

Social Housing - Application, Eligibility and Allocation

Policy

BaptistCare has a fair, transparent and equitable process to determine eligibility and access to Community Housing. Applications for BaptistCare Housing will be assessed based on eligibility, priority ranking and allocation criteria, consistent with NSW Community Housing Eligibility Policy, Community Housing Access Policy and Housing Pathways policies.

BaptistCare will make available its Community Housing properties to social housing eligible households of very low to moderate income who meet the eligibility requirements established by the NSW Community Housing Eligibility Policy, with a particular focus on disadvantaged older people and single parent families who are at risk of homelessness, particularly where family abuse has occurred.

Definitions	
Affordable Housing	Housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate income households and priced so that these households are also able to meet other basic living costs, such as food, clothing, transport, medical care and education. As a rule of thumb, housing is usually considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of gross household income.
Housing Pathways	The way in which applications for housing assistance are managed in NSW. It is a partnership between The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), including the Aboriginal Housing Office and the Housing Contact Centre, and participating community housing providers.
NSW Housing Register	A single waiting list of applicants assessed as eligible for social housing in NSW managed by DCJ (also known as the Waiting List). Applicants on the register can choose to be housed with DCJ or a community housing provider.
Residential Tenancy Agreement (Lease)	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.
Social Housing	Housing for people on very low to low incomes. People within this group are eligible for public housing and are registered on the NSW Housing Register and are usually in receipt of some form of Centrelink or other statutory payment, and have an annual income in the lowest quartile for income distribution in Australia.
Tenant	The person who has the right to occupy a residential premises under a residential tenancy agreement.
The Registrar	An independent statutory officer responsible for registering and regulating community housing provider under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) reporting directly to the Minister for Family and Community Services.

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Procedure

Applicants for social housing must apply through Housing Pathways. Applications may be assessed by either a community housing provider in Housing Pathways or DCJ Housing NSW client service staff.

Eligibility for Social Housing

Persons applying for social housing in NSW must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Citizen or permanent resident of Australia
- Resident in NSW
- Able to establish their identity
- Have a household income within the income eligibility limits under the *Social Housing Eligibility Policy* and *Allocations Policy Supplement* on the Housing Pathways website
- Currently in housing need and unable to resolve this need in the medium to long term without assistance
- Do not own any assets or property which could reasonably be expected to resolve their housing need
- Be able to sustain a successful tenancy, with or without support
- If a former tenant of public/BaptistCare/other community housing provider - make good any former debts
- Be over 18 years of age

Additional criteria for Single Parent Families:

- A household consisting of one adult only with the child/children whom they have primary parental or care responsibility

Additional criteria for Seniors Only Communities:

- Single person household where the tenant is 55 years of age or older, or if Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 45 years of age or older; or
- Two person households where the tenant and occupant are 55 years of age or older, or if Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 45 years of age or older.

BaptistCare's target groups for social housing

BaptistCare provides housing for:

- Seniors - Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) and National Rental Affordability Scheme
- Single parents with children (SAHF only)
- Women with children escaping Domestic and Family Violence (Transitional Housing – supported housing program)

BaptistCare will prioritise applicants with the following needs:

- Homelessness or potential homelessness
- Financial housing stress or unaffordable housing
- Inadequate or unsafe housing
- Family violence, child protection or the victim of crime
- Additional housing stress or disadvantage
- Medical or other disability
- Other complex needs

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Allocation

Social Housing must be allocated to eligible applicants listed on the DCJ NSW Housing Register. The Housing Manager will access DCJ Housing Pathways system to establish a shortlist of applicants who match BaptistCare's available property.

The allocation will consider:

- number of bedrooms, as prescribed by DCJ bedroom allocation policies
- medical condition or disability
- dwelling type suitability including stairs, yard and safety
- specific funding type
- tenant's preference for location, within limitations
- location requirements for management issues and neighbourhood resources
- proximity to shops and medical assistance
- proximity to site parking bays for age, frailty or disability
- balance of tenants within a multiple property site
- availability of resources and support where necessary.

Local allocation strategy

In some instances, management may determine a local strategy for a particular location. These strategies may be implemented for vacancies when:

- there is a high concentration of tenants/residents with multiple health, social or economic issues;
- there are existing issues which will be exacerbated if allocations are not sensitively managed;
- there is a mismatch of supply and demand making the property hard to let.

Any local allocation strategy will be signed off by the Housing Group Manager and will be time limited.

BaptistCare may at times need to prioritise an applicant due to operational purposes or in response to emergencies, relocations or transfers.

