

APPLICATIONS AND ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Category: Community Housing

Effective date:	24/01/07	Custodian:	Natalie Sangalli General Manager Community Housing
External references:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Disability Housing (CDHP) Policy • Community Housing Agreement • Community Housing Allocations Management System (CHAMS) Confidentiality Agreement • Community Housing Allocations Policy (CHAP) • Community Housing Income and Assets Limits Policy • Equal Opportunities Act 1984 (WA) • Health Act 1911 • National Rental Affordability Scheme Act 2008 • Privacy Act 1988 • Residential Tenancies Act 1987 • Residential Tenancies Regulations 1989 • Schedule 2 By Laws • Spent Convictions Act 1988 (WA) • Strata Titles Act 1985 	Internal references:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation procedures & workflow • Conflict of Interest Policy • Former Tenant Debt Policy • ILP Intake Policy • Information & Records Management Policy • Occupancy Policy • Privacy Policy • Rules for Property Complexes • Transfer, Mutual Exchange & Relocate Policy & Procedures
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1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- operate application and allocation processes which are fair, consistent and transparent;
- match tenants with properties and communities which are compatible to their needs;
- meet Access Housing's legal and contractual obligations; and
- maintain a sustainable tenant mix.

2. DEFINITIONS

Community Housing (CH)	Social and affordable housing under the legal control of a community housing organisation (CHO).
The Community Housing Agreement (CHA)	A partnership agreement between the Department of Communities (formerly the Housing Authority) and a Community Housing Organisation which details the terms and conditions required to operate as a community housing provider.
Joint Wait List (JWL)	A list of people eligible for community housing, managed by the Department of Communities.

Independent Living Program (ILP)	A housing program to enable people with severe and persistent mental illness to live independently with support in the community.
Lodging Houses	Accommodation for single persons whereby residents have their own bedroom and share common facilities such as kitchen, living and laundry areas.

3. CONTENT

3.1. APPLICANTS

3.1.1. Sources

Applicants are sourced from:

a) The Joint Wait List

Access Housing has an obligation under the Community Housing Agreement to source the majority of applicants for general vacancies from the JWL, nominally 50% priority wait list and 50% general wait list, using the earliest listing date. This includes public housing tenants approved by the Department of Communities to transfer to community housing.

As per the Community Housing Allocations Policy, Access Housing maintains a mix of allocations based on income bands in to its properties which is:

- at least 70% of properties occupied by Very Low Income (social housing) applicants; and
- up to 30% of the properties occupied by Low Income applicants (affordable housing), who are no longer eligible for social housing.

Where there are no eligible social housing applicants on the JWL and the income mix is less than 30% low income applicants, Access Housing may use its own waiting list to source low income applicants.

b) Access Housing Transfer List

Access Housing maintains a wait list of existing tenants approved for transfer (*refer Transfer, Mutual Exchange & Relocate Policy*). When a suitable property becomes vacant it may be allocated to an existing Access Housing tenant on the transfer list, according to priority and wait time. s.

c) Independent Living Program (ILP)

Access Housing maintains a register of applicants who are referred to the Independent Living Program via the ILP Committees or by direct referral by a support provider (*refer ILP In-Take Policy*). Eligible ILP applicants may be offered accommodation when ILP vacancies arise, in consultation with the ILP Committees and/or support provider.

d) Supported Accommodation and Special/Specific Programs

Applicants for supported accommodation and other special/specific funding or support program will be identified in consultation with partner support agencies or partner agency as defined in applicable program agreements.

e) Lodging Houses

Applicants will be selected from the Access Housing lodging house wait list or by referral, according to priority and/or wait list date.

f) Discretionary – most in need

Access Housing is committed to providing housing for the most vulnerable and most in need in the community. Access Housing may house people with a verified urgent housing need who meet all eligibility criteria but have not yet applied to the JWL, or who are listed on the JWL but warrant housing ahead of turn.

3.1.2. Applying

- Applications for the JWL must be made via the Department of Communities using the '*Application for Rental Housing*' form ensuring the authority to nominate Community Housing as a housing option section is completed.
- All Applicants, regardless of where they are sourced from, must complete an Access Housing Application form prior to an offer of housing being made.
- Tenants referred under a supported housing program will also require a referral form and tenancy support plan, if appropriate.

3.1.3. Eligibility

- a) Applicants must meet the following criteria:
- Have assessable income and assets within the 'Income and Assets limits' and provide sufficient proof of income documentation;
 - Provide 100 points identification;
 - Be an Australian citizen or Permanent Resident and live in WA;
 - Be 16 years of age or over;
 - Not own or part own any property or land that could be used as a viable housing option;
 - Not have any previous tenant debts for which repayment arrangements have not been made and kept to;
 - Not be a former tenant with a history of violence, threatening behaviour or unsatisfactory tenancy standards.

