which we provide housing.

This past year we have sponsored the training of a tenant who has a chronic medical complaint to undertake TAFE training. We are also working with another tenant on developing a book of environmentally friendly homemade cleaning products. Once published we will hold workshops for tenants and others in the community on how to make these products.

Eastcoast Housing has sponsored four people to participate in SAFE training this year. We also provided the facilities to hold the training. The participants were staff, tenants and other community members who have an interest in or are training in the welfare sector. It is felt that this participation will expand the individual participant’s knowledge base and assist their future practice habits.

An unemployed ex-employee approached Eastcoast Housing to ask for assistance in establishing a cleaning business. We provided information on public liability and business registration. Since this assistance was provided the person has promoted their business and is now operating a flourishing independent business.

Last year there was a determination to explore the possibility of building a community garden in the rear yard of the office. An assessment of the security risk, the work involved vs output and gain and the size of the yard has meant the idea has not proceeded as yet. Access to the yard means the rear windows to the office would be accessible by users of the garden. Several thefts has occurred in the back lane over the past year. Therefore this idea has been put on hold.

Eastcoast Housing had a tenancy during the year that did not end well. The local neighbourhood and community were distressed at the behaviour of our tenants leading up to their eviction. There was repeated expressed fear about future tenants of this house. Meetings were held with neighbours and it was determined that they would assist in making referrals of families that they knew about who were in need (and eligible) for housing through us. Several referrals were made. Eligibility and suitability was confirmed and a decision to house one of the recommended families was made. Referrals were made to other housing agencies for the unsuccessful families.

This engagement with the local community ensured that the neighbourhood was invested in finding an eligible tenant in a short period of time for a property that they were already very suspicious about who we were going to house. I believe the neighbours and local community will be welcoming to the new tenants and, because of their investment in the decision, will support them in settling into the area.

## Governance

During the past year Eastcoast Housing has actively recruited new directors that are interested and engaged in our business. They are productive and bring new insights to the organisation. Training and assessment has ensured that only those directors who have something to add to the objectives of the agency are retained.

The various backgrounds of the directors has worked to assist employee knowledge and growth. Additional staff training has been a direct result of having these new directors involved who are keen to provide information relating to the sectors they work in. The tenant representatives of the board provide valuable insight into how new policy may affect tenants and how staff approach can be improved on a day to day basis with the tenants we serve.

The planning functions of Eastcoast Housing continue to be prioritised by the directors and include the annual Business Planning consistent with our five year Strategy Plan, financial planning – especially in the area of future planned maintenance of properties. The perceived risks associated with the conduct of our business is identified on a continual basis and strategies are implemented to minimise these risks.

## Probity

The employee base has been stable at Eastcoast Housing for some years now. The workplace culture is healthy and supportive; with staff focus intent on positive outcomes for tenants.

Staff training includes information around whistle blowing and conflicts of interest. They know who to go to in the event that they wish to report a problem and have it investigated. Training is also offered to employees to ensure greater understanding of the needs of our customer base.

All new directors are appraised of our ethical standards of practice and agree to adhere to these. Disclosure of perceived or potential conflicts of interest occurs.

Each year Eastcoast Housing completes a questionnaire re: Fraud and Error Risk Factors for our auditor and details what controls are in place to avoid instances of risk of fraud.

## Financial Viability

Diligent assessment occurs on a regular basis around the financial performance and risk exposure of the agency. Prudent financial decisions are made to ensure the agencies ongoing viability.

## 2018-2019

## Community Engagement

Eastcoast will spend time promoting its new web site [www.eha.org.au](http://www.eha.org.au) and seek feedback from users and tenants. Already we have found people are making contact directly through the website.

The Eastcoast Housing Facebook page is updated regularly with local and regional events and information. We are getting a number of ‘likes’ from other local agencies within the community.

Eastcoast Housing is in discussion with the Latrobe Hospital Mental Health and are exploring the idea of partnering to provide a safe venue for people to come and hear from speakers of interest, undertake craft based activities and learn new skills etc. This forum will be open to tenants of Eastcoast Housing, service users of mental health agencies and individuals from the local community.

## Tenancy and Housing Services

It is anticipated that this year we will sign up to participate in the Victorian Housing Register. All current applicants are being advised that when we transfer across we will place their applications onto this system if they have not already applied through this system.

Throughout the year Eastcoast Housing will continue to monitor developments across the sector and provide feedback to government on improvements as required. The perceived and real impacts on potential customers will be monitored and recorded. Concerns have already been raised by particular client groups ie. People who have experienced domestic violence and individuals who have a mental health condition that makes them suspicious of appearing on any government lists.

The question that Eastcoast Housing will be mindful of over the coming year will be “Is the introduction of the Victorian Housing Register going to reduce choice for individuals?”.

## Asset Management

A decision of the directors is to increase the funds available throughout the next year bringing the ‘Sinking fund” balance toward $200,000 for emergency/unforeseen maintenance.

Bi-monthly the Asset Improvement Group will monitor the progress of expenditure against the forecast maintenance tasks. Priorities will be reviewed against forecasts. With adjustments to go before the board. Asset Management processes will be assessed as to effectiveness and relevance and quality improvements implemented to ensure best practice remains as a standard.

## STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

See attachment: ***Eastcoast Strategic Plan 2017-2020***

It is the opinion of the directors that Eastcoast is operating consistent with its organisational objectives and prioritizing the strategic directions as set down in our Eastcoast Strategic Directions Plan 2017-2020.

## FINANCIAL FORECASTS

Eastcoast Housing develops a 5 year financial forecast each year.

See attachment: ***2019 Eastcoast Financial Forecast***