Offers

After shortlisting the applicant, the Housing Manager will contact them and confirm that they still meet the eligibility criteria.

When a property becomes available, a shortlist is generated of clients on the NSW Housing Register (waitlist). The shortlist shows clients most in need first, ensuring urgent housing needs are considered first. The Housing Manager will work through the list and start contacting the applicants.

The Housing Manager will then invite the applicant to view the available property and confirm with SMS or email to expedite the process for an inspection and undertake a pre-offer eligibility check.

Outcome	Timeframe
Inspection	Within 48 hours of contact
Acceptance of offer	Within 48 hours inspection
Signing Lease	Within seven (7) days of the inspection
Rejecting the offer	Tenant to advise in writing the reason for rejecting the offer within 14 days of the inspection

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1. The applicant has 48 hours from the point of contact to inspect the property. The Housing Manager can provide assistance to any applicant who may have difficulty viewing the property or making the decision without support. If there are any outstanding repairs or cleaning required at the property at the time of inspection, the applicant is to be accompanied by the Housing Manager and the property may only be viewed externally unless safe to enter. The applicant can also request an extension to the 48 hours if there are other family members or support people who need to view the property or be involved in the decision. The length of any extension will be at the discretion of the Housing Manager and will balance the need to have the property tenanted as soon as possible.
2. The offer will be made to the applicant at the viewing or by phone.
3. The Housing Manager will inform the applicant if any of the following apply:
 - The premises have been subject to flood or bush fire in the past five years;
 - The premises pose a significant health or safety risk that is not apparent;
 - The premises have been the scene of a serious violent crime within the past five years.
4. The applicant has two business days to make a decision regarding the offer. If no response is received within two business days from the first contact with the offer, whether verbal or written, the Housing Manager will offer the property to the next suitable applicant.
5. If the applicant accepts the offer they are to complete, sign and return the Housing Pathways Offer response form. They are also asked to complete a consent form to collect personal information.
6. If the applicant refuses the property, then the next suitable priority applicant will immediately be offered the property.

Number of offers

Social Housing applicants are eligible for two offers, however, applicants need to be aware of the limited number of properties available and that declining may incur a waiting period.

Reasonable Offer

A reasonable offer is considered one which meets the applicant's housing need based on the information provided.

Withdrawing

If an offer is found to be unreasonable the offer will be withdrawn.

Unreasonable offer

An unreasonable offer is one that would adversely impact on a tenant, such as unsuitable modifications, putting a woman and children at risk.

It is unreasonable for the applicant to reject an offer on the grounds, such as following:

- not liking the neighbourhood (unless proven to be at risk);
- wants a brick property and/or garage;
- does not accept Lease conditions/bond/rent.

Continued Eligibility

- Criteria for continued eligibility is dependent on program guidelines and include maximum terms of tenure and income.

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- Tenants will be continually assessed against eligibility prior to each fixed term Lease and will be renewed provided the tenant:
 - continues to meet eligibility criteria, including income and any change in assets that might reasonably be expected to resolve their housing needs; and
 - the total term of tenure has not exceeded maximum terms.

No Longer Eligible

- BaptistCare will periodically review the tenant's rent and income to assess tenants' ongoing eligibility to reside in social housing where the term is fixed and assess if they may be more appropriately housed in affordable housing or in the private rental market.
- Tenants will no longer be eligible for Social Housing if they no longer meet the maximum Social Housing income eligibility limit in accordance with the Tenancy Policy Supplement. BaptistCare will assist and use reasonable endeavours in consultation with the tenant to transition the tenant to:
 - affordable housing (within or outside BaptistCare portfolio); or
 - alternate accommodation in the private rental market.
- Tenants can be given up to 12 months to exit the property depending on their circumstances.

Right of Appeal

If a tenant is not satisfied with a service provided by BaptistCare or does not agree with a decision it has made, they can ask for a formal review.

If a tenant is unhappy with the outcome of an appeal to BaptistCare, they can lodge a second level appeal with the Housing Appeals Committee. The Housing Appeals Committee is an independent agency that reviews certain decisions made by staff of Community Housing Organisations and Housing NSW. For information on the Housing Appeals Committee call 1800 629 794 or go to <http://www.hac.nsw.gov.au>.

Legislation

Housing Act 2001

Residential Tenancies Act 2010

References

[NSW Community Housing Access Policy](#)

[NSW Community Housing Eligibility Policy](#)

[NSW Community Housing Rent Policy](#)

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