

Allocations – Social Housing

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish an open and transparent allocations process
- Ensure equitable access to all eligible people seeking housing
- Create sustainable tenancies through matching clients to properties
- Ensure an individual's rights will not be discriminated against on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, marital status, criminal history, physical or intellectual disability or sexual preference as per the *Anti-Discrimination Act*.
- Provide applicants with coordinated access to social housing and to meet the requirements of the *Housing Pathways* process
- Maximise utilisation of housing resources and to optimise rental income

2. General principles

- Wherever possible, when making allocations of housing, the Housing Trust will take into account the reasonable needs and preferences of individuals and families
- Due to the limitations of our portfolio and demand for housing, it is not always possible to meet the specific preferences of individuals and families
- Housing Trust will require applicants to substantiate any specific housing needs or requirements with evidence from independent persons (e.g. medical professionals)
- Locational and other special housing needs in respect of an applicant housing should be detailed in a client's *Application for Housing Assistance*

3. Housing allocations

Standard allocations

Housing will be allocated to eligible applicants from the NSW Housing Register. The register includes new applicants for social housing and tenants who have been approved for transfer on either a priority or wait turn basis.

Generally, allocations will be made according to priority and the suitability of the property available, matched against an applicant's entitlements. Housing Trust will document the reasons for selecting (and for bypassing) applicants as part of the allocations process.

Housing Trust will prioritise existing Housing Trust tenant transfers over transfers from other housing providers, where the reason for the transfer is in the same category (e.g. medical/medical).

Non-standard allocations

In some situations, Housing Trust may make non-standard selections when allocating properties.

Non-standard selections may be made in the following situations:

- To meet the needs of an applicant who is at serious risk or in imminent danger (the applicant's circumstances must be substantiated)
- For an urgent transfer, including tenants being relocated for management purposes
- For an applicant with specific needs (e.g. where a specific location or property modifications are required)
- To maintain Housing Trust's targets for housing Aboriginal people
- To meet the identified targets of specific partnership agreements

4. Aboriginal properties & allocations

Housing Trust manages a number of properties and makes allocations that are designated for Aboriginal households. Housing Trust will use the best endeavours to ensure that allocations to Aboriginal properties will be made only where applicants have confirmed Aboriginality.

In accordance with FACS Allocations Policy, Priority Housing status will be granted to Aboriginal people if they or members of their household are over 55 years of age.

Additionally, Aboriginal people who nominate their interest in living in a Senior Communities property in public housing if 45 years of age or over will be considered.

Aboriginality

Confirmation of Aboriginality is generally obtained by providing one or more of the following documents and at least one member of the household must be an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander, and this person must provide confirmation of their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Aboriginality can be confirmed by:

- A Local Aboriginal Land Council form completed by the office bearers of a Local Aboriginal Land Council where the applicant is a member
- An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Organisation form completed by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation that is either:
 - incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (formerly the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976*),
 - or an incorporated community organisation where all the members of the organisation are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or both.

Confirmation must be provided via a formal resolution at a formal meeting of the organisations governing body.

Where an applicant cannot provide confirmation using either of the methods described above, they can complete a Confirmation of Aboriginality - Statutory Declaration form (Statutory Declaration) and submit it as evidence of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Where a household comprises a non-Aboriginal parent or relative with Aboriginal children, Housing Trust will consider this to be an Aboriginal household for the purpose of this policy.

5. Local allocation strategies

Housing Trust may develop local allocation strategies for particular areas or properties within the portfolio. For example, these strategies may be developed to:

- Respond to emerging or current community needs
- Assist with managing a complex of units where there has been a history of antisocial behaviour impacting on tenants or neighbours
- Help manage a location where there is a concentration of tenants with multiple health issues or complex behaviours
- Build and enhance stronger neighbourhoods / communities

6. Entitlements

Housing Trust will, where possible, consider the future needs for children when allocating a property, including the overall size of the home and areas available either at the property or nearby for play

activities. Consideration will also be given to whether an applicant or household member is pregnant at the time an offer is made.

Additional bedrooms

Due to the relatively small size of our portfolio and revenue implications, Housing Trust does not automatically provide additional bedroom entitlements for specific cultural groups.

