

Allocations and Offers Policy

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1 Purpose and Applicability

This policy describes how the Women's Housing Company (WHC) manages the allocation of social housing properties and makes offers of Social Housing, in accordance with [Housing Pathways policies](#), to ensure legal and contractual requirements are met and the organisation maintains financial sustainability.

The policy applies to all Social Housing properties managed by the WHC. The policy applies to all WHC staff, Social Housing applicants and WHC Social Housing tenants wanting to transfer to a different property.

For allocations and offers information relevant to Transitional Housing, Transitional Housing Plus – DV, and Affordable Housing, refer to the [Transitional Housing Policy](#), the [Transitional Housing Plus – DV Policy](#) and the [Affordable Housing Policy](#).

The [Customer Service Charter](#) and [Customer Rights and Responsibilities](#) guide the interactions between the WHC, applicants and tenants.

2 References

2.1 External or Statutory Requirements

This policy complies with the following external legislation or requirements:

- Housing Act 2001
- Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Act 2012
- Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement
- Housing Pathways Policies
- NSW Community Housing Access Policy
- NSW Community Housing Eligibility Policy

2.2 Internal Requirements and Forms

This policy refers to the following internal documents, which are available on the WHC website:

- *Rental Subsidy Application*
- *Centrepay Deduction Authority*
- *Centrelink Multiple Consent and Authority*

2.3 Definitions

Housing Pathways is the way applications for housing assistance are managed in NSW. It is a partnership between the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), including the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) and the Housing Contact Centre (HCC), and participating Community Housing Providers (CHPs). Housing Pathways provides a single application process with common eligibility and prioritisation guidelines and a standardised assessment process, regardless of which housing provider is approached by an applicant, using a 'no wrong door' protocol.

NSW Housing Register is the single waiting list for housing assistance across NSW, where eligible applications are registered and from which FACS Housing, the AHO and participating CHPs make offers of housing.

Social Housing is subsidised rental accommodation provided by not-for-profit, non-government or government organisations to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation in the private housing market. Social housing includes public housing and community housing as well as other housing assistance services and products.

The following terms are used in this document, with specific meaning:

- “may” is an acceptable action or requirement but not mandatory
- “must” or “shall” or “will” designates a mandatory requirement or action

3 Allocation Strategy

The WHC manages the allocation of tenancies for the social housing properties leased and owned by the WHC. FACS Housing Pathways policies guide the allocation of housing assistance.

As the mission of the WHC is to provide housing assistance and support to women, single women are prioritised when allocating a vacant studio or one bedroom property. For properties with two or more bedrooms, women who require a live-in carer to remain living independently in the community and women with children are prioritised, depending on property classification, configuration, and amenity.

When a vacant property becomes available, the WHC will make allocations to address the following priorities:

1. Management-initiated transfers of existing WHC tenants
2. Housing and Support Partnerships
3. Housing Pathways applicants:
 - a) Priority approved tenant-initiated transfer applicants
 - b) Priority approved applicants
 - c) General tenant-initiated transfer applicants
 - d) General wait-turn applicants

3.1 Management-initiated Transfers

Management-initiated transfers are undertaken where the WHC is required to relocate a tenant to another property for management purposes. These allocations are managed separately from the Housing Pathways policies and do not reference the NSW Housing Register. Refer to the ***During A Tenancy Policy***.

3.2 Housing and Support Partnerships

The WHC supports the principles of Housing First and works in partnership under formal agreements with the NSW Government and support providing organisations to provide long-term housing for vulnerable women (e.g. rough sleepers, mental health issues, escaping domestic and family violence, etc.).

The support provider assesses a client’s suitability for a Housing First solution and enters into a formal support plan with the client. Nominated applicants must be eligible for social housing and ideally be priority approved on the NSW Housing Register but not necessarily at the top of the list when housing is offered.

All tenants must have a formal support plan in place and must be actively engaged in support, unless mutually agreed between the tenant, the WHC and the support provider.

3.3 Housing Pathways Applicants

To enable all social housing providers to respond appropriately to the changing needs of existing tenants, and to maximise the utilisation of the properties they manage, applicants who are priority approved for a transfer are assisted before others on the NSW Housing Register.

