Hunter Community Housing - Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This policy outlines the allocation process for social housing properties managed by Hunter Community Housing.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This policy applies to applicants eligible for social housing assistance in New South Wales (NSW).

(3) A client's eligibility for social housing is determined by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) or a Community Housing Provider (CHP) participating in Housing Pathways.

(4) If a client meets the general eligibility criteria, their details will be placed onto the NSW Social Housing Waiting List.

(5) Hunter Community Housing will obtain referrals from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice or a Community Housing Provider (CHP)participating in Housing Pathways to make offers of social housing to eligible applicants from the NSW Social Housing Waiting List.

Section 3 - Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Hunter Community Housing Board	The governing body of Hunter Community Housing responsible for the approval of this policy.
General Operations Manager	Responsible for the implementation and communication of this policy.
Workers	Ensure they have read, understood and comply with the policy.
Hunter Community Housing clients	To follow this policy and provide any relevant information to Hunter Community Housing.
The Diocese Governance Department	Managing the review process and publication of this policy.

Section 4 - Policy Principles

Eligibility

(6) To be eligible for social housing, clients must:

a. be a permanent citizen or resident of NSW;
b. establish their identity;
c. generally be at least 18 years of age;

d. be able to sustain a successful tenancy; with or without support;
e. have a household income within the eligibility limits;
f. not own any property or assets which could reasonably be expected to resolve their housing need; and
g. make repayments on any former social housing debts, if applicable.

(7) A client may be ineligible to be placed on the NSW Social Housing Waiting List if they have a history of having committed registerable offences and it is likely that the presence of the client in social housing will:

a. cause antisocial behaviour, or
b. prevent risk of harm to the client or to other social housing occupants or neighbours.

(8) Eligibility will be determined by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice or a Community Housing Provider participating in Housing Pathways in accordance with the Eligibility for Social Housing Policy | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au) and the Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au).

Applications

(9) A client can apply for housing assistance:

a. online
b. by contacting NSW Department of Communities and Justice on 1800 422 322 or by contacting a CHP participating in Housing Pathways
c. by accessing their local NSW Department of Communities and Justice or a Community Housing Provider office

(10) For information on what assistance clients can access through Housing Pathways refer to the Housing Assistance Options Policy | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au).

(11) A client will need to provide evidence to demonstrate that the household meets eligibility criteria for housing assistance.

(12) Evidence must be provided for the client and for each person on the application aged 18 years or over. If a client and their partner is under 18 years of age this information must also be provided.

(13) A client must provide evidence of:

a. Identity;
b. citizenship or permanent residency of Australia;
c. NSW residency or of a need to live in NSW;
d. all sources of income and assets;
e. their ability to sustain a successful tenancy; with or without supports;
f. any land or property that anyone on the application owns or part owns;
g. an ongoing medical condition or disability that impacts the type of housing required for anyone on the application; and
h. repayments of former debt to a social housing provider, if applicable

(14) Applications will be assessed by NSW Department of Communities and Justice or a Community Housing Provider participating in Housing Pathways in accordance with the Eligibility for Social Housing Policy | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au) and the Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au).

Allocations

(15) General social housing will be allocated to eligible clients from the NSW Social Housing Waiting List by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice or a Community Housing Provider participating in Housing Pathways.

(16) Allocations will be made in accordance with the NSW Department of Communities and Justice Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au), the Managing the NSW Housing Register Policy | Family & Community Services, Matching and Offering a Property to a Client Policy | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au) and the relevant Community Housing Provider policies; if applicable.

(17) The social housing sector aims to promote a successful and sustainable tenancy when matching a client to a property. This means a client is matched to a property that:

a. is an appropriate size for the household;
b. meets any identified special needs of the client;
c. assists the client to access support services they need;
d. makes the best use of available housing stock in a timeframe that balances the client's need for stable housing with the costs to the housing provider providing assistance. This includes ensuring that properties with specific features that are in high demand and short supply are only offered to clients who need them. This includes properties with specific features that:
    i. are suitable for older people;
    ii. have been built or modified to meet the needs of people with a disability;
    iii. are on the ground floor or with level access; or
    iv. properties with yards.

(18) Generally client's will be housed in the following order. Clients who are:

a. approved for emergency temporary accommodation;
b. approved for urgent housing and clients approved for priority transfers or relocations on the grounds of under-occupancy;
c. elderly; aged 80 and over or 55 and over if Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
d. approved for a transfer on a priority basis or clients being relocated for management purposes;
e. approved for wait-turn housing and wait turn transfer.

(19) The time that a client will wait on the NSW Social Housing Waiting List depends on:

a. the number of social housing properties in the area;
b. the number of vacancies;
c. the number of people waiting for the same type of housing in the same area who have been waiting longer;
d. their willingness to accept offers of both public and community housing;
e. the number of people who have demonstrated a high need to be housed; and
f. the number of applicants leaving the NSW Social Housing Waiting List.

(20) Further information on the NSW Social Housing Waiting List data and the expected waiting times can be found on the NSW Department of Communities and Justice website.

Bedroom Entitlements

(21) A property will be allocated to a client based on the standard bedroom entitlements as specified in Table 1: Standard number of bedroom entitlements.