Refer Eligibility and Rent Setting Policy for full information.

- b) Additional criteria and evidence requirements apply to National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties. These are outlined at <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/programmes-services/national-rental-affordability-scheme>.
- c) Some properties and housing programs are funded or developed to meet specific community needs and additional eligibility criteria apply to ensure the properties are allocated in accordance with either funding and contractual arrangements. People applying for such special needs/specific housing will be advised of these additional criteria and the information required to confirm eligibility.

3.1.4. Housing entitlement

In order to fully utilise housing stock, generally applicants are eligible for the following bedroom sizes:

single persons and couples	1 bedroom
single parents/couples with 1 child	2 bedrooms
single parents/couples with 2 children	2 or 3 bedrooms
single parents/couples with 3 children	3 or 4 bedrooms

single parents/couples with 4+ children	4+ bedrooms
Adult sharers (16+ years)	1 bedroom per adult

Discretion may be applied where there are exceptional circumstances such as additional space required for medical needs.

3.1.5. Wait list management

- a) The JWL is managed by the Department of Communities on a priority and listing date basis. Access Housing informs the DoC of any change in applicant's details, including valid and invalid declines.
- b) Wait lists/Registers managed by Access Housing include:
 - Access Housing Transfers
 - ILP
 - Lodging Houses
 - Supported accommodation and other special funding or support programs or specific where maintaining a wait list is defined in the program agreement
 - Band B eligible applicants
- c) All wait lists managed by Access Housing are filtered by priority and listing date and are reviewed annually.

3.2. ALLOCATIONS

3.2.1. Principles

3.2.1.1. Sensitive Allocations

Access Housing will conduct sensitive and sustainable allocations to ensure that applicants are matched to housing which best meets their needs in terms of type, size, location, support, social mix, services/facilities required and with regards to any known neighbourhood problems which may affect the incoming tenant, or behaviours of the tenant that may be incompatible with the neighbourhood character.

Access Housing increasingly seeks to match tenants with housing regardless of the housing program attached to the property as a means of achieving better outcomes for tenants. Access Housing will ensure the tenants housed under particular programs equates to the number of houses allocated to each program.

3.2.1.2. Risk Management

Access Housing will undertake a Risk Assessment for all prospective tenancies to gain an understanding of the potential risks for the tenancies and community they are housed in. In proceeding to allocate a property to a high-risk tenancy, Access Housing shall ensure sufficient internal management capacity and external support for the tenancy to succeed.

3.2.1.3. Choice

Where possible, in consideration of stock location and availability, Access Housing will house applicants in the area and housing type of their choice, with access to required support and amenities.

3.2.2. Process

3.2.2.1. Assessment

Prior to an offer of housing being made, Access Housing will confirm the available property meets the applicant's needs and that the applicant:

- is eligible for the property and program type;
- meets general eligibility criteria, including income and asset limits;
- has good references and a reasonable tenancy history; and/or
- has access to the support required to sustain their tenancy.

Access Housing shall also undertake a risk assessment to understand potential risk factors for the tenant, their household and the community. The risk assessment shall identify the management strategies and support required to assist the tenancy to succeed.

3.2.2.2. Offers

Access Housing will make a formal offer to successful applicants and include details of the rent and bond requirements, applicable strata or house rules, and any restrictions on pet ownership, as well as general information about the rights and responsibilities of the tenant information and Access Housing's Values and Policies to enable them to make an informed decision.

Offers of housing may be withdrawn if the applicant provides false or misleading information or fails to respond to an offer of housing within the timeframe allocated.

Access Housing also reserves the right to withdraw or alter an offer of housing for business reasons.

3.2.2.3. Viewings

Applicants will be offered the opportunity to undertake a viewing of the property in the company of Access Housing staff.

When inviting applicants to attend viewings, Access Housing will ensure the applicant understands the impacts of declining an offer and will seek confirmation they wish to proceed with the allocation process. This specifically refers to applicants from the JWL whereby an invalid decline may result in 6 months suspension from the JWL.

3.2.2.4. Valid declines

An applicant may decline a property offer if there is a valid reason. A valid decline does not affect the applicant's status on the JWL. Examples of a valid decline are that the property offered is:

- does not meet the household's needs or the applicant's medical/disability needs
- is too far from frequently used amenities, public transport or from family (where there is a demonstrated need for support)
- outside the preferred zone

Other valid reasons include having to break a private lease that would cause the applicant financial hardship, illness or other compassionate grounds.

3.2.2.5. Sign up & handover

Tenants must attend a sign-up appointment at Access Housing to execute the Tenancy Agreement and complete other paperwork relating to the tenancy. Tenants will be advised of their rights and responsibilities and provided with information about Access Housing's services.

The sign-up appointment occurs prior to the date of occupation of the property and handover of keys.