

Policy

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Department	CHP, Habitat for Humanity Australia
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Objective

HFHA Limited (HFHA) is responsible for managing the allocation of tenancies across a variety of housing products and programs including social housing, affordable housing, supported housing and fee for service arrangements. This document outlines HFHA's policy in relation to the prioritisation and allocation of tenancies across all product and program types. This policy applies to all applicants who will be housed by HFHA.

Policy

HFHA is responsible for managing a range of housing products and programs in line with contractual and regulatory requirements. This document outlines the policy framework that will be used to match eligible applicants with general social housing properties currently under management. This includes properties leased or owned by HFHA for the purposes of social housing.

General Social Housing

This policy aligns with the Housing Pathways Eligibility for Social Housing Policy and Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement. Only those eligibility criteria and entitlements that are specific to HFHA are included in this policy.

HFHA will prioritise the allocation of properties within its general social housing portfolio as follows:

1. **Management initiated transfer** – where HFHA is required to relocate a tenant to another property for management purposes. Refer to HFHA Management Transfer Policy for further information.
2. Commitments under formal **Housing & Support Partnerships** – reflecting our formal contracts with Government and community organisations to house priority needs clients.
3. **Priority approved transfer applicants** - this will enable all social housing providers to better manage their responsibilities to existing tenants and ensure that available social housing can better meet the needs of new applicants.
4. **Priority approved applicants** – reflecting the fact that the priority needs of applicants require these applicants to be housed earlier.
5. **General wait turn and transfer applicants.**

Management Initiated Transfers

Management initiated transfers are undertaken where HFHA is required to relocate a tenant to another property for management purposes. These allocations are undertaken outside the HFHA NSW Housing Register. For further information please see the HFHA Management Transfer Policy.

Housing and Support Partnerships

HFHA has taken an active role in housing vulnerable people who require support to sustain their tenancy. We work in partnerships under a formal agreement between HFHA and the relevant Government or non-government organisation providing support services.

The housing and support partnerships cover long term housing and transitional housing arrangements for particular client cohorts such as rough sleepers, people with mental health issues, young people and women and children who have experienced family violence.

Some of these arrangements are for long term social housing, however, the majority provide transitional housing opportunities. Transitional housing is medium term housing usually for a period of between 6 -18 months. Unlike long term social housing, tenants will be expected to move to more appropriate long term housing options.

In most cases the support organisation is responsible for nominating eligible clients. Applicants must be eligible for social housing and be priority approved on the NSW Housing Register in order to be allocated to HFHA properties used for support partnerships.

All tenants will be required to have a formal support plan in place and must be actively engaged in support unless mutually agreed between the tenant, HFHA and the support provider. In the case of transitional housing, a formal exit plan that is mutually agreed between HFHA, the tenant and support provider is required to support exit to longer term housing options at the end of the tenancy term.

General Social Housing - Housing Pathways

1. Priority approved transfer applicants - this will enable all social housing providers to better manage their responsibilities to existing tenants and ensure that available social housing can better meet the needs of new applicants.
2. Priority approved applicants – reflecting the fact that the priority needs of applicants require these applicants to be housed earlier.
3. General wait turn and transfer applicants.

Additional Considerations

Where possible HFHA seeks to maximise the allocation of properties to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants in recognition of the higher levels of disadvantage facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. We regularly monitor our allocations to ensure that a minimum of 10% of all allocations or at least one in every 10 applicants offered housing will be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

When allocating a property or properties, HFHA must consider the need to support the peace and enjoyment of existing tenants and communities as well as any particular requirements of a property, for example whether it is disability accessible or is hard to let.

For some sites HFHA may develop a particular Local Allocation Strategy to reflect the particular allocation needs of the local community or specific development conditions for example around seniors living.

For the reasons outlined above not all allocations will be made in accordance with the categories outlined above and staff will need to consider the property configuration and community needs prior to allocation.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing properties are targeted to applicants on very low, low and moderate incomes, some of which are not eligible for social housing. The particular eligibility criteria and entitlements for affordable housing managed by HFHA may vary according to the funding program or specifics of the particular project.

For allocations to affordable housing properties owned or managed by HFHA to very low income households, applicants will be drawn from the HFHA NSW Housing Register in accordance with the allocation policy for General social housing outlined above.

Applicants will be required to submit their application and will be assessed in date order in accordance with the NSW Affordable Housing Guidelines and any local planning conditions.

For those on low or moderate incomes, application management and allocations will be made in accordance with the particular program guidelines. For further information please see HFHA's Affordable Housing Policy.

HFHA Tenancy Management Policy

While HFHA is subject to the Housing Pathways Eligibility for Social Housing Policy and Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement, there are some differences in policy between community housing and public housing providers.

