

Government Employee Housing Extended Absences and Long-Term Leave

Policy

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Contents

1. Policy statement.....	4
2. Purpose.....	4
3. Scope.....	4
4. Policy detail	4
4.1. Long-term leave.....	4
4.2. Extended absences	5
4.3. Other circumstances.....	5
4.4. Tenant responsibilities	5
5. Decision-making (delegation and discretion).....	5
6. References	5
6.1. Legislation.....	5

1. Policy statement

This policy sets out how the Northern Territory Government Employee Housing Office (NTGEHO) manages extended periods of leave and absences in Government Employee Housing (GEH).

2. Purpose

To minimise under-utilisation and damage to GEH dwellings, the NTGEHO requires leave and extended absences to be managed equitably through formal arrangement between GEH tenants, their agencies and the NTGEHO.

3. Scope

This policy applies to GEH tenants residing in premises owned or leased by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (Housing) for the purpose of residential accommodation. This policy does not apply to properties that are not leased under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*.

4. Policy detail

The NTGEHO will provide properties that are safe, secure and habitable as specified under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* and/or any other relevant legislation.

4.1. Long-term leave

An employee who is not on active duty, but retains a substantive appointment within a given locality will retain eligibility for GEH while on paid leave, such as recreation leave, long service leave, paid parental leave, special leave with pay or personal leave.

However, employees living in GEH in remote communities may be required to vacate their dwelling during long-term leave to make GEH available for replacement staff.

If an employee is on long-term leave and the GEH dwelling they occupy is required for replacement staff, their manager and/or human resources (HR) representative should discuss this with them.

Managers and/or HR representatives must:

- discuss with the employee the potential requirement to vacate their GEH dwelling during long leave to make way for replacement staff;
- use visiting officer quarters (VOQs), if available, for replacement staff during short-term leave so the employee does not have to vacate the dwelling; and
- for those periods of approved long-term leave, the employing agency may pay for storage or reasonable uplift expenses to Darwin, Alice Springs or Katherine (the nearest storage facility to point of origin). Length of storage and payment of travel expenses for the employee and their dependents is at the discretion of the employing agency.

Employees must:

- on approval of leave, contact their manager to arrange the removal of household goods and personal effects for the period of approved leave, if moving out of a GEH dwelling;

- provide at least 14 days' notice of intention to vacate to their manager and the NTGEHO to avoid overpayment of any relevant remote allowances and to organise an outgoing inspection.

An employee's right to occupy GEH ceases immediately upon the employee taking or being placed on unpaid leave or special leave without pay, subject to the approval of CEO (Housing), or their delegate, to the contrary.

4.2. Extended absences

In accordance with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*, tenants are required to notify the NTGEHO if they are absent from their dwelling for more than 30 days. Tenants are required to inform the NTGEHO of extended absences in order to avoid repossession on the assumption the dwelling is abandoned – see the Termination of a Tenancy policy for further information.

4.3. Other circumstances

CEO (Housing), or their delegate, or the employee may at any time terminate the occupancy by giving two (2) weeks' notice in writing of such termination.

4.4. Tenant responsibilities

The tenant retains all responsibilities under the conditions of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* and their tenancy agreement, even if absent from the dwelling.

5. Decision-making (delegation and discretion)

The CEO (Housing) may delegate a power or function under the *Housing Act 1982* or other Act. Delegated officers may make decisions on behalf of the CEO (Housing) in line with the Housing Delegations and the Department's Financial Management Delegations.

A discretionary decision may be made outside general application of policy if it supports the policy intent, will prevent an employee or agency from being unfairly disadvantaged, and is in line with the Department's delegations and legislative obligations.

6. References

6.1. Legislation

Housing Act 1982

Residential Tenancies Act 1999