

Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy

1 Purpose

- 1.1 Hume Housing is responsible for managing the allocation of tenancies across a variety of housing products and programs including social housing. This policy outlines Hume Housing's policy in relation to the prioritisation and allocation of tenancies across social housing programs including transitional and supported housing. This policy establishes an effective, accountable, and transparent framework for assessing eligibility for social housing and allocating properties to customers to promote positive and sustainable outcomes.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to our general social housing, transitional housing and supported housing programs.
- 2.2 Allocation of properties within our Specialist Housing programs is managed under separate guidelines, available on our website.

3 Policy Statement

- 3.1 This document outlines the policy framework that will be used to match eligible applicants with general social housing properties currently under management. This includes properties leased or owned by Hume Housing for the purposes of social housing.
- 3.2 When allocating properties, we aim to:
- make sure all eligible people have equal access to housing
 - manage a fair, needs-based allocation process and non-judgemental attitude toward all customers
 - make sure individuals are not discriminated against
 - meet our contract commitments and regulatory requirements
 - coordinate access to social housing through Housing Pathways
 - get the best use from our housing resources

Eligibility for social housing

- 3.3 Eligibility for social housing is set by the Department of Communities and Justice. To be eligible for social housing, applicants must
- 3.3.1 provide evidence of their identity
 - 3.3.2 be resident in NSW
 - 3.3.3 be an Australian citizen or have permanent residency
 - 3.3.4 have a household income within the eligibility limits
 - 3.3.5 not own any assets or property that could reasonably be expected to resolve their housing need
 - 3.3.6 be able to sustain a successful tenancy, without support or with appropriate support in place
 - 3.3.7 if applicable, make repayments of any former debts to a social housing provider
 - 3.3.8 in general, be 18 years of age

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Assessment of Income

- 3.4 To determine whether a household meets the income requirements, we will assess income eligibility based on the household size, type, and gross household income. We will then apply income eligibility limits and assessment rules.
- 3.5 There is no minimum income to be eligible for social housing. However, if an applicant does not have an income because they decline to apply for a Centrelink income, we will assess the person as though they receive the basic Centrelink support payment.

Applicants under the age of 18

- 3.6 Generally, applicants need to be 18 years and over. We will consider applicants between 16 and 18 if they meet the general eligibility requirements, they have an income, social housing is the best way to meet their accommodation needs, and we are satisfied they can meet their tenancy obligations.

Applying for social housing

- 3.7 People can apply for social housing directly through the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). Only one application needs to be submitted <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/applying-assistance/applying>
- 3.8 Applicants will need to provide evidence that they meet the eligibility criteria. Applicants should refer to the Evidence Requirements Information Sheet when completing their application.
- 3.9 Following the assessment of the application, we will confirm the outcome of the assessment in writing. If the application is a priority application, we will inform the applicant within 28 days.

Former customers

- 3.10 When a customer leaves a social housing property, either provided by us or another community housing provider (CHP) or (DCJ), a classification is given based on any issues that arose during or at the end of the tenancy, including arrears or property damage. Categories are:
- satisfactory
 - less than satisfactory
 - unsatisfactory
 - ineligible
- 3.11 Former customers can apply to be on the NSW Housing Register. To be approved, former customers must meet the current eligibility criteria.
- 3.12 Applicants whose previous tenancies are noted as “less than satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” may have to meet additional conditions before their application is assessed. Customers with debts will need to commit to repayment.

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3.13 Applications by customers deemed “ineligible” will not be approved.

The NSW Housing Register

3.14 When a person is eligible for social housing or transfer, their name will be added to the NSW Housing Register. DCJ and participating CHPs (Community Housing Providers) use this register to offer social housing properties when a suitable property is available.

How properties are allocated

3.15 General social housing will be allocated to eligible applicants from the NSW Housing Register in accordance with Housing Pathways policies. Allocations will be made according to priority, date of application and suitability of the property.

3.16 We may on occasion allocate out of turn in order to meet another purpose such as Specific Requirements, which must be supported by evidence and documented.

3.17 We do not discriminate based on age, race, gender, sexuality, marital status, religion, or disability in allocating properties.

3.18 We aim to offer the most suitable property to an applicant on the basis that:

- the property is appropriate for the person’s current household needs
- there will not be over or under-occupancy
- the property location matches the person’s needs
- the property type will not have a negative impact on the person’s health or disability
- There is alignment with any implemented local letting strategy

3.19 If a person has specific support needs and requires a modified property or a property that can be modified, we will make reasonable adjustments to ensure they are able to access housing. We will generally only offer a modified home to an applicant who meets the eligibility requirement for a modified property.