Tenure

HFHA has continuous tenure for general social housing. Tenants will be expected to sign a Residential Tenancy Agreement and provided they comply with this agreement they will be able to maintain their tenancy in the longer term.

Bedroom Categories

The tables below outline the standard bedroom entitlements for HFHA, bedroom entitlements relating to the need to accommodate children and the evidence required to substantiate these entitlements. These apply to all HFHA properties including general social housing, affordable housing and transitional supported.

Table 1: Standard bedroom entitlements for HFHA

Household Type	Standard Bedroom Entitlement (and subject to availability)
Single people	Studio or one bedroom
Couples	One bedroom
Single people or couples with one other household member	Two bedrooms
Single people or couples with two other household members	Two bedrooms
Single people or couples with three other household members	Three bedrooms
Single people or couples with four other household members	Three bedrooms
Single people or couples with five or more other household members	Four bedrooms or, if available, five or more bedrooms. Applicants who have a five bedroom household complement will generally be offered a four bedroom property unless a five bedroom property is vacant when the applicant's turn is reached. This is because of the limited availability of five bedroom accommodation.

Table 2: Bedroom entitlements related to accommodating children

Situation	HFHA Response
Child is over 18 years of age	The person is considered to be an adult when calculating the minimum bedroom entitlement
Shared bedrooms	Same sex children up to 18 years of age are expected to share a bedroom Male and female children are expected to share a bedroom until one of the children reaches 10 years of age.
Children can't share a bedroom	HFHA will allocate an additional bedroom where the applicant has demonstrated a need for same sex children, or children under 10 years of age, to have separate bedrooms. Examples of situations where an extra bedroom could be appropriate include where there is a large age gap between the children or behavioural factors.
Shared custody	The child/children are considered to be part of the household if the applicant has shared custody of children for three days and three nights per week or more. Normal bedroom entitlements apply.
Access visits from children	The children are not considered to be part of the household if they visit for less than three days and three nights per week. The applicant must demonstrate a need for an extra bedroom to accommodate access visits.
Future needs of children who may need separate bedrooms in two or three years time	HFHA will take this into account when matching the applicant to a property if it can. HFHA will make this decision on a case by case basis according to the size and type of housing that is available in the area.

Table 3: Information required substantiating the need for an extra bedroom

If an applicant has a requirement for an extra bedroom for medical or family reasons, they must substantiate this need.

Situation	Information Required
Extra bedroom due to medical condition or disability.	Documentation from the applicant's health care professional (e.g. specialist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist or psychiatrist) that supports the need for an extra bedroom. Evidence of the need for a separate room for a partner if a disability (or routines associated with a disability) require the couple to sleep separately. Evidence of the need for an extra bedroom for a family member, carer or support worker to stay when providing regular short term periods of support, e.g. minimum 2 nights per week or equivalent weeks over multiple times for the duration of the tenancy. Evidence that the temporary carer resides in another permanent tenancy.

Type of Housing Offered to Applicants

In general, a new applicant for HFHA cannot specify the type of housing that they would prefer unless they have documentation to support a specific need. And this can only be properly assessed by HFHA subject to availability of suitable housing.

When allocating properties, HFHA will consider the needs of a household subject to availability. Where applicants have special needs, they must substantiate their need for certain entitlements. An applicant may have special requirements for their accommodation based on medical, social or other factors. If an applicant wishes to be housed with social housing and can substantiate these needs, a provider may approve them for the following specific types of accommodation:

- Ground floor
- Modified property
- Property with wheelchair access
- Property with a certain number of steps

Applicants may specify a preference to be housed in a Senior Communities property if managed by HFHA where they are:

- 55 years of age or over, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants who are 45 years of age or over.
- Two person adult households where at least one person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who is over 45 years of age, or one person who is 55 years or over who is not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

If an applicant has other needs that require a specific type of accommodation or accommodation in a specific location they must substantiate this need. For example, they may need to be close to medical practitioners, or they may need to be housed in an area because of cultural needs and support, or they may have a child that needs to attend a special school.

Table 1: Information required to substantiate housing needs

The table outlines the information required by HFHA to substantiate specific housing needs.

Situation	Information Required
Location within allocation area – need for a property located within a specific part of an allocation area. For example, for access to cultural supports, a specific medical practitioner, a special school or neighbourhood supports for people with a disability etc.	Documentation substantiating the need for the specific location.
Shared custody – need for a larger property to accommodate children. Minimum stay of three days and three nights.	Substantiation of the shared custody arrangement through information such as one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documentation from the Family Court.• Statutory Declaration from the applicant.• Centrelink payment information.• Bank account details.

