



## Mutual Exchange

### Policy Intent

Mutual exchanges represent an alternative for tenants who wish to relocate but who are ineligible for a single transfer. By establishing and maintaining such an alternative, Housing Tasmania recognises the changing needs of tenants and their capacity to make choices within public housing.

### What is a Mutual Exchange?

A Mutual Exchange occurs when two tenant households "swap" their public rental accommodation. As Mutual Exchange can take place without having to establish need or test eligibility it affords tenants increased mobility within Public Housing.

Mutual Exchange properties are accepted for exchange on an 'as is' basis, with any items of damage, neglect, or abuse being repaired or corrected at the expense of the outgoing tenants, prior to a transfer being effected. If a tenant vacates, they may be required to make good any damage or modifications that may have been present when they transferred into the property. General Maintenance on properties involved in a Mutual Exchange (including repainting or redecorating) is not given special priority and Vacation Maintenance is not undertaken. This ensures that properties are not subject to maintenance over and above that which is included in the cyclic maintenance program. Applications are assessed against standard housing entitlements under HAS and only exchanges between appropriate properties will be considered.

### Eligibility

Single Transfer applicants are expected to demonstrate continued eligibility for public housing and a significant change in housing need. Mutual Exchange applicants are not required to demonstrate continued eligibility for public housing or to demonstrate a change in housing need. There are, however, some basic criteria which determine an applicant's suitability for mutual exchange. These are:

#### Legal Tenancy

Applicants for Mutual Exchange must be legal tenants i.e., they must be signatory(ies) to a tenancy agreement with Housing Tasmania for the property they currently occupy.

#### Rent Account Status

Applicants for Mutual Exchange must have a satisfactory rent payment history and should not have any amounts owing to Housing Tasmania.



## Tenancy History

Applicants for Mutual Exchange must have a satisfactory tenancy history over the two years prior to their exchange application. A tenant will be considered to have an unsatisfactory tenancy history where there are repeated, substantiated episodes of anti-social behaviour or repeated, documented breaches of the tenancy agreement. These may include:

- abatement notices;
- false or misleading information on review or Household Income statements;
- rent arrears;
- failure to maintain the property;
- malicious behaviour; and / or
- The prior issuing of a Notice to Vacate.

When assessing the applicant's tenancy history, claims of anti-social behaviour must be substantiated and documented on file, as should other breaches of the tenancy agreement. To avoid continually penalising tenants for indiscretions a study of the last two years of a tenancy should be adequate to determine tenancy history.

A tenant is deemed ineligible for a mutual exchange where either legal action concerning their tenancy has commenced, or they have been listed for action, or the tenant has a substantial record of anti-social behaviour.

## Housing Entitlement

Where possible, Housing Tasmania officers should ensure that tenants transfer to a property appropriate to household needs. This can be done by measuring the extent to which the tenant's current housing arrangements compare with standard housing entitlements for new applicants.

Where the property sought is equal to or one level higher than the household's standard entitlement (according to the housing entitlement table) the property may be considered appropriate and the application should proceed. However, where the property is two levels or more from the standard housing entitlement e.g., a single person wishing to transfer to a 4 bedroom property, the Area Manager must consider whether the household composition warrants transfer to such a property. Decisions should reflect sound stock management principles.

If necessary, Tenancy Officers may counsel the applicant on their location or amenity choice, particularly where the officer believes that the tenant may seek to apply for an ongoing series of transfers.

If an applicant for Mutual Exchange fails to meet any of the above criteria, they can be deemed unsuitable for exchange. Reasons for doing so should be clearly explained to the tenant and confirmed in writing.

Where an applicant is moving from a property with security provisions installed on that tenants behalf, further security provisions will not normally be provided.



## **Review**

As mutual exchange applicants are not required to satisfy income and asset eligibility criteria, it is not necessary to undertake a periodic review of their circumstances. However, at the same time the tenant's Expression of Interest for Mutual Exchange is formally accepted, the tenant will be reminded of their continued responsibility to contact Housing Tasmania should their circumstances change. They will also be advised that their application will be reviewed prior to signing new agreements to ensure that their rental accounts and tenancy conditions have been maintained.

## **Subsequent Mutual Exchange Applications**

There is no limit on the number of applications for exchange a tenant can make. The applicant will be subject to the same assessment procedures as if each application were their first.

For further information relating to this policy please email the helpdesk [housing.policyhelpdesk@dhhs.tas.gov.au](mailto:housing.policyhelpdesk@dhhs.tas.gov.au)