

Allocations Policy (Social Housing)

Purpose

Housing Trust believes sustainable tenancies are created by allocating the right property to the right tenants. 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.
- 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

General Principles

Wherever possible, when making allocations of housing, 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 these specific preferences.

Housing Trust will require applicants to substantiate any specific housing needs and/or requirements with evidence from independent persons (e.g. medical professionals).

Standard Allocations

Housing will be allocated to eligible applicants from the NSW Housing Register in accordance and compliance with Housing Pathways Policy.

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 bypassing applicants as part of the allocations process.

Housing Trust will prioritise existing Housing Trust Management Initiated Transfers over applications on the NSW Housing Register. Housing Trust does not record Management Initiated Transfers on the NSW Housing Register.

Non-Standard Allocations

In some situations, Housing Trust may make non-standard selections when allocation 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
- to maintain Housing Trust's targets for housing Aboriginal people
- to meet the identified targets of specific partnership agreements
- to meet the target groups associated with specific properties (i.e. SEPP 5 properties – Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability)
- to achieve results as per an approved Local Allocation Strategy

Aboriginal Applicants

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

Aboriginal people who nominate their interest in a Senior Communities property on their application will be considered if 45 years of age or over.

Where a household comprises of 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.

Aboriginal applications are entitled to an additional bedroom for the purpose of temporarily accommodating extended family members (this is subject to availability). Where Housing Trust has to relocate a tenant under a management initiated transfer, Housing Trust may not be able to offer Aboriginal tenants an extra bedroom.

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 anti-social behaviour impacting on tenants and/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
- assist in housing a specific group of people to address the needs of the community and/or balance out Housing Trust's portfolio

Bedroom Entitlements

Household Type	Standard Bedroom Entitlement
Single people	Studio or one (1) bedroom
Couples	One (1) or two (2) bedrooms
Single people or couples with one (1) other household member	Two (2) or three (3) bedrooms
Single people or couples with two (2) other household members	Two (2) or three (3) bedrooms
Single people or couples with three (3) other household members	Three (3) or four (4) bedrooms
Single people or couples with four (4) other household members	Three (3) or four (4) bedrooms
Single people or couples with five (5) or more other household members	Four (4) bedroom or, if available, five (5) or more bedrooms. Clients who require five (5) bedrooms due to their household complement will generally be offered a four (4) bedroom property due to limited availability of five (5) bedroom properties.

Accommodating Children

Situation	Housing Trust Response
Child over 18 years of age	The person is considered to be an adult when calculating bedroom entitlements
Shared bedroom	Same sex children up to 18 years of age are expected to share a bedroom Male and female children are expected to share a bedroom until one reaches ten (10) years of age
Children can't share a bedroom	Where children cannot share a room due to medical reasons or behavioural factors Housing Trust may allocate an additional bedroom
Shared custody	Children are considered to be part of the household if the client has shared custody of children for three (3) days per week or more. Normal bedroom entitlements apply.

Situation	Housing Trust Response
Access visits from children	<p>Children are not considered to be part of the household if they are receiving out-of-home care. An extra bedroom will be considered when evidence of proposed restoration of children is provided.</p> <p>The client must demonstrate a need for an extra bedroom to accommodate access visits.</p>
Future needs of children	<p>Housing Trust will take into consideration children who may need separate bedrooms in 2 or 3 years time. Matching a client to a property will be decided on a case-by-case basis according to the size and type of housing that is available in the area.</p> <p>Consideration will also be given to whether an applicant or household member is pregnant at the time an offer is made.</p>

Additional Bedrooms

Housing Trust recognises that some families 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 the 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) will be approved when supported by documented evidence.

Offers of Housing

Housing Trust will ensure all new tenants are allocated properties that maximise the opportunity to create a sustainable tenancy. This will include contacting the applicant's support worker (if relevant and consent provided) in relation to any proposed offer to the applicant.

An offer of housing is deemed to be made when the applicant is given the address of the 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 applicant.

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

- The property being offered is of an appropriate size and bedroom number so that there is no under or over occupancy
- The property location matches the applicant's allocation zone
- The property type and facilities enable the applicant to maximise their 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 social housing, including tenant-initiated transfers, will be given two (2) reasonable offers of accommodation.

