

Government Employee Housing Operational Policy Overview

Policy

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1. Policy purpose

The purpose of this policy document is to provide an overview of the policies, legislation and guidance for Government Employee Housing (GEH) and its operation.

This policy document applies to GEH tenants and premises owned or leased by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (Housing), for the purpose of GEH.

2. Government Employee Housing

GEH is the provision and management of a service through the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development (the Department) NT Government Employee Housing Office (NTGEHO) which provides accommodation for eligible employees of the Northern Territory Government (NTG) and approved non-government organisations.

2.1. CEO (Housing) Owned Dwellings

In locations where the local housing rental market does not exist, GEH dwellings are constructed by the NT Government and the housing assets are owned by CEO (Housing) and managed by the NTGEHO.

GEH is designed to offer eligible employees a housing benefit to support the employment and retention of qualified and skilled staff that provide essential services in regional and remote locations.

GEH also allows for the allocation of CEO (Housing) owned dwellings to employees of non-government organisations that are delivering services in remote locations where a local housing rental market does not exist.

2.2. Private Head Leased Dwellings

Under the GEH program, the CEO (Housing) head leases dwelling from private landlords across the Northern Territory and sub-leases them to Government employees eligible for GEH.

A Private Head Lease Agreement is an agreement between the CEO (Housing) and the owner of the dwelling acquired from the private rental market. The Agreement is entered into when there is no available CEO (Housing) owned GEH dwellings in a given location and will only be tenanted by Government employees.

3. Northern Territory Government Employee Housing Office

The Northern Territory Government Employee Housing Office (NTGEHO) leads the design, management and implementation of centralised GEH management across Government. NTGEHO is a specialised work unit that is focused on improving and maintaining GEH.

The NTGEHO is responsible for:

- delivering the new centralised GEH management model
- allocating government owned dwellings and sourcing private head leases where required
- performing the role of the landlord for all Government owned and private head lease GEH dwellings, similar to that in the private sector, including inspections
- establishing direct tenancy arrangements between all employees occupying GEH dwellings
- providing GEH tenancy management functions

- conducting GEH reporting, identifying data and reporting gaps and implementation of system improvements as required.

4. Principles for GEH

The NTGEHO has developed a series of guiding principles that were adopted during the centralisation of GEH management and used to guide operational policy.

The principles for GEH in the Northern Territory (everybody's responsibilities) are as follows:

- **Connected to community:** Staff will live and reside in housing in the communities they work, alongside the people they provide services to wherever possible.
- **Tenant responsibility:** Tenants will support the reasonable upkeep of GEH that is fit for and connected to the community.
- **Employing agency responsibility:** Contribute to the effective operation of GEH by working in partnership with NTGEHO and maintain responsibility for the conduct of employees.
- **Landlord responsibility:** NTGEHO will be a model landlord and provide high quality GEH services across the Northern Territory.
- **Housing to support opportunities in community:** GEH will be used to support jobs in community, and provide opportunities for Aboriginal-led service delivery.
- **Housing to facilitate service delivery:** GEH will be allocated and used to best support effective service delivery in community.

The principles for NTGEHO's operation (our commitments) are as follows:

- **Financial sustainability:** NTGEHO is able to cover its costs, and the mechanism for achieving this is transparent and well understood by client agencies.
- **Value for Northern Territory Government (NTG) investment:** The significant infrastructure and service investment provided by GEH requires a commitment to strong property and tenancy management and asset planning to ensure the program delivers value to the NTG.
- **Accountable:** Legislation, regulations, policies, procedures and systems are consistently applied and well understood.
- **Effective:** Program outcomes are clearly defined, and achievement of these outcomes can be objectively measured.
- **Efficient:** The allocation and management model adopted is efficient, leverages the skills of client agencies and housing staff, and does not employ unnecessary or complex processes.
- **Strategically aligned:** The NTG whole of Government agenda is integrated into the NTGEHO model, including the Local Decision-Making (LDM) policy and desire for local recruitment.
- **Promote employee safety:** GEH is designed to support safe living environments for employees as they deliver critical services in regional and remote areas.

