

Affordable Housing Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Housing Trust will determine eligibility and manage applications and property allocations within Housing Trust's Affordable Rental Housing Programs. Housing Trust manages affordable housing properties in accordance with the NSW Affordable Housing Guidelines.

Definition

Affordable Rental Housing is defined as housing that appropriately meets the needs of very low to moderate income households. Rent is priced at a discount to market rent so that these households can also meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transport, medical care and education.

Applications

Applications for Affordable Rental Housing must be made directly to Housing Trust. An application for affordable housing cannot be made through the NSW Housing Register - Housing Pathways, however applications for affordable housing may be accepted from people who are listed on the NSW Housing Register.

Housing Trust will assess Affordable Housing applications and evidence as provided by applicants to determine eligibility.

Eligibility

Affordable housing applicants must be able to demonstrate that they:

- are a citizen or have permanent residency in Australia
- are a resident of NSW
- are able to establish their identity
- are able to sustain a tenancy, either independently or with support
- are 18 years of age or older
- are within the income limits for affordable housing
- are able to demonstrate a connection to the local area which may include employment, education, family or a resident in the Illawarra area
- do not have assets (including property, shares or investments) which could solve their housing need

Income Limits

Income limits vary between Affordable Housing Programs and according to household size.

Income limits for Affordable Housing not governed by the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) are outlined within the NSW Affordable Housing Guidelines.

Income limits for programs under the NRAS are detailed in the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) – household income (indexation). This information can be accessed by visiting: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/programs-services/national-rental-affordability-scheme/national-rental-affordability-scheme-nras-household-income-indexation>

Income limits are reviewed annually to reflect Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustments to social security pensions, and benefits or movements in average weekly earnings.

Allocations

Affordable housing properties will be allocated to a mix of very low, low and moderate income households. Decisions relating to the allocation of properties within Housing Trust's Affordable Housing Program will be based on:

- achieving a mix of very low, low and moderate income households
- financial eligibility
- priority needs
- connection to area
- accordance with a local allocation strategy where this exists

Rent

Affordable Housing rent will be set at a discount to market rent and taking into account household income and capacity to pay. Housing Trust will ensure that rent is affordable to tenants and that the program is financially viable.

Rent will be charged at up to 30% of gross household income.

When a tenancy commences in an Affordable Housing property, the rent will be assessed on the household's average gross income for the previous twelve (12) months. A tenant's rent cannot be reassessed for the first six (6) months of their tenancy. All future rent assessments will be based on the household's current gross income.

Housing Trust requires the payment of two (2) weeks rent in advance at the commencement of tenancy.

Bond

Housing Trust requires the payment of four (4) weeks market rent as bond at the commencement of tenancy.

Ongoing Eligibility

To remain eligible for affordable housing households must continue to meet the criteria as outlined above and be able to demonstrate ongoing need. The exception is income, where existing tenants are permitted to earn up to 25% above the maximum eligibility income for moderate income before they become ineligible. Ongoing eligibility income limits are outlined within the NSW Affordable Housing Guidelines.

Eligibility Assessments

Eligibility will be assessed regularly as part of Housing Trust's rent review process. Where it is found that a tenant is no longer eligible Housing Trust will terminate the tenancy under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. Prior to issuing a notice of termination Housing Trust will notify the tenant of its intention to do so.

Housing Trust will seek to assist tenants to assess alternate housing options and determine a relocation strategy which may include a reasonable period to secure alternative housing depending on individual circumstances.

Right of Appeal

If an applicant or tenant believes Housing Trust has made a wrong decision a formal review of the decision should be requested. To do this, the applicant or tenant is required to complete a Housing Trust Appeals Form stating why they disagree with the decision. Housing Trust's Appeals Policy and form is available by contacting Housing Trust office or alternatively, may be downloaded from our website: www.housingtrust.org.au

If the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal appeal they can make an appeal to the Independent Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). HAC is an independent appeals agency for all NSW Social Housing clients.

Housing Trust will advise the appellant on how to lodge an appeal with HAC. Alternatively HAC may be contacted directly by visiting www.hac.nsw.gov.au or by calling 1800 629 794.

Reference or Related Documents

Internal Documents

1. NRAS Affordable Housing Procedure
2. NRAS Processing Procedure
3. NRAS Guidelines
4. Appeals Policy
5. Form 106001 Review of Decision and 1st Tier Appeal

External Documents

1. Residential Tenancies Act 2010
2. National Rental Affordable Scheme Regulations
3. NSW Affordable Housing Guidelines
4. Community Housing Rent Policy
5. Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Policy Version Control

Version	Details of Improvements	Release Date	Approval/Release Details
V 1.0	New Policy	01.07.2016	Approved for release by GM:C&C
V 2.0	Updated Policy to cover all affordable housing programs. This policy replaces the NRAS Affordable Housing Policy which has been retired. The NRAS Policy was created when HT only had NRAS affordable housing in the portfolio. The new policy is broader and covers all HT's affordable housing programs.	23.08.2018	Approved for release by Amanda Winks Chief Housing Officer
V 3.0	Paragraph added under Rent heading to explain how a tenants rent is calculated at the beginning of their tenancy and when they are eligible to ask for a re-assessment of rent.	07.02.2019	Approved for release by Amanda Winks Chief Housing Officer