

Eligibility Policy

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Policy owner: Director Housing & Homelessness

Purpose

The purpose of Unison's eligibility policy is to provide guidance to staff regarding the different eligibility requirements for the various types of subsidised housing that Unison manages.

Scope

This policy applies to social and affordable housing managed by Unison

Principles

It is important that staff understand the different eligibility requirements of the different types of subsidised housing to:

- Provide consistent and reliable information for prospective and incumbent tenants
- Ensure Unisons' business practices comply with our contracted obligations to funding partners.

Application

Social housing – Victoria

Eligibility

All social housing applicants need to register with the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) except where the applicant is under the age of 18 and is being nominated for a property by a youth specific support agency with nomination access to a Unison property.

VHR applications can be completed online through myGov or by completing a written application. Further information about the process is on the Housing Victoria website. To be eligible for the Victorian Housing Register the applicant must

- Be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident
- Not own or part-own a property in Australia
- Should live in Victoria
- Not earn or own more than the current social housing income and asset limits as specified on the Housing Victoria website.

Exception to asset limits

Asset limits for Priority Housing may be increased up to the Register of Interest Asset Limit for households with significant personal support needs. Further information is available on the Housing Victoria website.

Applicants must be able to show proof of income and proof of identification

In addition to the eligibility criteria defined by the VHR there are additional eligibility criteria for Unison properties. The applicant must:

- Have a regular income
- Be able to pay at least one or two weeks rent (depending on rooming house or general residential tenancies agreement) and, in some buildings, a bond that is equivalent to one month's rent. For people who need assistance with the bond, please refer to the Victorian Government's Bond Loan Scheme (see Housing Victoria website). In some situations, Unison might waive bonds. This must be approved by the relevant Manager, Place Management
- Be prepared to address outstanding debts from a previous tenancy (approval of new tenancies for people with debts from a previous tenancy must be provided by the relevant Manager, Place Management).
- Be prepared to demonstrate a plan that will prevent antisocial behaviour that occurred in a previous tenancy (approval of new tenancies for people who have a history of anti-social behaviour in a Unison property must be provided by the relevant Manager, Place Management).

Other

Some properties have additional eligibility criteria based on gender, age or disability

Transgender applicants are eligible for gender-specific properties aligned with their gender identity. Refer to [Transgender Housing Policy](#).

Transfers

Unison tenants seeking a transfer must apply through the Victorian Housing Register. Tenants seeking a transfer will need to meet transfer eligibility requirements of the Victorian government. See Housing Victoria website - VHR Priority Transfer Guidelines.

- a) Current accommodation is rooming house with communal/shared facilities
- b) Health/medical condition is being exacerbated by current accommodation
- c) Is leaving domestic or family violence situation
- d) Current accommodation is underutilised or over crowded

Emergency transfers

In some situations, Emergency transfers will be granted when a property is uninhabitable through no fault of the tenant

Transfer requests for tenants who are pregnant:

- Pregnant tenants are eligible to apply for a transfer to larger accommodation prior to giving birth
- A transfer is not acted upon until the children are born and a birth certificate and a current Centrelink Income Statement is supplied to Unison
- The transfer application date is effectively backdated to the original request
- Where the pregnant woman is a tenant in a rooming house with shared facilities the situation will be considered by the Manager, Place Management and relevant Team Leader

In some situations, Unison will consider transfers outside this policy. This will only occur at the discretion of the relevant Manager, Place Management.

Tenants Whose Income Exceeds Eligibility Criteria

Tenants who exceed the income eligibility criteria during their tenancy will be allowed to remain in Unison accommodation, but rent may change to reflect the Affordable Housing rate (refer to Rent policy). However, if their income remains above the Affordable Housing limits for a period of twelve months, the tenants will be encouraged to make the transition to private rental.

Tenants whose income exceeds eligibility limits are not eligible for a property transfer, as they will not meet the general eligibility criteria in relation to income

Transfer of Lease

Tenants may be added or removed from leases only in limited situations. All household members must be eligible for the housing, the property must be suitable for all household members and the transfer of a lease must demonstrate a positive improvement to the wellbeing of the tenants.

These situations may include:

- A tenant requests their partner to join their tenancy
- A tenant requests their child to join their tenancy
- A tenant requests another person with a continuous link to the property to join their tenancy
- Both tenants in a joint tenancy agree for one tenant to relinquish their tenancy
- One tenant in a joint tenancy has died
- One tenant is requesting to be removed from a joint tenancy due to family violence or other safety situation at the property
- Or another exceptional circumstance (at the Manager, Place Management's discretion)

Social housing – South Australia

To be eligible to be housed in a Unison social housing property an applicant must meet the Government of South Australia's criteria. The Government's criteria include a combination of base eligibility criteria and income, assets and needs tests. More information is available on the Housing SA website.

Affordable Housing

Victoria –Income Eligibility

All applicants must be over 18 years of age and meet the following criteria:

- Australian Citizenship OR Permanent Residency Status
- Currently live in Victoria
- Stable rent history
- Able to live independently
- Assets less than \$30,000 per household or \$60,000 for households requiring Disability Modified Unit
- Income within limits as specified by the Victorian government

Tenants Whose Income Exceeds Eligibility Criteria

In circumstances where the household's income increases and remains above the limit for Affordable Housing the tenants may remain for up to 1 year and then tenants will be encouraged to make the transition to private rental.

National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) – Victoria and South Australia

To be eligible for an incentive under NRAS, landlords must ensure that dwellings are rented to eligible tenants. In managing NRAS, Unison staff check to ensure that tenants meet the NRAS eligibility requirements on behalf of landlords and NRAS incentive holders.

The gross income limits for households of eligible tenants are specified in the NRAS Regulations. Income levels are assessed against gross income limits according to the household composition. For NRAS purposes, a household is all persons who are tenants of the dwelling. All persons who ordinarily reside in a NRAS home must have their income included as a member of the household.

A household's gross income for the 12 months prior to commencement of tenancy of an NRAS dwelling must be equal to or less than the income limit for the household's composition. Household income may then increase above the income limit. However, a dwelling cease to be eligible for an incentive if the tenants' household income exceeds the applicable household income limit by 25 per cent or more in two consecutive eligibility years.

Each year, household income limits are indexed according to percentage changes of All Groups Component of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) so that the limits effectively maintain the same target group of tenants over the life of the Scheme.

Household Income Limits

Current information about eligibility, income and assets can be found on the Department of Social Services website.

Glossary

Social Housing - The term used to describe the tenants that are in receipt of a Centrelink benefits and are registered on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR)

Review of policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years as delegated by the responsible Director.