



**TMP 012**  
**Affordable Housing Policy**

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VERSION	DATE REVIEWED	CHANGE SUMMARY
6.0	27 October 2025	COO and Director of Service Delivery Reviewed and Updated from previous versions and moved to new template.
6.0	5 January 2025	Finalised and Approved

## 1. AUTHORISING AUTHORITY

<b>Approval Authorities:</b>	CEO.
<b>Administration of Policy</b>	All Business Line Managers
<b>Adherence to Policy:</b>	All CHC Staff
<b>Scope:</b>	This policy applies to all CHC Australia-managed properties within the ACT and NSW.

## 2. PURPOSE / BACKGROUND

This policy outlines the approach, principles, eligibility and framework for CHC to manage affordable housing rental properties and deliver the tenancy management for these same dwellings.

CHC is committed to the provision of safe, stable, and affordable housing for our tenant community. The organisation's approach is underpinned by fairness, transparency, and efficiency, ensuring that every property is allocated to achieve the greatest benefit for those in need.

Through this policy, CHC aims to:

- Provide access to affordable housing for individuals and households on low to moderate incomes who are not eligible for public or social housing.
- Support tenants with the potential for income growth or home ownership by providing stable, affordable rental options that create long-term pathways.
- Offer another choice of housing for individuals and families requiring affordable rental accommodation within the ACT and NSW.

CHC may deliver targeted programs designed to address specific housing barriers or priority cohorts (e.g., essential workers, women experiencing rental stress, or industry-linked workforce needs).

Program-specific eligibility or prioritisation settings will be clearly defined in each program's operating framework.

## 3. POLICY OVERVIEW

CHC delivers affordable housing in accordance with the following legislation and program frameworks:

- ACT Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines 2024–2025
- National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) Policy Guidelines
- ACT Housing Assistance Act
- Community Housing Providers Amendment Bill 2025 (NSW)

CHC identifies properties within its portfolio for allocation under the Affordable Housing Program. These homes are advertised publicly through platforms such as Allhomes, Domain, and the CHC website. For larger-scale developments, CHC may conduct an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to manage applications efficiently and transparently.

Specialised programs may operate under additional governance structure, such as Tenant Allocation Panels or independent oversight mechanism, to support transparent, defensible and program-aligned decision-making.

In general, applicants are required to provide evidence of identity, income, and housing need. All applications are assessed against CHC's eligibility criteria and ranked according to need, financial capacity, and suitability for the property. This ensures that each home is matched to the most appropriate household.

All applicants must:

- Be Australian citizens or permanent residents.
- Have lived in the ACT for at least six months.
- Establish the identity of all household members.
- Be able to maintain a tenancy under the terms of the lease.
- Meet the eligibility income thresholds for the program.

To ensure the financial viability and sustainability of CHC's affordable housing programs:

- Eligibility income limits align with the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), finishing in 2026, and NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines for the current financial year.
- Where a dwelling must comply with ACT-specific program requirements, the ACT Affordable Housing Thresholds apply.
- From time to time, CHC reserves the right to amend or apply tailored income thresholds for targeted affordable housing program, such as Build-to-Rent-to-Buy initiatives or industry-specific housing allocation, where no government-mandated thresholds apply.
- Certain CHC programs, including targeted initiatives such as Build-to-Rent-to-Buy (BtRtB), may apply additional or modified eligibility criteria that reflect specific program objectives, grant conditions, or strategic outcomes.
- These may include assessment of financial readiness, savings capacity, employment stability, program-purpose alignment, or demographic targeting where appropriate and lawful.
- Any adjustments will be supported by credible research, market data, and/or industry benchmarks to ensure equity and alignment with program intent.

Rent is generally set between 74.9% and 80% of market rent and should not exceed 30% of a household's gross income wherever practicable. Applicants must not own assets (e.g. property, significant savings, or shares) that could reasonably resolve their housing needs.

Successful applicants receive a formal offer and execute a tenancy or occupancy agreement. CHC maintains an ongoing relationship with tenants through annual reviews to confirm eligibility and affordability, ensuring that the Affordable Housing Program continues to serve the households it is intended to support.

