

Priority Housing

Policy

Date effective: 21 November 2016

1. Purpose

This policy outlines how applicants waiting for public housing may be categorised as a priority. The Department of Housing and Community Development ('the Department') recognises that some applicants are in more urgent need of public housing than others, and that the process of prioritising these applicants must be fair and transparent.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all public housing applicants.

3. Policy

Eligible public housing applicants who can demonstrate an urgent need for public housing will be placed closer to the top of the wait list.

The Department maintains a general wait list for all eligible public housing applicants including urban, remote communities and town camps. For more information, see the Wait Lists policy.

An urgent need for public housing usually falls under one of the following categories:

- At risk of homelessness
- Serious medical or social problems
- Domestic or family violence

If an applicant is in need of crisis accommodation on a short-term basis, the Department will offer referral to other organisations. This will not prevent the applicant from applying for priority public housing.

3.1. Applying for priority housing

Existing applicants may apply for priority housing at any time. New applicants may also apply for priority housing at the same time as applying for public housing. Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria for public housing, although the Director has some discretion for extreme situations. For more information, see the Eligibility for Public Housing policy and the Discretionary Decision Making policy.

Applicants must prove their need for priority public housing. This will require supporting documentation to enable the Department to make an appropriate assessment and determination. See the Identification and Documentation policy for more information.

Applicants will be interviewed to ensure their application covers all relevant details. Applicants are welcome to bring a friend, relative or advocate from a supporting agency to this interview.

3.2. Assessment of application

Applications will be assessed by the Manager. If the Manager does not approve the application, it proceeds to the Director.

The Director will consider if an applicant is in more urgent need of public housing than other clients on the general wait list and make a determination to approve or not approve the application.

3.3. Approved applications

Applicants who have their application approved will be placed on the waiting list as a priority. The Department will make every effort to allocate housing to priority applicants as soon as possible. For more information, see the Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy.

3.4. Applications not approved

If the application is not approved, and the applicant requests that the decision is reassessed, additional evidence demonstrating the priority needs of the applicant and why the decision should be reviewed will be requested before the application is escalated to the Executive Director for review and decision.

If the decision to not approve the application is supported by the Executive Director, it will be automatically considered a 1st Tier appeal and will be reviewed by the Investigation and Appeals Unit. The Investigation and Appeals Unit will undertake a full review of the matter and will put forward recommendations to the relevant delegate. The applicant will be informed in writing, including details on the ability to further appeal the decision. If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the decision they can lodge a 2nd Tier appeal. The Appeals Board reviews these appeals. Members of the Board are appointed by the Minister for Housing and Community Development and are independent of the Department. See the Appeals policy.

3.5. Allocation

Eligible priority housing applicants will be provided with a formal offer of housing when a suitable dwelling, in any location, that meets their needs becomes available. For more information, see the Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy.

Generally only one offer of housing is made. Should this offer be rejected without good reason, the application will no longer be considered a priority, and the applicant will be placed on the general wait list in order of application date.

3.6. Remote communities and town camp applications

There is no separate priority waitlist maintained for remote communities and town camps. Applications are assessed on a needs basis. See the Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy.

4. Discretionary decision making

Discretion can be applied to this policy using the Discretionary Decision Making policy.

5. Complaints and/or appeals

If a client is not satisfied with either a decision or action of the Department, they can access the Department's 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. This policy will be reviewed within two years of release.

7. References

Legislation

Housing Act

Residential Tenancies Act

Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy

Policies

Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy

Appeals policy

Complaints policy

Discretionary Decision Making policy

Eligibility for Public Housing policy

Identification and Documentation policy

Information Privacy policy

Wait Lists policy

8. Document change control table

Release Date	Version Number	Approved by (position)	Section amended	Category
21/11/2016	2.01	Director Policy	all	Editorial amendments
15/09/2015	2.00	Chief Executive Officer	all	Revised
2/09/2013	1.00	Executive Director, Housing Operational Client Support	all	New separate policy derived from Housing Services Operational Policy Manual, Chapter 5