3.20 Bedroom entitlements

We have an obligation to use our limited housing stock efficiently. The number of bedrooms that will be made available to applicants depends on the age, gender, and relationships of all household members. Although the assessment of bedroom entitlements is complex and based on a range of factors, the following is a guide to how bedrooms will affect allocations:

Household Type	Standard Bedroom Entitlement
Single person	Bedsitter, one or two bedrooms
Couple	One or two bedrooms
Single person or a couple with <u>one</u> other household member	Two or three bedrooms
Single person or a couple with <u>two</u> other household members	Two or three bedrooms
Single person or a couple with <u>three</u> other household members	Three or four bedrooms
Single person or a couple with <u>four</u> other household members	Four or five bedrooms. Note: limited availability of five-bedroom properties

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3.21 When allocating bedrooms for children we take the following into account:

- A child of the household is considered an adult once they reach 18 years of age
- Male and female children are expected to share a bedroom until one reaches 10 years of age
- Children of the same gender can share until 18 years of age
- We may consider separate bedrooms for children where a need can be demonstrated
- For children with shared custody arrangements the children must reside in the home at least 3 days/nights a week to be considered household members for bedroom allocation purposes

3.22 If a household requires an extra bedroom because of a person's medical condition or disability support needs, applicants are required to support this request with evidence from specialist medical practitioner, occupational therapist etc (but not a general practitioner). If bedroom is required for a carer to stay at the property, the applicant must specify how many nights the carer will reside at the house.

3.23 We also acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers may have family responsibilities that require an additional bedroom and will accommodate this where possible.

When an offer is made

3.24 People on the Housing Register are entitled to 2 reasonable offers of housing. If an offer of housing matches the applicant's requirements and no new evidence is supplied, this will be considered a reasonable offer. We are not able to offer properties based on an applicant's preferred style of property, neighbourhood, layout or proximity to family and friends.

3.25 We only have a limited number of days to rent a property once it has become available and the offer stage of the process moves quickly.

3.26 When a property becomes available and is offered to an applicant, they must view the property and accept the offer within 48 hours. If the applicant is unable to meet this timeframe, they will need to provide evidence such as a doctor's certificate, evidence of a commitment such as jury duty or a court appearance, letter from a support provider etc.

3.27 If an applicant's needs have changed, we will consider whether the offer is still reasonable. If not, the offer may be withdrawn.

3.28 If the offer is reasonable but the applicant cannot accept it for reasons beyond their control, we may suspend the offer. Relevant reasons could include hospitalisation, illness, being overseas or in custody. When the applicant is available, we can reactivate their application on the waiting list.

Accepting an offer

3.29 Once an offer is accepted, we will outline the process for:

- calculating the rent for the property based on the rental subsidy (See the [Rent Policy](#))
- visiting our office to sign the tenancy agreement
- paying the rental bond (see the [Bond Policy](#))

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- understanding the customer's rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- moving into the property

Rejecting an offer

- 3.30 If the applicant rejects the offer, they will need to provide us with reasons in writing to consider whether the rejection was of a reasonable offer, or whether the offer was not reasonable in the circumstances.
- 3.31 They will stay on the waiting list until another suitable property becomes available. If they reject a second reasonable offer the application will be closed and they will be removed from the list. For this reason, we encourage applicants to accept the first property they are offered.

Managing Specific Requirements

Location requirements

- 3.32 In some limited circumstances we may be able to take an applicant's location preference into account. This generally only applies for families with young children who need to access early childhood or primary school education. Applicants should be aware that the waiting times may be longer.

Needs of culturally diverse communities

- 3.33 In some limited circumstances we will consider cultural need and the cultural diversity of an area and surrounding supports services available to applicants. Applicants should be aware that the waiting times may be longer.

Housing Registerable Persons

- 3.34 We will comply with Registrable Persons Policy when a person is listed as a Registerable Person.

Local Letting Strategies

- 3.35 We may develop a local letting strategy for a specific area if:
- there are ongoing tenancy management issues
 - a property is hard to let due to limited demand
 - the community has disproportionate levels of social-economic or other disadvantage
 - there is a high concentration of customers with multiple health, social or economic issues and existing issues could be made worse if we do not manage allocations.
- 3.36 Local letting strategies may vary the standard allocation criteria or give higher priority to certain applicants. Strategies must be approved by the General Manager Housing & Impact and reviewed every 6 months.