<p>A studio unit is unsuitable due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical condition or disability • Requires a carer • Family Complement including households with more than one person, pregnancy, shared custody, access visits or child restoration 	<p>Documentation that demonstrates that this type of property will adversely affect the applicant's health (e.g. due to claustrophobia) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Assessment from the applicant's health care professional • Report or letter from a health care worker or a support agency • Only single person households will be offered a studio unit. An applicant with family reasons or carer requirements needs to provide documentation to demonstrate their need for additional bedrooms as outlined above.
Situation	Information Required
<p>A high-rise unit is unsuitable due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical condition or disability • A child or young person at risk 	<p>Documentation that demonstrates that this type of property will adversely affect the applicant's health (e.g. due to claustrophobia) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Assessment from the applicant's health care professional • Report or letter from a health care worker or a support agency <p>Documentation that demonstrates that the applicant has special housing requirements due to risk to a child or young person including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current report or letter from a health care professional, health care worker, support agency, Police or justice systems officers (e.g. advising that the applicant cannot reside in a high density area). • Current report or letter from a school Principal or counsellor, or a community support provider (e.g. from a refuge or community centre supporting the young person).

Matching and offering a property to an applicant

Table 1: HFHA property types

Property Type	Applicant
General properties Social housing property owned by HFHA or head leased from the private rental market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants with needs that can be met by the type, size and location of the particular property.
HFHA senior communities The properties in these HFHA complexes are specifically for older people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants who are 45 years of age or over. Applicants aged 55 years or over who are not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Two person adult households where at least one person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who is over 45 years of age, or one person who is 55 years or over who is not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
Modified property Properties modified to cater for applicants with a disability (in allocation areas where these properties are not readily available).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who have demonstrated a need for a modified property.
Ground floor property Properties located on the ground floor of a unit complex (in allocation areas where these properties are not readily available).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who have demonstrated a need for a ground floor property.
Level access Properties with level access to an entry way (in allocation areas where these properties are not readily available).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants who have demonstrated a need for a property with level access.
Studio and high-rise Properties that are studio units (i.e., where the lounge room and bedroom are combined in one room) or are units in a high rise apartment building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants whose needs are met by the size of the particular property, except where they have demonstrated that a studio or high-rise unit is unsuitable.

Criteria for matching applicant to properties

The criteria used to match applicants to properties are outlined in the table below. HFHA will match applicants to housing where an applicant has selected community housing as one of their preferred providers.

Table 1: Criteria for matching applicants to properties

Property Attribute	Basic Criteria	Additional Criteria that is Considered when Relevant
Public, Aboriginal Housing Office or community housing properties	Community housing providers will match the applicant to community housing. Housing NSW will match the applicant to public or Aboriginal housing.	

Location of property	Where the applicant is required to undertake a Locational Needs Assessment, HFHA will match to the allocation area the applicant has been approved for. Community housing providers will match the applicant to one of the applicant's preferred allocation areas.	<p>HFHA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match within an allocation area when the applicant has demonstrated a need for this allocation area. • Take into consideration any geographical boundaries/restrictions agreed to in an Operating Agreement for an Accord Partnership.
Type of property	Applicants on the NSW Housing Register, HFHA will match to a house, cottage, terrace, townhouse, villa, boarding house, shared accommodation or a unit according to availability.	<p>HFHA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match an applicant to a specific type of property if the applicant has demonstrated a need for this type of property. • Match an applicant to properties with specific features (such as ground floor, level access, modifications, maximum number of stairs any person can manage) if the applicant has demonstrated a need for this type of property. • Not match an applicant to properties that have specific features if the applicant has demonstrated that these features would make the property unsuitable for them. • Include matches to high-rise units, except where the applicant has demonstrated that a high-rise is unsuitable.
Number of bedrooms	Applicants on the NSW housing register, HFHA will match to a bedroom allocation based on the size of the applicant's household.	<p>HFHA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants to a property that has one more bedroom than the minimum bedroom entitlement for the household, if the applicant has requested this. HFHA has this policy in recognition of the family responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. These applicants can ask for an extra bedroom on their application for housing assistance or at any time while they are on the NSW housing register. • Match to a bedroom allocation above the minimum entitlement if the applicant has demonstrated a need for a property of this size. For example, HFHA will allocate an additional room for a family member or carer to stay in if the applicant has demonstrated a need for this. • Where possible, consider the future accommodation needs of children in the household. • Include matches to studio units for a single person households, except where the applicant has demonstrated that a studio is unsuitable.

Number of Offers Provided

HFHA in most cases will provide a maximum of two offers of alternative accommodation under the Housing Pathways system.

HFHA tenants who are being relocated for management purposes will receive one offer of alternative accommodation. HFHA has decided that such tenant is to only receive one reasonable offer of alternative housing, due to achieve HFHA's broader strategic or operational outcomes, which includes:

- HFHA has a compelling financial or operational need to achieve the relocation within a specific timeframe and this timeframe is not reasonably achievable if the tenant is entitled to two reasonable offers of alternative accommodation.
- Seeking to end a situation of anti-social behaviour or disruption in the neighbourhood associated with a particular tenant or tenancy.
- A documented history of the tenant failing to respond to communications from HFHA within a reasonable period of time.
- A compelling external reason.

