



Managing Access and Applications Policy

Access to Public Housing Process

Managing Access and Applications is the overarching Policy to a 4 Step process for Access to Public Housing, as below:

- Step 1:** Applying for Public Housing and the registration process (*Applying for Public Housing Policy and Procedure*);
- Step 2:** Establishing eligibility (*Public Housing Eligibility Policy and Procedure*);
- Step 3:** Assessing housing need, establishing entitlement and identifying category of need (*Housing Assessment System Policy and Procedure*);
- Step 4:** Allocating an appropriate property (*Offer and Decline Policy and Procedure*).

Context

Housing Tasmania provides housing assistance for Tasmanians with low incomes, complex or multiple needs on the basis of need. Housing Tasmania works within a policy framework that recognises the interrelationship between housing and other health and well being factors.

Housing Tasmania funds a range of products and services that meet our clients' needs. These products include low cost public rental housing, assistance to private renters, home ownership assistance, Aboriginal and community housing.

Whilst public housing performs an essential role in addressing housing stress, it has a restricted capacity to meet housing demand and therefore must ensure that property allocation is targeted to applicants assessed with the highest and greatest need. Within this context it is imperative that business efficiencies are aligned with quality and best practise in the management of processes and application of policies.

Appropriate circumstances

The appropriateness of eviction will be assessed in each case, taking into account the circumstances of the breach, the health and well-being status of the tenant household, linkages to support services and the availability of alternative housing.

Social Housing Options

Social housing enables Tasmanians who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or living on a low income, to access affordable, appropriate and secure accommodation.

The social housing options are:

- Public rental housing which is the rental of government owned and managed homes;



- Home Ownership options which facilitate home purchase;
- Financial Assistance;
- Community Housing; and
- Aboriginal Housing;

These options should be discussed with applicants at the time of interview.

Access

All Tasmanians have the right to test their eligibility for social housing regardless of their social or economic circumstances. For more information refer to the Public Housing Eligibility Policy and Procedures.

Clients may access Housing Tasmania information via the telephone; call into a Housing Tasmania office, or by the internet.

Applicants will be provided with Fact Sheets relating to Applying for Public Housing when they request an application form.

Benchmarks

This policy places benchmarks for processing application registration, interview and signing of lease agreements:

- Applications registered within 48 hours of receipt;
- Assessment interviews scheduled within 10 working days of the receipt of the application;
- Applications should not be incomplete for greater than 30 days from date of initial assessment interview.
- Applications should not be suspended for greater than 60 days without review, unless the suspension relates to outstanding charges;
- Applicants signed up within 5 working days of offer acceptance.

Benchmarks are set to ensure Statewide consistency and a timely response by Housing Tasmania to clients.

Housing Tasmania will meet other prescribed statutory requirements eg; Personal Information Protection Act.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Allocations User Guide to the Tasmanian Housing Information System (THIS)* and other related policies (see Managing Access and Applications Tools and Related Policies).

Reporting

Senior managers will monitor benchmarks on a monthly basis. Unmet benchmarks will be discussed with Area Managers.



Legislation

All documents within this policy have been written within the framework of all overarching Legislation

Status of applications

Applications on the Tasmania Housing Information System (THIS) are classed as incomplete, active or suspended depending on the individual circumstances relating to the application.

Some applicants will attempt to submit an application without the required documentation. These will be returned to the client to resubmit with all required documentation.

Incomplete applications are those waiting on an assessment interview. Incomplete applications will not be placed on suspension. The Administration Officer is responsible for registering the application and file management of all incomplete applications.

An application will be made active if eligibility and need (ie. 10 points) has been established. The applicant can provide additional documentation which may later increase their assessed level of housing need, and the application will be reviewed accordingly.

Active applications are those where:

- An assessment interview has been completed;
- The applicant/s have been deemed eligible;
- The category of need and entitlements have been determined;
- The Senior Customer Service Officer has confirmed the assessment; and
- Where the data entry has been completed.

Suspended applications are those applications who have met eligibility criteria but where a time penalty or temporary removal from the active waiting list has been applied due to;

- A former debt as per the *Outstanding Charges Policy*;
- A Change in Circumstances resulting in a re-assessment interview.
- The applicant has a history of anti-social behaviour and/or poor condition of property and the Access and Support Manager has determined that a suspension period is required;
- The applicant has requested temporary removal from the active waiting list e.g. the applicant has a current lease or is hospitalised. In this instance the **maximum suspension will not be greater than 6 months**;



- An applicant who is in medium term transitional housing such as the Direct Tenancy or Community Tenancy can be suspended until the organisation and the applicant are confident they are ready for an independent tenancy. If suspended for this reason, the arrangement will be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis.

Review of Applications

When managing applications a clients circumstances are required to be regularly reviewed to ensure that Housing Tasmania holds accurate information concerning a client's eligibility.

Reviews will include:

- Cyclic (THIS generated);
- Change in Circumstances (client generated);
- Manual (Housing Tasmania generated); or
- Pre Allocation (Housing Tasmania generated).

Breaches of Previous Tenancies

Breaches may relate to condition of property or anti-social behaviour. Access and Support Managers and Area Managers are delegated to decide whether to provide further housing assistance or place conditions on further assistance to applicants, potential tenants or tenants, with a documented history of substantiated previous breaches of a Housing Tasmania Lease. Special conditions imposed upon a tenant will be documented on the applicants' file and the applicant advised in writing.

An attachment to the Lease can be used if special conditions will continue to apply when allocated a property. The applicant is to be fully informed and sign the lease attachment.

Cancellation of Applications

The following situations are grounds for when an applicant can be cancelled:

- The application receives less than 10 points at their initial HAS interview;
- The applicant refuses to sign a debt agreement (where exceptional need has not been cited) or debt dispute is not in process;
- There is no response to two (2) Departmental review letter requests or two (2) letters requesting that the applicant make contact;
- A letter to the last known address is returned by Australia Post marked 'no longer at this address';
- Where the applicant has made no effort to repay an outstanding debt; or has defaulted on a debt agreement arrangement and despite contact, has not resumed payments;



- The applicant does not attend the initial interview and fails to attend second interview without contact.
- The applicant leaves Tasmania for longer than 3 months;
- Following a review or reassessment the applicant no longer requires public rental accommodation or becomes ineligible;
- The applicant does not respond to an 'offer' and a further two (2) letters do not result in contact;
- The applicant has requested their application be cancelled. Cancellation requests can only be accepted from the applicant (both co-applicants) and must be in writing, with checks undertaken to ensure that the signature on the written notification is that of the signatory to the application;
- If the applicant is deceased, the next of kin noted on the Tenant Profile Sheet, or nominated trustee can provide a written request to cancel the application; and/or,
- Applications should be cancelled if, following the assessment the information requested to make the application active is not received within 30 days.

An application which has been cancelled may be revived within a 6 month period providing approval has been given by the Access and Support Manager.

Responsibilities

Administration Officers and Access and Support staff are responsible for the registration and data entry processes and file management of applications including storage, archiving and disposal.

Housing Access Officers are responsible for the Level 1 assessment of the applicant's current circumstances and the allocation of points and entitlements.

Access and Support Planning Officers are responsible for the confirmation of points allocation, category of need and bedroom entitlements to ensure the assessment is correct, fair and equitable together with Level 2 Expanded Assessment and Coordination Planning.

For further information relating to this policy please email the helpdesk housing.policyhelpdesk@dhhs.tas.gov.au