

## POLICY

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING ELIGIBILITY AND ALLOCATIONS

### RECORD DETAILS

<b>Policy</b>	Affordability Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy
<b>Date authorised by Executive</b>	May 2019
<b>Review responsibility</b>	Chief Operations Officer
<b>Date last reviewed</b>	September 2021
<b>Next review date</b>	September 2022
<b>Version</b>	Version 2 – August 2021

### PURPOSE

This policy explains how Haven; Home, Safe will define the eligibility requirements and allocate its affordable housing properties to meet its contractual and legal obligations.

### Scope

This policy applies to all tenantable properties owned and or managed by Haven; Home, Safe (excluding Transitional Housing Management)

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

HHS's Affordable Housing aims to provide affordable housing options that provide security of tenure to eligible low-income Victorians. HHS has an agreement with the Victorian Government that a proportion of targeted social housing properties will be allocated to those on the waiting list through the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). Haven; Home, Safe (HHS) is required to meet an annual priority allocations target which is set by the Victorian Housing Register Allocations Framework each financial year. Further information on the VHR can be found at Victorian housing register - DHHS Services Renters for Affordable Housing are selected openly and fairly, based on an assessment process, which considers individual requirements and meets the stated aims of HHS as an Affordable Housing Association (AHA). HHS will adhere to DFFH eligibility criteria in accordance with the VHR guidelines and will communicate clearly with applicants.

### POLICY

HHS long term housing options policies and procedures are led by VHR guidelines in determining eligibility and allocations will be fair, transparent and consistently applied. HHS will ensure communication is clear and accessible to all and that properties are allocated as quickly and efficiently as possible and tenanted as soon as practicable once vacant. Regular monitoring of processes and measurement of outcomes will support best practice.

The purpose of Haven; Home, Safe's allocations procedure is to:

- Ensure requirements are clearly documented and regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure they meet the requirements of applicants, HHS Affordable Housing Program, Victorian Housing Register, NRAS Regulations, and the Victorian Housing Registrars Regulatory Framework.
- Be consistent across all HHS offices.
- Ensure appropriate housing is made available to people seeking assistance
- Honour nomination arrangements as agreed to by HHS as required.
- Support the financial viability of its housing programs

### All vacancies will be allocated from the VHR

### Frequently asked questions:

#### Am I eligible?

All applicants for Affordable Housing with HHS must be eligible for housing under the DFFH VHR application guidelines. For further information go to the VHR website [Apply for social housing | Housing.vic.gov.au](https://www.vhr.vic.gov.au). HHS applies the following

additional criteria for eligibility:

**Residency**

It is preferred that applicants are already residents of the area where housing is sought or have links to family or employment.

**Age**

As per the residential tenancy act renters must be over 16 years of age. Applicants taken from the VHR for people under 18 years of age require to be co-signed by a suitable guarantor.

**References**

Applicants should be able to demonstrate that they can sustain a tenancy, as such, allocations may be subject to satisfactory reference checks.

Applicants may be asked to provide two recent rental references and/or one personal reference. If an applicant has not previously rented, two written character references will be required.

Discretion may apply to exclude the applicant from the usual reference requirement, where extenuating circumstances may exist. For example, applicants who may not have rented before, those experiencing long term homelessness and who are on the priority waiting list, or applicants exiting an institutional environment. In such circumstances, HHS will determine if the allocation is to be accepted.

**What size property am I ELIGIBLE FOR?**

Household need will be matched to the size of the property. It is HHS policy to utilise all available rooms in a property to enable us to house more people and reduce underutilisation of properties.

