

ELIGIBILITY POLICY

February 2025, Version: FINAL

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1 Purpose and Objective

This policy outlines Housing Plus's approach to assessing eligibility for social housing with Housing Plus.

2 Scope

- a. This policy applies to all Housing Plus' and its subsidiaries' employees, management and other stakeholders including volunteers
- b. This policy also applies to applicants seeking social housing assistance with Housing Plus
- c. This policy describes the organisation's objectives and policies regarding eligibility for general social housing, transitional housing, and supported housing programs owned or managed by Housing Plus
- d. Eligibility for affordable housing is set out in the *Affordable Housing Policy*.

3 References

3.1 Legislation

- Housing Act 2001
- Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992

3.2 Policies

- NSW Community Housing Access Policy
- Homes NSW Matching and Offering a Property to a Client Policy
- Homes NSW Antisocial Behaviour Management Policy
- Housing Plus Customer Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy
- Housing Plus Allocations Policy
- Housing Plus Modification of Properties Policy
- Housing Plus Affordable Housing Policy
- Housing Plus Former Tenancy Policy
- Housing Plus Ending a Tenancy Policy

4 Definitions

Term: Company

Definition: Housing Plus, ABN 83 147 459 461, and all of its related and associated entities

Term: Employee

Definition: An individual who is directly engaged and paid by the Company as an Employee

Term: Manager

Definition: An Employee who has direct reports (includes Executive, Senior Management and Team Leaders). In situations involving volunteers, 'Manager' refers to the Volunteer Supervisor

Term: Executive

Definition: A member of the Executive team

Term: Volunteer or Other Stakeholders

Definition: Collectively refers to any individual(s) who is not an Employee but who carries out work (whether paid or unpaid) for the Company, including (but not limited to) work as a volunteer, contractor, secondee, consultant or subcontractor, labour hire company, an apprentice or trainee, and a student gaining work experience.

Term: Work Environment

Definition: Includes but is not limited to:

- During and outside normal working hours.
- All functions, events and places which are work related (e.g. Including working from home under the flexible work policy, work lunches, conferences, Christmas parties and client functions).
- During the recruitment process, any environment which has sufficient connection to employment; decisions about promotions and other career opportunities, or in the termination of employment.
- In the course of providing goods and services.

Term: Applicant

Definition: A person seeking social housing assistance. This may be a new tenant or a person seeking transfer of their tenancy.

Term: Affordable housing

Definition: Housing available to very low to moderate income households which is priced so that these households are also able to meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transport, energy, medical care and education.

Term: Social housing

Definition: Properties made available to customers on low to moderate incomes and managed by Community Housing Providers or Department of Communities and Justice. Rent subsidies are available to customers to reduce their weekly rent payments.

Term: Supported housing

Definition: Properties that are made available to customers who have a support plan in place with a service provider to assist them maintain the tenancy.

Term: Tenancy agreement

Definition: The *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* (NSW) ("RTA 2010") defines a residential tenancy agreement as 'an agreement under which a person grants to another person for value a right of occupation of residential premises for the purpose of use as a residence' (section 13(1)).

Term: Housing Pathways

Definition: The process established by the NSW Government to manage allocation of social housing.

Term: NSW Housing Register

Definition: The name of the NSW waiting list for social housing, which is part of Housing Pathways.

5 Responsibilities

5.1 Executive

- a. Ensure adequate resources are provided to implement and support this policy.
- b. Manage the implementation of and adherence to this policy.
- c. Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

5.2 Management

- a. Ensure that all Employees and Other Stakeholders are aware this policy and understand their obligations.
- b. Ensure effective implementation of and adherence to this policy.
- c. Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

5.3 Employees, Volunteers and other Stakeholders

- a. Understand and comply with this policy.
- b. Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

6 Policy

In NSW, applications for social housing are assessed and managed through Housing Pathways. Housing Pathways is a partnership between Homes NSW and participating community housing providers (CHPs), including Housing Plus.

Housing Plus assesses eligibility and priority assistance for people seeking social housing assistance through Housing Pathways. When an assessment is complete, Housing Plus notifies the applicant in writing of the outcome of the assessment. When a person is eligible for social housing or a transfer, Housing Plus will add their details to the NSW Housing Register. Homes NSW and participating CHPs use this register to offer social housing properties when a suitable property is available.