Priority approved applicants are assisted next, recognising their priority needs for more urgent housing assistance.

Existing tenants of any social housing provider who have applied for a transfer, but without priority approval, and general applicants who are not assessed as priority, are offered assistance in turn, based on the length of time since their application was lodged, their specific housing needs and their selected allocation zone.

4 Matching Applicants to Properties

The WHC will consider the needs of eligible applicant households subject to availability of suitable properties. When allocating a property or group of properties, the WHC also considers the need to support the peace and quiet enjoyment of existing tenants and communities, as well as particular features or restrictions of a property.

Due to the limited availability of vacant properties, applicants must demonstrate a need for a specific location, or a property with specific attributes. Special accommodation requirements may be due to medical, social, cultural, household complement, family or other support, or other factors.

4.1 Local Allocation Strategies

A Local Allocation Strategy may be established for particular properties to ensure future allocations meet specific criteria. Some examples of additional considerations include property and building configuration, vulnerabilities of existing tenants, and restrictions imposed by private landlords. For this reason, not all allocations are made in accordance with the categories listed above.

One example of a Local Allocation Strategy is for seniors communities, which are groups of properties within a complex that are specifically for older people. To be matched to a property in a WHC seniors community, applicants must be aged 55 years or over, or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants must be 45 years or over.

Applicants will only be matched to a property covered by a Local Allocation Strategy where the applicant's household profile meets all of the criteria specified for that property.

4.2 Location of property

The WHC manages social housing properties across the majority of metropolitan Sydney. A vacant property is matched with applicants who have selected the allocation zone where the property is located.

Applicants must demonstrate a specific locational need for high demand areas such as the eastern suburbs and inner city, or if requesting specific suburbs within an allocation zone, and provide documentation substantiating that need cannot be met by residing elsewhere.

4.3 Type of property

The majority of properties managed by the WHC are one and two bedroom units within low rise buildings. Some units may be in high rise buildings, some units may be studios (where the sleeping and living areas are combined). The portfolio includes a limited number of villas, townhouses and cottages, and some dwellings are modified for disability access.

Applicants must demonstrate a specific need for a property with disability modifications, ground floor or level access, limited number of steps, or evidence that a studio or high rise unit is unsuitable.

4.4 Bedroom categories

The WHC standard allocation is for a single person to be matched with a studio or a one bedroom property. A couple will be matched with a one bedroom property. Where the applicant's household contains other people, a larger property will be allocated.

Where possible, the WHC seeks to maximise the use of larger properties by allocating to households that require additional bedrooms. This includes women who require a live-in carer, women with medical or disability requirements, women with children, women engaged with FACs to gain custody of children, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

For the definition of a live-in carer and the associated bedroom entitlement, refer to the ***Live-In Carer Policy***.

If an applicant has a requirement for an additional bedroom due to a medical condition or disability, documentation from a general medical practitioner or medical specialist must be provided to support this need. This includes the need for an extra bedroom for a family member, carer or support worker to stay when providing regular short term periods of support (e.g. minimum of two nights per week or equivalent weeks over multiple times for the duration of the tenancy). Evidence is also required that the family member or temporary carer resides in another permanent tenancy.

The age, gender and number of children within a household will determine the bedroom entitlement at allocation. A person aged 18 years or more is considered an adult for this purpose. Children of the same gender up to the age of 18 years are expected to share a bedroom. Children of different gender are expected to share a bedroom until one child reaches 10 years of age. Where there is a large age gap between the children or behavioural factors, the WHC will consider requests for additional bedrooms.

Children are considered to be part of the household if there is a shared custody arrangement for a regular stay of three days and three nights per week or more. Children may stay for access visits but are not considered part of the household if they visit for less than three days and three nights per week.

In recognition of the family responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, where there is a request for an extra bedroom, the WHC will match ATSI applicants to a property that has one more bedroom than the minimum bedroom entitlement for the household.

5 Managing Offers

Social housing applicants are entitled to two reasonable offers of alternative accommodation. The WHC complies with this Housing Pathways policy for all social housing allocations, with the exception of management-initiated transfers of existing WHC tenants, in which case only one reasonable offer is made. Refer to the ***During A Tenancy Policy***.