Seniors Housing

- 3.37 Some properties are considered Seniors Housing and will be allocated to people over 55 (or 45 if Aboriginal). We aim to support people to "age in place," meaning the property should meet their needs related to ageing and allow them to live there for as long as possible.

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- 3.38 We may allocate a Seniors Housing property to a person under 55 with disability who requires a more accessible property. Applications or requests would need to provide evidence that the person has support needs that can be met through this accommodation model.
- 3.39 If members of the household are under 55, we will consider whether the allocation is consistent with the nature of the property as Seniors Housing.
- 3.40 Hume vacancies may be offered to customers through Humes Transfer Policy where a property is identified by Hume as suitable for a customer on the Management Transfer Register, see Transfer Policy.

Other allocation programs

Temporary Accommodation

- 3.41 Temporary Accommodation (TA) is emergency accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. A person must be eligible for social housing to access TA, and each person can access 28 nights of accommodation in a 12-month period.
- 3.42 We manage the allocation of TA in the Hunter Region. It is managed by with DCJ or other Community Housing Providers in other parts of the State.

Housing Independence Program

- 3.43 To be eligible for the Housing Independence Program (HIP) a person must have a live application on the NSW Housing Register. Applicants are referred by an external agency or can self-refer. We manage allocations from an internal waiting list, and consider factors such as, time on the waiting list, risk of harm, loss of children etc using an allocation matrix.
- 3.44 HIP tenancies are for a period of 12 months.

Supported Housing Program

- 3.45 To be eligible for Supported Housing a person must have a live application on the NSW Housing Register. The support partner organisation nominates participants under the terms of our agreement with them.
- 3.46 We will work with the customer and the support partner over a period of up to 18 months to ensure the tenancy is sustainable and the customer is supported to transition to longer term housing.

4 Responsibilities

4.1

Role or responsibility	Position or delegation level
Ensuring policy aligns with compliance obligations	Manager, Risk and Compliance
Providing information and assistance to potential applicants	Lettings Team
Arranging inspections and offers of properties	Lettings Team

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Reviews and appeals	General Manager Housing & Impact
Approval of this policy	Deputy Manager – Housing & Impact

Reporting

- 4.2 Quarterly report through CHIMES portal.

Records management

- 4.3 Employees must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in SDM and HOMES.

5 Definitions

Affordable housing: properties made available to customers on low to moderate incomes with capped rent to ensure customers are not paying more than 30% of their income on rent.

Housing Pathways: the process established by the NSW Government to manage allocation of social housing. Most community housing providers are required to use the Housing Pathways process.

NSW Housing Register: the name of the waiting list for social housing, which is part of Housing Pathways.

Residential Tenancy Agreement: the standard agreement signed by the customer and Hume at the start of the tenancy. This document is required by the tenancy laws

Social housing: properties made available to customers on low to moderate incomes and managed by Community Housing Providers or Department of Communities and Justice. Rent subsidies are available to customers to reduce their weekly rent payments

Supported housing: properties that are made available to customers who have a support plan in place with a service provider to assist them maintain the tenancy

Transitional housing: housing for people who have been in housing stress or homeless, offered as a 12-month tenancy to support customers to return to the private rental market

Temporary Accommodation: time limited accommodation for people who are experiencing homelessness. It is a short-term temporary measure rather than a longer-term response.

HAC Housing Appeals Committee

6 Related Legislation and Documents

Bond Policy

Housing Pathways Eligibility for Social Housing Policy (DCJ)

Registrable Persons Policy

Rent Policy

Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement (DCJ)

Rentstart Assistance Policy

7 Feedback and questions

- 7.1 Customers can provide feedback at any time by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 1800 004 300.

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7.2 Decisions made under this policy may be reviewed or appealed. Hume can investigate an internal first tier appeal, if the customer still does not agree with the decision, The Housing Appeals Committee can conduct a second tier appeal at the customer's request see the [Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Policy](#).

7.3 Hume employees may provide feedback about this document by emailing feedback@humehousing.com.au

8 Approval and Review Details

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Board
Policy Owner	Executive Housing and Impact
Next Review Date	September 2024
Policy History	Details
Original Approval Authority and Date	Board
Amendment Authority and Date	October 2022
Notes	Review of Policy against legislation and update of narrative