5. NTG agencies' roles and responsibilities

5.1. Interagency Steering Committee

The Interagency Steering Committee (ISC) has been established to provide oversight and transparency over GEH and provides a vital role, including reviewing and endorsing policies and procedures, driving the GEH

reform, facilitating integrated planning for future GEH assets and coordinating communications within client agencies.

The ISC's role is to:

- represent their agency with the authority to provide impartial, effective and timely advice and make decisions where necessary on business as usual work that impacts across the GEH portfolio, or with their specific agency, and to enable the effective progress of the GEH reform;
- participate in the reviewing of GEH related policy;
- participate in the reviewing of demand and supply projections and models with consideration of their own agency specific insights into any future plans; and
- inform their respective agency on the developments of the GEH reform.

5.2. Client agencies

NTG agencies are responsible for deciding:

- which of their staff are eligible to receive GEH. If in line with the terms and conditions set by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE) pursuant to the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993*;
- if the employee is entitled to a rental concession in accordance with:
 - Commissioner for Public Employment Determination 8 of 2015; and
 - where relevant the applicable enterprise agreement.
- what other employee entitlements their staff are eligible to receive, for example;
 - full payment of or a contribution towards the provisions of utilities to the dwellings such as electricity or internet connection; and
 - expenses occurred for storage of personal belongs and uplift expenses.

5.3. NTPS employees

GEH dwellings are owned by CEO (Housing) and are NTG assets. Where an NTPS employee is the GEH tenant, they must abide by the Code of Conduct and the conditions of the tenancy agreement between them and CEO (Housing). Should the GEH Tenant act in a way that is contrary to the Code of Conduct or NTPS Values, it can be a breach of their employment conditions or the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*.

The actions of non-NTG tenants will be addressed through the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*.

For further information on the Code of Conduct, please visit: <https://ntgcentral.nt.gov.au/my-job/my-responsibilities/code-of-conduct>.

6. GEH policies

GEH is supported by a suite of policies which sets out guidelines for its operation. These policies establish the key elements that the NTGEHO and other agencies must incorporate as part of their management of GEH. The suite of policies provides detailed guidance to assist the NTGEHO to meet its legislative requirements and obligations.

By adhering to these policies, the NTGEHO and other agencies will have a consistent approach to the effective management and planning of GEH tenancy and assets. The policies include:

- Eligibility, Entitlement and Allocation policies
- Rents and Rental Concessions policy
- Tenancy Management policies
- Tenancy Agreement Breaches policy
- Asset Management policy
- Complaints and Appeals policies.

Each policy will outline the details of the legislative requirements and the NTGEHO's obligation under relevant Acts. Please refer to each individual policy for further information.

7. Legislation

GEH is implemented and managed in accordance with the *Housing Act 1982* and the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*. The legislative context in which GEH operates is important as it provides the legal foundation upon which GEH policies are based.

The *Housing Act 1982* is the primary piece of legislation governing the provision of GEH and where the establishment of the entity CEO (Housing) as landlord of GEH properties. The *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* determines the legal requirements in which the CEO (Housing) as the landlord will manage GEH tenancies.

Other relevant legislation that relates to GEH includes, but is not limited to:

- *Criminal Code Act 1983*;
- *Information Act 2002*;
- *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993*;
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*; and
- *Privacy Act 1988*.

8. Decision making and amendments

Any requests for changes to GEH policy must align with relevant legislation and the principles for GEH and be submitted to the ISC for endorsement by its members.

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 a client from being unfairly disadvantaged, and is in line with the Department's delegations and legislative obligations.

9. Review of the policies

If at any time the legislative, operating or funding environment is so altered that the existing policies are no longer appropriate in its current form, the policies shall be reviewed and amended accordingly in agreement with the Commissioner for Public Employment. The OCPE will ensure the policies meet legislative requirements.