

Priority housing

Policy

Document title	Priority housing	Version 2.04
Contact details	Territory Families, Housing and Communities Operational Policy housing.policy@nt.gov.au	
Approved by	Executive Leadership Board	
Date approved	26/03/2024	
Document review	24 months from date of approval	
TRM number	HSG2016/01871-4~001	

Version	Active from	Author	Changes made
2.04	08/04/2024	Operational Policy	Inclusion of social housing language Addition of young people Transitioning to Independence as a priority cohort
2.03	30/03/2022	Operational Policy	Rebranded
2.02	18/03/2020	Director Policy	Editorial amendments
2.01	21/11/2016	Director Policy	Editorial amendments
2.00	15/09/2015	Chief Executive Officer	Revised
1.00	2/09/2013	Executive Director, Housing Operational Client Support	New separate policy derived from Housing Services Operational Policy Manual, Chapter 5

Contents

1. Purpose	4
2. Scope	4
3. Policy detail	4
3.1. Applying for priority housing	4
3.2. Assessment of priority application	5
3.3. Allocation	6
4. Decision-making (delegation and discretion)	6
5. Complaints and/or appeals	6
6. Review of the policy	6
7. References	7
7.1. Legislation.....	7
7.2. Policies.....	7

1. Purpose

The Chief Executive Officer (Housing) (CEO (Housing)) recognises that some clients are in more urgent need of housing than others, therefore the process of prioritising these applicants must be fair and transparent. This policy outlines how the CEO (Housing) prioritises social housing applicants who apply for priority consideration.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all urban social housing applicants.

3. Policy detail

The CEO (Housing) maintains a general wait list for all eligible social housing applicants. For more information, refer to the Wait List policy.

Social housing includes accommodation in urban areas, remote communities and town camps, provided by both the CEO (Housing) (public housing) or a Community Housing Provider (community housing).

Eligible applicants who can demonstrate an urgent need for housing will be placed on the wait list with priority status, doing so may reduce their wait time.

The following categories are considered an urgent need for social housing:

- Young person in the care of the Chief Executive Officer Territory Families, Housing and Communities transitioning to independence;
- At risk of homelessness;
- Serious medical or social problems; and
- Domestic or family violence.

New applicants may apply for priority housing when they first complete their application for social housing.

Existing applicants on the general wait list may apply for priority consideration at any time after their general application has been approved.

There is no priority housing within remote communities and town camps. Applications for these housing types are assessed on a need's basis. Refer to the Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy.

3.1. Applying for priority housing

Priority housing applicants must meet the eligibility criteria for social housing, although the CEO (Housing) has some discretion for extreme situations. For more information, refer to the Eligibility for Social Housing policy and the Discretionary Decision Making policy.

Applicants must prove their urgent need for priority housing and are required to provide documentation that supports their claim for priority. The CEO (Housing) will assess all documentation provided and make an informed determination of the request. Refer to the Identification and Documentation policy for the documentation required.

If further information is needed in respect of an application, the CEO (Housing) may interview the applicant to further understand the applicants' circumstances and provide the most appropriate assistance. Applicants are welcome to bring a friend, relative or advocate from a supporting agency to this interview.

Priority housing is a need for urgent housing and is different to crisis accommodation, which is an immediate need for accommodation. If an applicant indicates they need crisis accommodation, the CEO (Housing) may accept the Application for Social Housing and will assist the client by submitting a referral to non-government support organisations who may be able to assist with short to medium term accommodation. If the applicant requires the Department to assist with a referral, they must attend their local Housing office in person and sign paperwork authorising the Department to share their details.

3.2. Assessment of priority application

Applications will be assessed and determined in line with the CEO (Housing)'s Housing Delegations and policies. The CEO (Housing) will advise applicants if they are approved or not approved in writing. If the CEO (Housing) receives all necessary documentation to make a determination when the application is submitted, the application will be backdated. Refer to Identification and Documentation policy.

3.2.1. Approved applications

Applicants who have their priority application approved will be placed on the wait list with priority status. The CEO (Housing) will make every effort to allocate housing to priority applicants as soon as possible, however there is a wait time. Current estimated wait times can be located on the TFHC website.

While on a wait list, applicants must maintain contact with the CEO (Housing) every 6 months to ensure accurate contact details are recorded. Applicants must notify the CEO (Housing) if their circumstances change regarding the following:

- ongoing need for social housing;
- residential and postal address;
- telephone numbers and email address;
- next of kin, or contact details of an alternative contact person;
- income details including eligibility for aged pension; and
- household size.

Applicants in urban centres are required to confirm their continuing eligibility and need for social housing with their local housing office every 6 months. If the applicant fails to make contact, the CEO (Housing) will attempt contact by telephone, email or sending reminder letters to their recorded contacts.

Failure to meet these obligations may result in the applicant missing an offer of housing, resulting in the application being deferred, or cancelled and removed from the wait list.

3.2.2. Applications not approved

Any applications for priority housing that are not approved are eligible for appeal. Refer to the Appeals policy for further information.

3.3. Allocation

Eligible priority applicants will be provided with an offer of housing when a suitable dwelling becomes available. For more information, see the Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy.

An offer of housing will follow a pre-tenancy interview, taking into consideration the needs of an applicant. Generally, only one offer of housing is made. The applicant may refuse the offer by providing sufficient reason in writing within 3 working days. The CEO (Housing) will consider the reasons provided, and if it agrees with the grounds provided, the applicant will be placed back on the wait list. A further offer will be made when a suitable premises becomes available, this may not be immediate.

If the CEO (housing) determines that an offer of housing has been rejected without reasonable grounds, the applicant will be given a second opportunity to consider the premises. If the applicant fails to respond to the CEO (Housing), or does not accept the offer made, their priority application will be cancelled. The applicant will be placed on the general wait list. The applicants previous wait time will remain; however, the applicant will now be subject to the extended general wait times.

If an applicant rejects a further offer, whilst on the general or priority wait list, without reasonable grounds, the application will be cancelled and removed from the social housing wait list. The applicant may resubmit a new application, however previous wait time will not be taken into consideration.

An applicant can re-apply to move from a general application to priority, however a new application and updated documentation is required for assessment. If priority is approved, the applicant will commence their priority wait time from the date the new application was received, previous priority wait time will not be taken into consideration.

4. Decision-making (delegation and discretion)

The Chief Executive Officer (Housing) may delegate a power or function under the *Housing Act 1982* or other Act. Delegated officers make decisions as the Chief Executive Officer (Housing) in line with the CEO (Housing)s Housing Delegations and Financial Management Delegations.

A discretionary decision may be made outside the general application of policy if it supports the policy intent, will prevent a client from being unfairly disadvantaged, and is in line with the CEO (Housing)'s's delegations and legislative obligations. Refer to the Discretionary Decision Making policy.

5. Complaints and/or appeals

If a client is not satisfied with a decision or action of the CEO (Housing), they can access the CEO (Housing) complaints and/or appeals processes. For further information, please refer to the Complaints and/or Appeals policies.

6. Review of the policy

If at any time the legislative, operating or funding environment is so altered that the policy is no longer appropriate in its current form, the policy shall be reviewed and amended accordingly.

7. References

7.1. Legislation

Housing Act 1982

Residential Tenancies Act 1999

7.2. Policies

Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy

Appeals policy

Complaints policy

Discretionary Decision Making policy

Eligibility for Social Housing policy

Income and Assets policy

Wait List policy