When an applicant is matched to a property, the WHC attempts to contact the applicant to conduct an assessment, in order to confirm the applicant's eligibility for social housing, check the household complement and review the property requirements. Where eligibility is confirmed and the property and applicant's requirements match, the offer is formalised and the applicant is invited to view the property.

5.1 Extension of Offer Timeframes

Due to the limited number of vacancies and the number of eligible applicants on the NSW Housing Register, applicants are required to respond to contact, inspect offered properties, communicate their acceptance or rejection of offers and sign a tenancy agreement within tight timeframes, as detailed in Housing Pathways policies.

Where these timeframes cannot be met by applicants, unless evidence of special circumstances is provided, the housing application may be by-passed or suspended.

Timeframes may be extended for applicants who are unable to inspect an offered property within two business days of receiving the offer due to reasons such as:

- Applicant is suffering from an illness; or
- Applicant has a disability or medical condition that requires support to view the property; or
- Applicant has to travel a long distance to view the property; or
- There is a formal support arrangement (i.e. for people with impaired decision making) that requires a third party to approve the suitability of a property.

Timeframes may be extended for applicants who are not able to sign a tenancy agreement within one week of accepting an offer due to reasons such as:

- Applicant has serious health issues or a disability; or
- Applicant is experiencing a family crisis or emergency; or
- Applicant has a current rental lease in the private market.

5.2 Offer Accepted

An offer of social housing is considered to be accepted when an applicant inspects the property, agrees to the relevant terms and conditions and signs a tenancy agreement.

5.3 Offer Withdrawn

After matching an applicant to a property, the WHC may withdraw an offer under the following circumstances:

- The property is required for an applicant with more urgent needs; or
- Offer details were not provided to the applicant as they do not meet the eligibility criteria; or
- Offer details were not provided to the applicant as their needs or circumstances have changed; or
- Applicant did not accept the offer and the WHC determined the applicant's decision was valid, based on information provided by the applicant and supporting evidence that the property did not meet their needs, such as:
 - Medical Assessment Form
 - Letter from their doctor or health care provider
 - Letter from their support provider
 - Letter from their employer.

5.4 Offer Rejected

Where the WHC has attempted to contact an applicant to confirm eligibility prior to making an offer, and the applicant has failed to respond to contact, the offer is recorded as a rejection by the applicant.

Where the offer of housing matches the applicant's requirements as listed on the NSW Housing Register, and the applicant did not provide any new, substantiated information about their needs within the required timeframe, and there are no grounds for suspending the applicant's Housing Assistance Application, this is also considered to be a rejection of an offer.

An offer is also considered to be rejected where the offer of housing matches the applicant's requirements and the applicant has declined the offer due to not liking, or being unwilling to accept, the specific requirements of the WHC, such as the type and length of lease offered, or the requirement to pay a bond.

An offer is also considered to be rejected where the offer of housing matches the applicant's requirements, and the applicant has declined the offer for personal preference reasons that do not directly impact on the applicant's housing needs, including (but not limited to):

- Wanting gas instead of electricity
- Wanting a bath instead of a shower
- Wanting a property made of brick
- Wanting a different type of property (house, townhouse, villa or unit)
- Wanting to live on a specific floor or level in a block of units
- Wanting a seniors community property only
- Not liking the cladding, internal or external layout, design, or colour scheme of the property
- Not liking the neighbourhood
- Wanting a different street
- Wanting a different suburb (where specific locational need has not been established)
- Wanting to live near shops, family, medical (where specific locational need has not been established)
- Wanting the WHC to match them to a property due to the needs of their pet.

5.5 Housing Application Suspended

The WHC may suspend an applicant's Housing Application on the NSW Housing Register upon receipt of information from the applicant that demonstrates they are temporarily unable to accept an offer of housing, due to circumstances beyond their control. These circumstances may include, but are not limited to, situations where the applicant:

- Is experiencing serious illness or hospitalisation
- Is overseas or away on holidays
- Is in prison
- Cannot terminate a residential tenancy agreement without significant negative consequences.

6 Complaints and Appeals

Any person who has a complaint about how the Allocations and Offers Policy has been administered, or applicants and tenants who wish to appeal a decision, should refer to the ***Complaints and Appeals Policy***.