Extension of Offer Timeframes

The table below provides information on when timeframes for HFHA offers will be extended.

Table 1: Extension of timeframes for HFHA offers

Situation	Evidence
Applicant not able to inspect the offered property within two working days of receiving the offer	Information that substantiates the applicant's reasons for not being able to inspect the property within the required timeframe.
Applicant not able to sign a tenancy agreement within one week of accepting the offer due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serious health reasons or disability or• Family crisis or emergency or• Have a current rental lease in the private market.	Information that substantiates the applicant's reasons for not being able to sign the tenancy agreement within the required timeframe, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A doctor's certificate.• A letter from a support provider.• Evidence of the family crisis or emergency and its impact on the applicant's ability to sign the tenancy agreement.• Current rental lease.

Accepting, Rejecting and Withdrawing Offers and Suspending Applications for Social Housing

The table below sets out the criteria for making decisions about when an offer of HFHA is accepted, rejected or withdrawn, and/or when an application is suspended.

Table 1: Criteria for accepting, rejecting and withdrawing Housing Bridge offers and suspending applications

Situation	Evidence
Offer accepted	The applicant has accepted a property offered by HFHA, Housing NSW or another community housing provider and signs a tenancy agreement.

Offer rejected	<p>The offer of housing meets the matching requirements and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no grounds for suspending the applicant’s NSW housing register application, and • The applicant did not provide any new, substantiated information to Housing NSW about their needs within the required timeframe, or • The offer of housing meets the matching requirements and: • The applicant has declined the offer for a reason that Housing NSW considers to be a personal preference because it does not directly impact on the applicant’s housing needs. Common examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanting a property made out of brick. • Wanting gas rather than electricity. • Not liking the neighbourhood. • Not liking the cladding, internal or external layout, design, or colour scheme of the property. • Wanting a bath rather than a shower. • Wanting a different suburb (where locational need for a particular suburb has not been established). • Wanting a specific street. • Wanting to live near shops, family, school (where locational need has not been established). • Wanting a different type of property (house, townhouse, villa or unit). • Wanting to live on a specific floor of a block of units. • Wanting a senior communities property only. • Wanting HFHA to match them to a property on the basis of the needs of their pet
	<p>The offer of housing meets the matching requirements and the applicant has declined the offer due to not liking, or being unwilling to accept, the specific requirements of the housing provider, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The type or length of lease offered, or • Payment of bond for a community housing property.
Offer withdrawn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HFHA offered the property but now needs it for an applicant with more urgent needs, or • HFHA matched the applicant to the property but did not provide the details to the applicant because the applicant’s needs or circumstances had changed, or • HFHA matched the applicant to the property but did not provide the details to the applicant because they did not meet the eligibility criteria, or • The applicant decided not to accept an offer of a senior communities property. HFHA will change its records to show that the applicant should not be offered this type of property again, or • The applicant did not accept the property and HFHA has decided that the applicant’s decision is valid because, based on information provided by the applicant, the property did not meet their needs. Such information may include a letter and other information provided by the applicant explaining their reasons for declining an offer and supplying relevant supporting documentation such as:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A Medical Assessment Form. b) A letter from their doctor or health care provider. c) A letter from their support provider. d) A letter from their employer.
Application suspended	<p>Information from the applicant demonstrating that they are temporarily in a situation where they are unable to accept an offer due to circumstances beyond their control. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, situations where the applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is experiencing illness or hospitalisation. • Is overseas or on holidays. • Cannot terminate a residential tenancy agreement. • Is in prison.

Complaints and Appeals

This is an appealable policy.

If a tenant is not satisfied with a service provided by HFHA or does not agree with a decision it has made, they can ask for a formal review. To do this, the tenant can complete either an 'I Want To Complain' form or an 'I Want To Appeal' form, details of which appear in the HFHA Complaints and Appeals Policy. This policy, and information leaflet, is available from HFHA's office or downloaded from our website www.habitat.org.au.

If a tenant is unhappy with the outcome of an appeal to HFHA, they can lodge a second level appeal with the Housing Appeals Committee. The Housing Appeals Committee is an independent agency that reviews certain decisions made by staff of Community Housing Organisations and Housing NSW. For information on the Housing Appeals Committee call 1800 629 794 or go to www.hac.nsw.gov.au.

Related documents

Documents supporting this policy:

- Eligibility for Social Housing Policy
- Affordable Housing Policy
- Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement
- Management Transfer Policy
- Managing the NSW Housing Register Policy
- Matching and Offering a Property to a Client Policy