

Rent Policy

Version No.:	9.0
Version date:	February 2022
Review date:	February 2025
Policy owner:	Director Housing and Homelessness

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the way in which Unison sets rent.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all long-term housing properties owned or managed by Unison.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to:
 - a Where Unison acts as property manager for properties owned or leased by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and rent is set in accordance with DFFH policies.
 - b Private rental or National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) properties
 - c Properties in the Head Leasing program
 - d Any other excluded special housing programs

3 Policy Statement

Principles

- 3.1 Rent charges are set at a market rent. Unison then provides a rebate based upon household income so that rent is affordable, and properties are accessible to people on low incomes
- 3.2 Charges to renters are compliant with all funding agreements and meet all State and Federal government requirements
- 3.3 The rent setting and review process is transparent, fair, promoted and consistently applied
- 3.4 Flexibility is allowed to respond to individual hardship and change of circumstance

Application

Rent Rebate

- 3.5 Rental rebate means a rebate of rent, or any other reduction in rent, granted to a renter or a resident of a rooming house by the Director of Housing or a registered agency.
- 3.6 As a social housing provider, Unison provides a rental rebate to maintain affordability of rent charges. The rental rebate is the difference between the market rent and the rebate assessable amount.

- 3.7** Proof of income for all household members must be provided before a rent rebate can be assessed.
- 3.8** Proof of income must be provided to Unison by the deadline required, otherwise the rebate will either not be applied and/or removed. If income evidence is provided after the deadline and the rebate has been removed and/or not applied, there will be no reimbursement, unless otherwise approved by the manager.

Market Rent

- 3.9** Market rents are assessed annually. The market rent amounts are sourced from the DFFH. Market rent amounts must also not exceed ATO benchmark rents. Unison may consider additional factors and reduce the market rent accordingly.
- 3.10** *Social Housing rebate assessable amount* Unison determines the rebate assessable amount for social housing tenancies based on the following sources of household income:
 - a** 30% of gross Assessable Income or 25% of gross Assessable Income for rooming house rooms with shared facilities.
 - b** 100% of the eligible Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) payment, plus
 - c** 15% of Family Tax A and Family Tax B payments (if applicable)

Affordable Housing rent

- 3.11** Affordable housing tenancies also receive a rebate to ensure rents remain affordable. The rent charged will be:
 - a** No more than 74.99% of market rent for the premises; and
 - b** Sufficient to keep the amount payable below 30% of gross Assessable income

Minimum Rent

- 3.12** In order to maintain financial stability, Unison is reliant on rental income. Although flexibility is allowed to respond to individual hardship and change of circumstance, in line with Unison's Eligibility policy, renters are required to have an income to remain eligible for Unison housing.
- 3.13** In both social and affordable housing, the minimum rent chargeable will be equivalent to the rent for someone on JobSeeker Payment, even where actual income received is below this amount. In exceptional circumstances, where Youth Allowance is a household's main income, this rule may not apply.

Additional Property costs

- 3.14** In many Unison properties there are additional property costs which are a condition of occupancy. These costs will vary depending on the service provided at the individual property. Additional property costs may include:
 - a** Electricity
 - b** Gas
 - c** Water
 - d** Cleaning (including garbage)
 - e** Gardening
 - f** Furniture
 - g** Laundry facilities

- 3.15 Additional property costs are identified and specified at the time of setting total rent and are reviewed annually.
- 3.16 They are calculated based on the actual aggregated cost of provision of the services to Unison for properties where an additional cost is applicable.

Rent in advance and Bonds

- 3.17 Renters are required to pay rent up to 2 weeks in advance at the commencement of their rental agreement and maintain their rent in accordance with their rental agreement. A bond is charged in some properties, refer to the Bond Policy.

Income Review

- 3.18 Proof of income of all household members is required in order to calculate the rebate assessable amount. If a household does not provide proof of income, no rebate will be provided, and market rent will be charged.
- 3.19 All general income is considered assessable when determining the rebate. Specific purpose payments are generally not included in the calculation of rebate. Please refer to Appendix 1: Assessable and Non-Assessable Incomes.
- 3.20 Documentation covering all income over the twelve (12) week period prior to the rental agreement sign up/ income review is required. If a household member has an irregular income, the income should be assessed by averaging the income over the 12 weeks.

Rebate Review

- 3.21 Review of household incomes and rebates are conducted every 12 months, when there is a change in household circumstances, or at renter request.
- 3.22 Failure to provide proof of income may result in any rental rebate being removed and the market rent for the property being charged.
- 3.23 If a household member is eligible to receive a Centrelink payment, the rebate will be calculated as if that payment is being received, regardless of whether the household is actually receiving that income or not. Renters are encouraged to apply for all the payments they are entitled to.
- 3.24 It is the renter's responsibility to advise Unison of any changes to household income as soon as they occur. Unison will review the rebate assessable amount in line with this policy.