The eligibility requirements for social housing in NSW can be found in the Homes NSW Eligibility for Social Housing Policy here: www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/eligibility-social-housing-policy

Applications for social housing can be made online here: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/forms/housing/application> or over the phone on 1800 422 322.

6.1 Eligibility for social housing

To be eligible for social housing, applicants must demonstrate the following:

- Proof of Australian citizenship or permanent residency for every person on their application who is aged 18 years and over
- NSW residency
- Evidence of their identity
- Household income within the eligibility limits
- They do not own any assets or property that could reasonably be expected to resolve their housing need
- Ability to sustain a successful tenancy, without support or with appropriate support in place
- Repayments of any former debts to a social housing provider (if applicable and subject to the Former Tenancy Policy of the provider)
- In general, be 18 years of age.

To determine whether a household meets the income requirements, Housing Plus will assess income eligibility based on the household size, type, and gross household income. Housing Plus will then apply income eligibility limits and assessment rules. Further information on income limits can be found here: www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/social-housing-eligibility-allocations-policy-supplement

When an applicant is eligible for social housing or transfer, their name will be added to the NSW Housing Register. DCJ and participating CHPs use this register to offer social housing properties when a suitable property is available.

6.1.1 Eligibility of Applicants with a former Housing Plus tenancy

When a tenant vacates a Housing Plus property, a classification is applied to the tenancy following an assessment of the overall tenancy, property care, any issues that may have occurred during occupancy or at the end of the tenancy and any debt remaining as outlined in the Housing Plus Former Tenancy policy. Categories and eligibility are outlined in Table 1 below

Table 1: Eligibility Of Former Tenants

Category	Meaning
Satisfactory	There are no conditions related to this category.
Less than satisfactory	<p>If a former tenant owes more than \$800, any future application for social housing will be suspended, unless one of the below criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Debt paid in full, or - Payments of a minimum of \$50 per fortnight are paid against the outstanding debt for a six (6) month period. <p>Former tenants will not be offered social housing unless they meet the above criteria.</p>
Unsatisfactory*	A former tenant will not be considered eligible for social housing until they have shown that they can sustain a tenancy without breaching the Residential Tenancies Agreement for at least six months outside of the Housing Pathways system, by providing a reference from a landlord or service provider. This could include renting in a boarding house, transitional housing or a private tenancy.
Ineligible	An ineligible former tenant will not be eligible for social housing assistance.

To be approved, former tenants must meet the current eligibility criteria for Housing Pathways and be placed on the NSW Housing Register. Former tenants with debts will need to pay the debt in full or commit to an agreed repayment plan in line with the above eligibility requirements, prior to receiving an offer from Housing Plus.

*Housing Plus may offer 'unsatisfactory' former tenants a six-month probationary fixed term lease agreement. After the completion of a **six (6) month** fixed term, Housing Plus will sign another six-month fixed term lease. If the tenant has successfully maintained their tenancy for 12 months, they will be offered a continuous agreement.

Where a former Housing Plus tenant has been deemed ineligible and is seeking the decision to be reviewed, Housing Plus will review an appeal with a panel of employees guided by the CEO. Please refer to the Housing Plus Customer Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy for more information.

6.1.2 Eligibility for transitional or supported housing

Support partners are responsible for nominating potential tenants for properties managed under transitional and supported housing programs. The relevant program guidelines or agreement guides the nomination criteria and responsibilities of all parties. Generally, transitional or supported housing tenants meet eligibility requirements for Housing Pathways and have an active application on the NSW Housing Register. Additional eligibility criteria may apply for specific housing programs, for example, people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and who require immediate housing and support.

7 Appeals and Reviews of Decisions

Decisions made under this policy can be reviewed or appealed. For more information, refer to the *Customer Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy*.

8 Document Control

8.1 Document History

Action	Responsible Person	Date
Created draft	Shay Robertson Jenelle Woolf Sarah Priestley	April 2021
Reviewed by	Justin Cantelo Liz Stamatelos	July 2021
Approved by	David Fisher	July 2021
Reviewed by	Lena Jenson Chris Maybin Tracy Hurst Therese Short Liz Stamatelos	April 2024 February 2025
Approved by	Justin Cantelo	February 2025