## 4. PRINCIPLES

CHC's Affordable Housing Program operates under the following principles:

**Long-Term Affordability:** Rents are set to remain affordable and sustainable, generally between 74.9% and 80% of market rent, and should not exceed 30% of gross household income wherever practicable.

**Fairness and Transparency:** All applicants are assessed against clear, published criteria to ensure fair and transparent allocation of housing.

**Targeted Support:** Affordable housing is directed toward low- to moderate-income households who are not eligible for public housing but face housing stress in the private market.

**Local Connection and Community Cohesion:** Allocation decisions may consider an applicant's connection to the local area, including employment, education, or family support networks, to strengthen community stability and minimise displacement. CHC may also consider broader neighbourhood cohesion indicators, including suitability for safe, stable community environments, where such considerations are relevant to the program design or property typology.

**Sustainability and Viability:** Eligibility, rent settings, and allocation decisions will balance tenant affordability with the long-term financial sustainability of CHC's housing portfolio.

**Accountability:** Decisions are made within approved delegations. Regular internal reviews and audits will confirm compliance with this policy and all applicable program and legislative requirements.

CHC may apply enhanced governance arrangements, including structured scoring frameworks, panel-based assessment processes, independent oversight, and formal quality assurance, for specialised or pilot programs. These arrangements ensure fairness, auditability and alignment with program purpose.

## 5. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy complies with the following external legislation and requirements

- ACT Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines
- National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) Policy Guidelines (including 2025–26 income limits)
- Community Housing Providers Amendment Bill 2025 (NSW). introducing public registers, affordability rules on property titles, and stricter compliance obligations

# Appendix 1. Affordable Housing Operational Guidelines

These guidelines operationalise the CHC Affordable Housing Policy by setting out the practical processes and documentation requirements for managing affordable housing allocations and tenancies in the ACT and NSW. They translate the policy principles into consistent day-to-day practice, ensuring fairness, transparency, and compliance with the NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines, the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), and the ACT Housing Assistance Act. These guidelines can be updated administratively to reflect changes to legislation, program requirements, or operational practices without requiring Board approval.

## SCOPE AND APPLICATION

These guidelines apply to all CHC employees involved in affordable housing eligibility assessment, allocation, tenancy establishment, and rent management. They must be read in conjunction with the overarching CHC Affordable Housing Policy and associated operational procedures.

## PROGRAM-SPECIFIC VARIATIONS.

These operational guidelines outline the standard processes for affordable housing allocations. Certain CHC initiatives including pilot programs, grant-funded programs, or targeted housing pathways may apply additional or varied processes as set out in their individual program guidelines and approved policies (e.g., BtRtB Tenant Selection Policy).

## GUIDELINE OVERVIEW

The summary and sections below provide guidance on a specific stage of the affordable housing process, from application through to tenancy review and exit. Staff should record all key decisions, evidence, and communications in CHC's approved tenancy management system in accordance with CHC's Privacy and Records Management Policy.