4 Related information

- a *Housing Act 1983*
- b *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*
- c Bond Policy
- d Change in Circumstances Policy
- e Eligibility Policy
- f Rent Arrears Policy

5 Review of policy

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

Appendix 1: Assessable and non-assessable income

Primary incomes: assessed at 30 per cent %

- Abstudy 60+
- Abstudy Partnered 21+
- Abstudy Partnered with Dependants
- Abstudy Partnered No Dependants
- Abstudy Single 21+
- Abstudy Partnered with Dependants 21+
- Abstudy Single with Dependants 21+
- Abstudy Single Away from Home
- Abstudy Single with Dependants
- Abstudy Single at Home
- Abstudy
- Age Pension
- Age Pension - Pension Reform
- Asylum Seekers Allowance
- Austudy No Dependants
- Austudy Partnered with Dependants
- Austudy Partnered Special No Dependants
- Austudy Single with Dependants
- Austudy Single Special Rate
- Austudy
- Blind Pension
- Carer Pension
- Carer Pension - Pension Reform
- Community Development
- Clean Energy Supplement
- Compensation Payment
- Dad Partner Payment
- Defence Force Income Supplement
- Defence Force Reserve Payment
- Disability Wage Supplement
- Domestic Allowance
- Deprived Income
- DSP under 21 with Dependants
- Disability Pension
- Disability Pension - Pension Reform
- Disability Pension Youth Away from Home

- Disability Pension Youth at Home
- Veteran Affairs Disability Pension
- Disability Youth with Dependants-Pension Reform
- University Scholarship/Grant and Bursaries
- Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment
- Farm Household Support
- Farm Family Restart
- Flexible Support Payment
- Foster Allowance
- Formal Training Allowance
- Incentive Allowance
- Investment/Savings Interest
- Imputed Pension
- Income Stream and Annuities Asset
- Income Stream and Annuities Income
- Income Support Supplement
- Imputed Top-up to appropriate Centrelink Rate
- JobSeeker Payment
- JobKeeper Payment
- Maintenance Payments (includes payments 'in-kind')
- Mature Age Allowance
- Pension Supplement Notional
- Newstart Allowance < 18 with Dependants
- Newstart Allowance with Dependants 18-20
- Newstart Allowance
- Newstart Allowance at Pension Rate
- Approved Program of Work Supplement
- Orphan Pension (18 and under)
- Overseas Pension
- Overseas Assets (deemed interest rate)
- Overseas Income
- Overseas Pension Special
- Partners Allowance
- Paid Parental Leave
- Parenting Payment Partnered
- Parenting Single Pension
- Real Estate Asset (deemed interest rate)
- Real Estate Income
- Remedial Tuition Allowance
- Self-Employed Adjusted Nett Profit
- Service Pension - Pension Reform
- Service Pension
- Sheltered Workshop Allowance

- Sickness Allowance 18-20
- Sickness Allowance
- Sickness Allowance Single with Dependants
- Sickness Allowance at Pension Rate
- Special Benefit
- Special Benefit Single with Dependants
- Special Benefit at Pension Rate
- Superannuation Payments
- Supplementary income
- Trust and Companies Asset
- Trust and Companies Income
- Top-up to appropriate Centrelink Rate
- Wages (PAYE employees)
- War Widow Pension - Pension Reform
- Work Care Payments
- Widows Allowance
- Widows Allowance at Pension Rate
- Widows Pension
- Widows Pension - Pension Reform
- Wife Age/DSP Pensioner
- Wife Age/DSP Pensioner - Pension Reform
- Youth Allowance Away from Home
- Youth Allowance at Home
- Youth Allowance Partnered no Dependants
- Youth Allowance Partnered and Dependants
- Youth Allowance Single with Dependants
- Youth Allowance Special Away from Home
- Youth Allowance Special at Home
- Youth Allow Special Partnered and Dependants
- Youth Allowance

Family incomes: assessed at 15 per cent (social tenancies)

- Clean Energy Supplement, FTB part A
- Clean Energy Supplement, FTB part B
- Family Lump Sum Supplement (A)
- Family Lump Sum Supplement (B)
- Family Tax Benefit - Part A
- Family Tax Benefit - Part B
- Imputed Family Lump Sum Supplement (A)
- Imputed Family Lump Sum Supplement (B)
- Imputed Family Tax Benefit - Part A

- Imputed Family Tax Benefit - Part B

Non-assessable incomes

Non-assessable incomes are usually payments that are provided for a specific purpose.

