

Identification and Documentation

Policy

Date effective: 14 December 2016

1. Purpose

The Department of Housing and Community Development ('the Department') needs to verify personal information about clients to confirm their eligibility for public housing or bond assistance, calculate rent and rental rebates and comply with requests under the *Information Act*. This policy outlines the type of information required to confirm a person's identity, prove their income, and detail any medical or social needs.

2. Scope

All applicants to, and clients of, the Department must provide proof of their identity and income and assets. Applicants and clients who require special consideration or priority housing due to medical and social needs must also provide evidence of those needs. See also the Priority Housing policy.

3. Policy

3.1. Identification

Every applicant for public housing or bond assistance, or person requesting access to information under the *Information Act*, must provide evidence of their identity and, where relevant, the identity of their dependent children. In establishing identity, documents must be provided which verify the client's full name and date of birth. Acceptable forms of identity are listed at Appendix 1.

A dependent child means a person less than 18 years of age who lives with their parent or guardian.

The Department has the discretion not to accept documentation that it believes to be of insufficient quality and reliability to meet the Department's requirements.

3.2. Income

The Department requires evidence of income to support claims. Household income must be below the upper limit identified for the number of household residents, to be eligible for public housing or rental rebates (see the Income and Assets policy). Income testing is also applied to applications for Bond Assistance.

To substantiate income, documentation must:

- detail the recipient's full name;
- be no more than a fortnight old at the date they are submitted;
- be on official letterhead, remittance advice or be provided electronically directly from the paying authority (such as Centrelink or the employer); and
- contain full details of all income received (such as gross income, year to date or benefit type as appropriate).

In addition, the Department may require the client's most recent bank statement/s showing at least three months of transactions.

The Department can access evidence of income directly from Centrelink with the written permission of the client or applicant. Written permission to access Centrelink income data must be on the Income Confirmation Scheme Active Consent Authority form.

3.3. Social and medical need

The Department promotes and supports social inclusion for all residents of the Northern Territory. Residents with special needs must provide evidence of their requirements so that the Department may make necessary and appropriate alterations to premises or provide appropriate accessible accommodation.

The Department requires appropriate official documentation to demonstrate the client's or applicant's needs and to establish eligibility for a service, dwelling type or location, or alteration to an existing premises.

The Department prefers that clients provide standard documents from recognised professional agencies or practitioners. However, Managers have the discretion to accept alternate documentation if they believe it is of sufficient quality and reliability to meet the Department's requirements. See the Discretionary Decision Making policy.

3.4. Representatives

Any person acting on behalf of a client must provide documentation that confirms the client has consented to that person acting on their behalf, including that they consent for the Department to release personal information to that representative. The documents must be signed by the client. These are often called 'Authority to Act' documents.

The Department's preference is for clients and representatives to complete the Department's Authorisation to Disclose Personal Information form.

3.5. Lawyers

Any lawyer acting on behalf of a client must provide an Authority to Act document when making any request for information, subject to the exception in the following paragraph.

Lawyers who have travelled to a remote community and have an urgent simple enquiry on behalf of a client may telephone the Department's complaints line (1300 301 167) between 8.00am and 4.00pm weekdays. Lawyers must identify themselves as a registered practising lawyer acting on behalf of a Department tenant. Urgent verbal enquiries by lawyers acting on behalf of clients in remote communities will only be accepted by the complaints line, not by any other communication channel.

Lawyers should direct all other enquiries on behalf of clients, other than Freedom of Information requests, to Housing.AdvocateEnquiries@nt.gov.au. These requests require an Authority to Act document.

4. Complaints and 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 both the Complaints and/or Appeals policies.

5. 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 will be reviewed and amended accordingly. This policy will be reviewed within two years of release.

6. Discretionary decision making

Discretion can be applied to this policy using the Discretionary Decision Making policy. In particular, the Department may exercise discretion when considering whether or not a particular form of identification not specifically mentioned in Appendix 1 is sufficient for the purpose for which it is provided. The Department may also exercise discretion when considering the sufficiency of documentation offered to confirm income, assets or social and medical need.

7. References

Legislation

Housing Act

Information Act

Residential Tenancies Act

Policies

Appeals policy

Bond Assistance policy

Complaints policy

Discretionary Decision Making policy

Eligibility for Public Housing policy

Income and Assets policy

Priority Housing policy

Key related documents

Appendix 1 – Acceptable Forms of Identification

Authorisation to Disclose Personal Information form

Income Confirmation Scheme Active Consent Authority form

Proof of Identification form

8. Document change control table

Release Date	Version Number	Approved by (position)	Section amended	Category
14/12/2016	2.01	Director Policy	all	Editorial amendments
14/12/2015	2.00	Chief Executive Officer	all	Revised
2/09/2016	1.00	Executive Director, Housing Operational Client Support	all	New separate policy derived from Housing Services Operational Policy Manual, Chapter 2

Appendix 1 – Acceptable Forms of Identification

The following standards regarding proof of identity apply in relation to applications for public housing, bond assistance, and access to information lodged under the *Information Act*:

Primary sources

Any one of the following primary sources is an acceptable form of identification:

- Current Australian Passport
- Current Northern Territory Driver's Licence
- Current document of identity issued by the Australian Passport Office
- Current Australian Defence Force ID card
- Current Police Service ID card from an Australian jurisdiction
- Current Northern Territory proof of age card from the Motor Vehicle Registry (MVR)

Secondary sources

If the person does not have a primary source of identification, at least two of the following other forms of identification must be presented. One of the secondary sources must be photographic identification. Acceptable secondary sources of identification are:

- Current overseas passport with current entry stamp
- Naturalisation/citizenship/immigration papers issued by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection
- Current driver's licence (with photograph) from another State or Territory
- A document listed as a primary source of identity which has expired within the last two years
- A Notice of Assessment from the Australian Taxation Office no more than 12 months old
- Centrelink Income Statement
- Current Medicare card
- Current concession or health care card issued by the Australian Government
- Current utility account with evidence of payment
- Current photographic identification from a recognised local Aboriginal authority
- A birth, marriage or divorce certificate issued by an Australian state or territory
- A current Working With Children Check issued by an Australian state or territory
- The Department may use its discretion to accept any other formal document that may go towards establishing a person's identity

Children

Dependent children under the age of 18 may be identified by any primary source, by birth certificate issued by an Australian state or territory, current Medicare card, proof of custody documents, or appropriate Centrelink documentation confirming the identity of any dependent children.

People with insufficient formal identification

If a person does not have two secondary sources of identification, an authorised referee may complete the Department's Proof of Identification form to verify the person's identity. The authorised referee must state that he or she has known the applicant for at least two years and can verify their identity. Authorised referees include but are not limited to:

- a chairperson, secretary or CEO of an incorporated Indigenous organisation (such as land councils, community councils, housing organisations)
- a Remote Jobs and Communities Program provider
- school principal
- school counsellor
- minister of religion
- treating health professional or manager in Aboriginal Medical Services, or
- a public servant with at least five years' service in either the Northern Territory or Australian Government.