Similarly, tenants transferring under Housing Trust's management initiated transfer will receive two (2) reasonable offers of accommodation. However, if a tenant has been required to relocate and has received a Termination Notice with thirty (30) days or less notice, one (1) reasonable offer of accommodation will be made due to time restraints.

Accepted Offers

Where an applicant accepts an offer of housing, Housing Trust requires the client to sign a tenancy agreement within forty-eight (48) hours of accepting the offer.

Housing Trust will undertake a Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) for all priority housing applicants at the point of accepting an offer of accommodation to build a detailed profile of the risks an applicant might have in sustaining their tenancy. This assessment will help to determine appropriate referrals that could be made prior to the lease sign up to assist the new tenant to prepare to move into their new home.

The outcome of the VAT will be recorded in Housing Trust's tenancy management system. Depending on the outcome, the Community Housing Worker will work with the applicant after lease sign up to complete a Tenancy Response Plan.

Applicants who have a history of debt and/or rent arrears will be encouraged to link in with financial counselling and/or financial management to assist with developing a budget and increase their budgeting skills.

Declined Offers

Where an applicant declines an offer of housing, Housing Trust will review the reasons provided at rejection to determine if the offer is reasonable. If the offer is deemed reasonable Housing Trust will:

- inform the applicant in writing that Housing Trust deems the offer reasonable 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
- where an applicant has exhausted the number of offers they are entitled to receive, their application will be removed from the NSW Housing Register in line with Housing Pathways Policy

Where a tenant on Housing Trust's internal management initiated transfer wait list has exhausted the number of offers they are entitled to, Housing Trust may issue a Termination Notice or act on the Termination Notice already issued.

Reasonableness of Offers

The reasonableness of an offer will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. 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 property (house, townhouse, villa, unit)
- wanting gas rather than electricity
- size of bedroom 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 or vice versa
- wanting built in wardrobes
- wanting a different suburb or street (where the need to particular suburb has not been established)
- wanting to live near particular shops, schools, churches or other community facilities (where the need to for such has not been established)
- wanting a property with a yard for children or pets (where the need to for such has not been established)

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 applicants household to remain together

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
- the offer is unsuitable due to the clients medical needs
- there is a substantiated threat to the client's personal safety because of the locations
- the client is unable to view the property due to circumstances beyond their control

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.

Right of Appeal

If an applicant believes Housing Trust has made a wrong decision, a formal review of the decision should be requested within twenty-eight (28) days. To do this, the applicant is required to complete a Housing Trust Appeals Form stating why they disagree with the decision. *Housing Trust's Appeal Policy* and form are available by contacting Housing Trust office or 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

1. Creating Sustainable Tenancies for Tenancies with Complex Needs Policy
2. Housing Transfer Policy
3. Appeals Policy
4. 105005 Allocation New Tenants Social Housing Checklist
5. 108002 Allocation Property Details Form
6. 107001 Allocations Transfer Tenants Current Tenants moving into another HT Property
7. 107009 Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT)
8. Tenancy Response Plan (TRP)
9. 103011 Notice- of Termination Cover Letter

External

1. Residential Tenancies Act 2010
2. Housing Pathways Policies and Procedures
3. State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability)

Policy Version Control

Version	Details of Improvements	Release Date	Approval/Release Details
V 1.0	Original Policy - Allocations Policy - Policy ID # TM04	10.11.2014	Approved for release by GM:C&C
V 2.0	Reviewed Policy	19.10.2016	Approved for release by GM:C&C
V 3.0	Reviewed Policy	29.05.2017	Approved for release by GM:C&C
V 4.0	Reviewed Policy	25.10.2017	Approved for release by GM:C&C
V 5.0	No change to Policy intent – Policy expanded to include more detail and ensure clarity, particularly around local allocation strategies and bedroom entitlements. Applies to social housing only. Affordable Housing is covered in HT's Affordable Housing Policy Policy Renamed: Allocations Policy (Social Housing) Reviewed and endorsed by the Tenant Advisory Group between the period May – July 2020 (due to COVID-19) and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) on 24.08.2020	04.09.2020	Approved for release by Amanda Winks Chief Operations Officer