- Adequate Means of Support Pension paid by the Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Additional payments made by other countries to victims of war as a result of their war experiences that do not affect the full entitlement of Centrelink payments are also excluded as assessable income
- Austudy Loan
- Austudy Pensioner Educational Supplement
- Baby Bonus (formerly known as Maternity Payment) – paid to families for children born or adopted after 1 July 2007. Only the deemed interest rate is applied to any savings or investments where the amount has been deposited. See Maternity Payment
- Basic Parenting Payment (partnered) - formerly known as Basic Parenting Allowance – This payment was included in Family Tax Benefit Part B from 1 October 2000 and assessable from this date
- Bereavement Payment
- Book Allowance
- Carer's Allowance (formerly known as Child Disability Allowance and Domiciliary Allowance)
- Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) Payment Supplement – only the base rate amount
- Community Empowerment Project Payments (paid by the City of Yarra)
- Child Care Benefit
- Children's Trust Funds where the household member has no access to the funds
- Clean Energy Advance – one off payment made from May 2012 (i.e. before the Clean Energy Supplement) to pensioners, other income support recipients, families receiving Family Tax Benefit payments and Seniors Supplement recipients, provided they met eligibility requirements. The deemed interest rate is applied to any savings or investments where the amount has been deposited.
- Department of Health and Human Services (the department) Caregiver payments. This payment is made by the department to families involved in caring for foster children
- Double Orphan Allowance
- Double Orphan Pension (assessable prior to 23 November 2008)
- Education Allowances
- Education Entry Payment
- F-111 ex-gratia \$40,000 or \$10,000 lump sum payments for participants in the F-111 Deseal/Reseal programs. The one-off payment is not assessable, however where the payment is invested, the deemed interest rate should be applied, and the resultant amount included as assessable income
- Family Tax Benefits for 6th and subsequent child
- Family Tax Initiative (For assessments prior to 1 October 2000)
- Family Tax Benefit Lump Sum Amount of \$600 paid before 30 June 2004. This was a one-off payment of \$600 per child paid to all families entitled to Family Tax Benefit Part A in 2003/04 financial year. Deemed interest rate is applied to savings or investments where the amount has been deposited.
- Family Tax Benefit Part A Lump Sum Supplement paid in respect of the 2003/04 financial year. Payment commenced 1 July 2004. Families have two years from 30 June 2004 to claim this payment.
- Fares Assistance

- Formal Training Allowance - paid with Centrelink pension/allowance
- Foster Allowance
- GST for allowances
- Income of residents under 18 years of age
- Language, Literacy and Numeracy Supplement
- Large Family Supplement
- Lump sum funds invested into income stream products such as annuities
- Maternity Payment (now known as Baby Bonus) –paid to families for children born or adopted after 1 July 2004. Only the deemed interest rate is applied to any savings or investments where the amount has been deposited. See Baby Bonus.
- Minimum Family Allowance (formerly known as Basic Family Payment) – This payment is included in Family Tax Benefit Part A after 1 October 2000 and assessable after this date.
- Minimum Family Allowance for dependents aged 18 – 24. This payment is included in Family Tax Benefit Part A after 1 October 2000 and assessable after this date.
- Mobility Allowance
- Multiple Birth Allowance
- Neighbourhood Renewal Community Survey Payments made to both interviewees and interviewers (This applies to tenants or residents in identified Neighbourhood Renewal Areas only)
- Orphan Pension (18 years and under)
- One off Economic Support Payment
- Pension Bonus Scheme (formerly Older Australian's Bonus) – a one-off non-taxable bonus payment of \$500 paid to older Australians of Age Pension age. The payment was part of the 2007/08 Federal budget and was paid to recipients of the Age Pension, Mature Age Allowance, Widow Allowance, Partner Allowance, Commonwealth Seniors Card and Veterans' Affairs Gold Card holders. The deemed interest rate is applied to any savings or investments where the amount has been deposited.
- Pension Supplement (formerly known as GST Component of Pensions)
- Pharmaceutical Allowance
- Prisoner of War (Japan and Korea) \$25,000 lump sum compensation payment. Paid to surviving Australian service personnel (or their surviving widows/ers) in 2001 (Japan) and 2004 (Korea). The one-off payment is not assessable, however where the payment is invested, the deemed interest rate should be applied, and the resultant amount included as assessable income
- Remedial Tuition Allowance
- Rent Assistance paid to tenants who have a tenancy agreement with the Director of Housing (the tenant should notify Centrelink that they are a Departmental tenant)
- Restitution payments from Foreign Governments
- Schoolkids bonus
- School Start Bonus – one off payment paid to families with children starting prep and year seven at a government or non-government school. The deemed interest rate is applied to any savings or investments where the amount has been deposited.
- Superannuation funds, lifetime annuities that cannot be realised or drawn from
- Superannuation funds, lifetime annuities of persons under retiring age whose funds are realisable but choose not to access them.
- TAC Impairment Annuity Benefit
- Telephone Rental Concession
- Travel, Meals, Laundry and Accommodation Allowances

- War Disability Pensions (Department of Veterans' Affairs)
- Work for the Dole Supplement
- Youth Disability Supplement