HHS will offer and generally allocate properties by bedroom size according to the following:

Household Composition	Minimum Bedrooms
Single person or couple	One bedroom/studio
Single person or couple with one other household member	Two bedrooms
Single person or couple with two other household members	Two/three bedrooms
Single person or couple with three other household members	Three bedrooms
Single person or couple with four other household members	Three/Four bedrooms
Single person or couple with five other household members	Four/five bedrooms

When determining the suitability of a household to property at the point of allocation, HHS will use the following guiding principles:

- People 18 years and over are entitled to their own bedroom
- Siblings of different genders are not required to share a bedroom regardless of age
- Children of the same gender within a household can share a bedroom
- Only single person households can occupy studio units or rooming house.

**What if my household size changes during my tenancy?**

Where household size changes during the tenancy, HHS will assist applicants to apply to the VHR for a transfer to a more appropriately sized property. A suitable property may be available within the HHS portfolio, however due to the limited number of properties available, a tenancy transfer via the VHR to another Housing provider will be explored. HHS staff will assist renters to broaden their options should this scenario occur which may include leasing a property from the Private Rental Market.

**What if I need support to sustain my tenancy?**

Applicants who have specific support needs are encouraged to explore linkages with suitable support services. Where supports are currently in place, please provide written documentation relevant to the applicant’s circumstances, stating that ongoing support needs at the level required are in place to allow the applicant to maintain independent living. If further supports are required, linkages with suitable support services can be discussed.

**What if my support needs change during my tenancy?**

If your support needs change during your tenancy, then HHS staff will be available to assist to link you in with appropriate services.

**How will my rent be calculated?**

HHS uses a minimum 25% discount off market rent model, which means that there will be a minimum 25% discount off the market rent of the property. Renters will not be charged more than 30% of total household income. Your rent will be reviewed every 12 months and adjusted according to change in your income and/or change to the market rent of the property.

A service charge may also be added, which includes but is not limited to, services that cannot be individually metered.

**What income information am I required to provide?**

Applicants are required to provide current income information for all household members receiving an income. This information can be provided in the form of a letter or statement from the source of income. Applicants who receive Centrelink incomes have the option to give authorisation to HHS staff to obtain the information directly from Centrelink. The types of incomes are detailed in the following table:

Type of Income	Information/Documentation
Pension or Allowance (e.g. Centrelink payment, Austudy, overseas pension)	Current information (letter or statement no more than two weeks old) from Centrelink, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and/or the overseas pension organisation.
Wages or maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income statement or consecutive pay slips showing the date and total gross amount paid over the last 13 weeks by employers.</li> <li>• Seasonal workers must provide current information that confirms the income they are receiving at the time of application.</li> </ul> 13 weeks consecutive paylips, Information from Centrelink, Child Support Agency or a Family Court Order showing weekly Maintenance Payments received.
Workcover or superannuation payments	A current letter from Workcover or the superannuation institution detailing the regular payments received.
Self-employed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13-week Profit and Loss statement, and</li> </ul> Applicants who participate in the Income Confirmation Service do not need to provide a separate letter or statement.
Other Income	Documentation providing details of the type of income, amount received, period of payment, source of income etc.

**Note:** Applicants in receipt of no income are referred to community support organisations in the region to assist them with their housing and any other needs.

**What is NRAS?**

Some properties within the HHS AH portfolio are under the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) . NRAS is a partnership between the Australian Government and the States and Territories to invest in affordable rental housing. NRAS seeks to address the shortage of affordable rental housing by offering financial incentives to persons or entities such as the business sector and community organisations to build and rent dwellings to low- and moderate-income households at a rate that is at least 20 per cent below the market value rent.

Additional criteria and evidence requirements apply to NRAS properties. These are outlined at <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/programmes-services/national-rental-affordability-scheme>

All rent calculations (initial and ongoing) will be reviewed independently by the NRAS compliance team including the 12 month eligibility review.

**Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)**

HHS manages a portfolio of SDA properties in partnership with licensed disability support providers. Each person living in these properties must be a current participant under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, be approved to live in the relevant SDA building category and have sufficient SDA funds included in their support package. Allocations and vacancies will be managed in accordance with the service agreement between HHS and the support provider.