

# Social Housing Wait lists

## Policy

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1.00	2/09/2013	Executive Director, Housing Operational Client Support	New separate policy derived from Housing Services Operational Policy Manual, Chapter 4

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# 1. Policy Statement

Applicants who are eligible for social housing are placed on region specific wait lists, maintained in each urban centre, remote community, town camp or community living area. Applicants are allocated from the wait list depending on wait time and priority.

# 2. Purpose

This policy ensures that social housing stock is utilised correctly and allocated fairly to those in need, whilst recognising that some clients will be in greater need than others.

# 3. Scope

This policy generally applies to all clients who have had their application for any form of social housing approved. Exemptions appropriate to specific types of public housing or locations of public housing will be clearly identified.

# 4. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Front-line staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apply wait list policy as outlined.</li><li>• Take into account policies relating to access and equity, as well as discretion of the Delegate.</li><li>• Refer difficult or unusual cases to the Coordinator or Manager.</li></ul>
Housing Reference Group (HRG)	Provides cultural advice regarding applicants for remote communities, town camps and community living areas and provide advice to the CEO (Housing) on allocation decisions and any community issues which may affect housing.
Service providers	Manage the supported accommodation options and advise the CEO (Housing) of their eligibility criteria and vacancies.
Director / Executive Director	Has the discretion to move a client on the wait list.

# 5. Policy detail

The wait list for social housing is managed by the Chief Executive Officer (Housing) ((CEO) Housing). Public Housing and Community Housing Providers (CHPs) access the wait list independently to allocate their managed premises.

## 5.1. Multiple applications

Applicants may apply for housing on multiple wait lists, such as remote community, town camp, urban or community living area, however, may only continue to hold specific applications once allocated. Permitted application types are listed below:

- An applicant is not permitted to have urban applications within multiple regions, however if their circumstances change during the wait time, they can request that their application be transferred to another urban centre wait list, at any time without loss of wait time.
- If an applicant has applied for urban, remote community or town camp locations, and is allocated to an urban premises, the applicant may retain their application(s) for a remote community or town camp.
- If an applicant has applied for urban, remote community or town camp locations, and is allocated to a remote community or town camp, the applicant's urban application will be cancelled.

Refer to the Social Housing Transfers policy for further information.

## 5.2. Allocation order

Generally, the CEO (Housing) allocates housing in urban centres and community living areas to applicants in the order in which they apply, depending on the type of application they were approved for.

Applications for housing in remote communities, town camps and community living areas are allocated according to need and will only be placed on the wait list following endorsement of the applicable Housing Reference Group. Refer to the Housing Reference Groups policy for further information.

Choice of location generally cannot be accommodated. The CEO (Housing) will endeavour to consider specific location requirements where possible and where specific need is demonstrated.

Refer to the Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy for further information.

## 5.3. Applicant responsibilities

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.

If the applicant maintains contact with the Department every 6 months, they will meet the criteria to request the reinstatement of their application, should their application be cancelled. A request to reinstate

an application must be made within 6 months of the cancellation. Refer 5.8 Reinstatement of an application.

## 5.4. Wait time

The CEO (Housing) cannot provide accurate wait times due to the various factors that affect the management of a wait list, these include:

- availability of housing stock;
- the frequency of existing tenants ceasing their tenancy;
- type and size of premises required;
- location of premises required; and
- ability to contact an applicant.

Current estimated wait times can be located on the TFHC website.

## 5.5. Accrued wait time

### 5.5.1. Changes in circumstances

If there are changes to a household's structure while on the wait list, there will be no loss of accrued wait times, providing that new household eligibility criteria is met. However, whilst a group of singles may disband and each person retains credit for time on the wait list, they are not entitled to take this credit to any new group of singles.

### 5.5.2. Relationship breakdown

If a relationship ends, both applicants will retain all credit for waiting time to which they are entitled and must contact the CEO (Housing) to determine their own position on the wait list. Neither applicant is entitled to credit for waiting time accrued by the other applicant before the relationship began. Final discretion lies with the Manager.

### 5.5.3. Changes to pensioner status

If a non-pensioner single applicant is granted an age pension or Mature Age Allowance, they will be transferred to the pensioner wait list with no loss of accrued waiting time.

### 5.5.4. Deferral of application

If an application is deferred, there will be no loss of accrued wait time. The application is suspended until the application is placed back on the wait list. Refer to 5.6 Deferral of application for more information.

### 5.5.5. Cancellation of application

If an application is cancelled, the applicant will lose their accrued wait time. A client may submit a new application after the cancellation, however if the application is approved, their wait time will start again.

## 5.6. Deferral of applications

A deferral can be initiated by the CEO (Housing) or applicant, for a period of up to 12 months. A request to defer will be reassessed after the timeframe has expired. Deferrals can occur for the following reasons:

- medical treatment or rehabilitation;
- to care for a family member;
- inability to contact applicant;
- applicant is incarcerated;
- inability to prove current eligibility;
- inability to provide 2 tenancy references.

## 5.7. Cancellation of applications

Applications will be cancelled and removed from all specified social housing wait lists if the applicant advises that social housing is no longer required.

Further, applications will be cancelled and removed from urban and community living area wait lists for the reasons as outlined in 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 respectively.

### 5.7.1. Cancellation for social housing in urban centres

An application will be cancelled if:

- the applicant fails to respond to any form of contact whilst on the wait list, including reminders to confirm details or provide updated and requested information to the CEO (Housing);
- the applicant's household no longer meets eligibility criteria;
- an applicant rejects an offer of housing without providing sufficient reason in writing (no credit for wait time will be given if they choose to reapply for social housing); or
- the applicant leaves the Northern Territory for an extended period of time, unless for prolonged medical treatment or rehabilitation.

### 5.7.2. Cancellation for social housing in community living areas

An application will be cancelled:

- if the applicant leaves the Northern Territory for an extended period of time, unless for prolonged medical treatment or rehabilitation.

## 5.8. Reinstatement of an application

Cancelled applications may be reinstated on compassionate grounds that have impacted an applicant's ability to meet their obligations whilst on the wait list, including maintaining contact with and providing information to the CEO (Housing).

An application may be reinstated if the applicant contacts the CEO (Housing) within 6 months from the cancellation date. The applicant must provide evidence of their continual residence in the Northern Territory, for a minimum of 6 months.

Delegation to approve a reinstatement of an application rests with the Manager. If an application is reinstated within the 6 month period, there will be no loss of wait time. Discretion may be applied by the Manager following the 6 month period to accept the request for reinstatement and consideration of any loss of wait time.

## 6. 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 delegations and legislative obligations. Refer to the Discretionary Decision Making policy.

## 7. Complaints and/or appeals

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

## 8. 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.

## 9. References

### 9.1. Legislation

Housing Act 1982

### 9.2. Policies

Appeals policy

Access and Equity policy

Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy

Complaints policy

Discretionary Decision Making policy

Housing Reference Groups policy

Priority Housing policy

Social Housing Transfers policy