Table 1: Standard number of bedroom entitlements

Household Composition	Standard Bedroom Entitlement
Single person	Studio or Bedsitter, one or two bedrooms
Couple	One or two bedrooms
Single person or couple with one other household member	Two or three bedrooms
Single person or couple with two other household members	Two or three bedrooms
Single person or couple with three other household members	Three or four bedrooms
Single person or couple with four other household members	Three or four bedrooms
Single person or couple with five or more other household members	Four bedroom or if available, five or more bedrooms

(22) A property with children will be allocated to a client based on the criteria as specified in Table 2: Criteria for accommodating children.

Table 2: Criteria for accommodating children

Situation	Consideration
Child is over 18 years of age	The child is considered an adult when determining 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	An additional bedroom will be allocated where the client demonstrates the need for same sex children or children under 10 years of age to have separate bedrooms.
Shared custody	The child/children are considered part of the household if the client has shared custody of the child/children for 3 days per week or more standard bedroom entitlements apply.
Access visits from children	Child/children must reside in the household for 3 days per week or more.
Future needs of children who may require separate bedrooms in two- or three-year's time	Consideration will be given when property is allocated however will be dependent on the size and type of housing that is available in the area.

Offers of housing

(23) Most applicants will be offered a maximum of two reasonable offers of housing.

(24) If there is evidence of false or misleading information provided by the applicant, the offer of housing may be withdrawn.

(25) A reasonable offer is one that matches:

a. the number of bedrooms required for the household, as determined in Bedroom Entitlements.
b. the approved allocation zone.
c. any special needs or medical/disability requirements demonstrated in the application.

(26) An offer is not considered unreasonable if an applicant does not like the

a. suburb;
b. neighbours;

c. look of the property; or
d. property because of personal preferences.

(27) An applicant should think carefully about rejecting an offer. If the offer is deemed to be reasonable by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice or Hunter Community Housing, the offer will count towards the number of offers the applicant is entitled to receive.

Criteria for accepting, rejecting and withdrawing housing offers and suspending applications

(28) Table 3: Criteria for accepting, rejecting, and withdrawing housing offers and suspending applications; outlines the process for when an offer has been accepted, rejected, or withdrawn and/or when an application has been suspended.

Table 3: Criteria for accepting, rejecting, and withdrawing housing offers and suspending applications

Outcome	Situation
Offer accepted	The applicant has accepted the offer and must sign a residential tenancy agreement within the required timeframe.
Offer has been rejected due to the client not responding to contact	The applicant has failed to respond to contact and has not provided a response to an offer of social housing within the required timeframe.
Offer has been rejected and offer is considered to be an unreasonable offer	The client did not accept an offer that matches their housing needs and it is determined that the client's reasons for rejecting this offer is: ♦ a reasonable refusal as the property did not meet their housing needs; and ♦ the client has provided acceptable supporting evidence to substantiate their reason/s for rejecting the offer.
Offer has been rejected and offer considered to be a reasonable offer	The offer of housing meets the applicant's needs and the applicant: ♦ Did not accept an offer that matches their housing needs within the required timeframe. ♦ Failed to respond to contact to confirm eligibility prior to making an offer. ♦ Did not provide any new, substantiated information about their needs within the required timeframe.
Offer withdrawn (Not counted as a reasonable offer)	The offer of housing was rejected by the applicant and determined that the applicant's reason for rejection was reasonable as the property did not meet their housing needs. Where the property has been matched (but not offered) to an applicant however the property is now required for an applicant with more urgent needs, The details of the offer were not provided to the applicant as the applicant's needs or circumstances have changed.
Application suspended (Not counted as a reasonable offer)	The applicant has demonstrated that they are temporarily in a situation where they are unable to accept an offer due to circumstances beyond their control.

(29) Further information is available in the Matching and offering a property to a client - Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au).

Registrable persons

(30) Housing assistance is provided to registrable persons in accordance with the Social Housing Assistance Policy for Registrable Persons | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au).

Modified properties

(31) Modified properties will only be allocated to people with an identified need. These are usually applicants who are elderly, have a disability or care for someone who is elderly or has a disability.

(32) The applicant must provide supporting documentation from a medical professional or allied health care worker which substantiates their need for a property with modifications.

Section 5 - Appeals and Internal Review

(33) If a tenant disagrees with a decision Hunter Community Housing has made they should speak to Hunter Community Housing.

(34) If they are still dissatisfied, they can request an internal review in accordance with the Hunter Community Housing Appeals Policy.

Section 6 - Consequences of Breaching this Policy

(35) Any worker found to be in breach of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including where a serious breach occurs, dismissal.

Section 7 - Notations

(36) If there is any inconsistency between a policy document in existence before the commencement of this policy, and a policy document developed after the commencement of this policy, the latter applies to the extent of the inconsistency.

Section 8 - Document Review

(37) This policy will be reviewed when there is a legislative change, organisational change, delegations change, technology change or at least every 3 years to ensure it continues to be current and effective.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	18th October 2024
Review Date	18th October 2027
Approval Authority	Head of Governance
Approval Date	15th September 2024
Expiry Date	To Be Advised
Unit Head	Ray Bowen Director Property and Housing
Enquiries Contact	Hunter Community Housing