However, we do recognise that some families do require additional bedrooms for family/cultural reasons. Requests for additional bedrooms will be considered on a case by case basis and will require the applicant to substantiate this need. Requests for additional bedrooms due to medical conditions or disability (e.g. to store specialist equipment or for a part-time or live-in carer), where supported by documented evidence, will also be considered on a case by case basis.

Aboriginal applicants are entitled to an additional bedroom in capital properties for the purpose of temporarily accommodating extended family members.

7. Offers of housing

General

An offer of housing is deemed to be made when the applicant is given the address of a property which meets their location and other entitlements.

The decision regarding allocation of properties is based on information available in the NSW Housing Register provided by the application.

When making an offer of housing, Housing Trust will ensure that:

- The property being offered is of an appropriate size and bedroom number to ensure there is no under or over-occupancy
- The property location matches the applicant's zone selection in the NSW Housing Register
- The property type and facilities enable the applicant to maximise his/her mobility and independence

Any reasons not to offer a property to a particular applicant (i.e. where an applicant is bypassed) will be documented.

Number of offers

Applicants for housing, including tenant-initiated transfer applicants, will be offered two reasonable offers of accommodation.

Tenants transferring within Housing Trust's leasehold program will be offered two reasonable offers of accommodation. However, if a 30 day or less termination is received one reasonable offer of accommodation will be made.

Where an applicant has exhausted the number of offers they are entitled to, their application will be removed from the NSW Housing Register in line with *Housing Pathways* policy.

It is not a reasonable offer if the property:

- Adversely affects an applicant's medical condition or disability
- Places the applicant in an area that will put them at risk
- Makes it difficult for the applicant's household to remain together
- With reference to the principles at cl. 4 of this policy, is culturally inappropriate for Aboriginal people or other cultural groups

Accepted offers

Where an applicant accepts an offer of housing, Housing Trust will require the client to sign a tenancy agreement within 24 hours of accepting the offer.

Rejected offers

Where an applicant rejects an offer of housing, Housing Trust will:

- Suspend the applicant/tenant in the NSW Housing Register
- Request the applicant/tenant to complete and return an *Offer Response Form* within 28 days
- Assess the *Offer Response Form* within 14 days of its return to determine the reasonableness of the offer made and whether the offer should stand or be withdrawn
- Inform the applicant in writing as to whether Housing Trust considers the offer of housing to be reasonable (whether the offer will stand) or whether the offer will be withdrawn, and how many offers they have remaining
- Advise the applicant of their right to appeal the decision made by Housing Trust and the process by which that appeal can be made
- Un-suspend the applicant in the NSW Housing Register if they are entitled to receive future offers.

Reasonableness of offers

The reasonableness of an offer will be assessed on a case by case basis. However, Housing Trust does not consider the following factors to be reasonable grounds for rejecting an offer of housing:

- Wanting a property made out of brick or other materials
- Wanting a different type of house (e.g cottage, townhouse, villa, unit)
- Wanting gas rather than electricity
- Size of bedrooms being considered too small
- Not having a garage or shed, or insufficient resident or visitor parking
- Not liking the neighbourhood
- Wanting a bath rather than a shower
- Wanting built in wardrobes
- Wanting a different suburb or street (where the need for a particular suburb has not been established)
- Wanting to live near particular shops, schools, churches or other community facilities (where the need for such has not been established)
- Wanting a property with a yard for children or pets (where the need for such has not been established)

Withdrawing offers

An offer of housing may be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Where it is subsequently determined that an applicant is not eligible for social housing
- The applicant's situation changes after the time of offer but before a lease agreement is signed (e.g. if household composition changes)
- The offer is unsuitable due to the client's medical needs
- There is a substantiated threat to the client's personal safety because of the location (e.g. because of a known perpetrator of domestic violence in the locality)
- The client is unable to view the property due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g. overseas, in hospital, in prison etc.)
- HT will consider an offer reasonable, for management transfers, if we are unable to contact you via phone or hand delivered letter and you fail to respond to us within 48 hours

Housing Trust may require applicants to provide substantiated information to demonstrate why an offer

of housing was unreasonable. This may include support letters from medical professionals, support workers, a local school, or an employer.