## TENANCY AND ALLOCATION SNAPSHOT

Element	Detail
<b>Application Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Australian citizen or permanent resident</li><li>▪ Lived in the ACT for at least 6 months</li><li>▪ 18 years or older</li><li>▪ Do not own property or significant assets that could resolve their housing needs</li><li>▪ Able to successfully sustain a tenancy (with or without supports)</li><li>▪ Meet current Affordable Housing or NRAS income limits</li></ul> <p>Where relevant to program design, CHC may assess broader financial readiness indicators (e.g., savings discipline, serviceability capacity, or budgeting stability) to ensure long-term sustainability for targeted pathways such as Build-to-Rent-to-Buy.</p>
<b>Rent Setting approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Non-NRAS: 74.9%–80% of market rent</li><li>▪ NRAS: At least 20% below market rent</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In both cases: Rent should not exceed 30% of household income wherever possible</li> <li>▪ Income limits reviewed annually in line with NSW &amp; NRAS guidelines</li> </ul>
<b>Other Factors considered</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ability to sustain a tenancy: evidence of independent living, income to sustain rental payments, ability to manage household.</li> <li>▪ Housing need: Current circumstances, unaffordable, unsafe, or unsuitable housing.</li> <li>▪ Local connection: work, study, or close family/support nearby.</li> <li>▪ Matching: Property suitability for household composition.</li> </ul>
<b>Allocation approach</b>	<p>Priority is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ability to sustain tenancy and pay rent without exceeding 30% of gross income</li> <li>▪ Housing need and urgency</li> <li>▪ Suitability of the property for the household</li> <li>▪ Local area connection</li> </ul>
<b>Tenancy Conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lease term: Up to 12 months</li> <li>▪ Bond: Four weeks' rent</li> <li>▪ Advance rent: 2 weeks advance rent</li> <li>▪ Rent: Remain two weeks in advance through the tenancy</li> <li>▪ Payment options: Payway, Centrepay, EFTPOS, bank transfer</li> <li>▪ Rent reviewed annually with 60 days' notice</li> </ul>
<b>Hardship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In exceptional cases (domestic violence, illness, crisis), CHC may approve temporary rent reduction to \$5/week for up to 2 weeks (once every 12 months, COO approval required)</li> </ul>
<b>Ending a Tenancy</b>	<p>CHC may end a tenancy if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A tenant no longer meets eligibility criteria</li> <li>▪ A tenant breaches the tenancy agreement</li> <li>▪ The property is needed for redevelopment or a specific program</li> <li>▪ Tenants can also give notice as per the Residential Tenancies Act</li> </ul>

## ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

CHC undertakes a structured and evidence-based process to assess all affordable housing applications. This ensures every applicant is treated fairly, decisions are transparent, and allocations are made according to need, eligibility, and program requirements.

### Assessment Process:

1. Application Receipt and Registration
  - Applications are received online, via email, or in person.
  - .
2. Verification of Information
  - Applicants must provide proof of identity, income, assets, and housing need.

- Should a application be incomplete then the applicant is notified of the required documentation needed and given 2 business days to supply the missing documentation.

### 3. Eligibility Check

- Confirm citizenship/residency and six-month ACT living requirement.
- Verify household income against applicable thresholds (NRAS, NSW, ACT, or CHC program-specific).
- Confirm no significant assets or property ownership.
- Ensure rent will not exceed 30% of gross household income.

### 4. Priority and Suitability Assessment

- Evaluate housing need, tenancy sustainability, and local area connection.
- Match household composition to appropriate dwelling type.
- Apply additional eligibility criteria for targeted programs where relevant.

### 5. Approval and Recordkeeping

- Tenancy Officer reviews the application and submits recommendation for approval.
- Tenancy Manager reviews and approves eligibility and prioritisation.
- COO endorses any exceptions or discretionary approvals.
- All evidence and communications are recorded in the tenancy management system for the successful applicant.

### 6. Outcome Notification

- Applicants are advised within 48 hours of decision finalisation.
- Unsuccessful applicants may reapply.
- If an applicant was unsuccessful due to eligibility, then should their circumstances change they can reapply.
- All applicants are entitled to lodge an appeal under the Complaints and Review of Decisions Policy

To support an application for a property, applicants may be asked to demonstrate a connection to the area and the ACT community such as family, culture, employment, education, or support networks.

## VACANT PROPERTIES & ALLOCATIONS

CHC advertises all vacant properties on Allhomes and/or the CHC website [www.chcaustralia.com.au](http://www.chcaustralia.com.au), all properties are advertised generally for a period of five (5) calendar days. This standard timeframe ensures transparency and provides prospective tenants with sufficient opportunity to view the listing and submit an application.

Listings include key details such as rent, eligibility criteria and application information.

- Allocations are made in accordance with the Affordable Housing and NRAS program guidelines and are informed by:
- The applicant's financial capacity to maintain rent payments, ensuring rent does not exceed 30% of gross household income.
- The priority categories identified in relevant program guidelines.
- Suitability of the property for the household's needs.
- The applicant's connection to the local area.

## **WAITING LIST**

CHC does not maintain a general waiting list.

However, for specific targeted projects or large-scale developments, CHC may establish a temporary waiting list through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process. This approach supports efficient applicant identification and timely allocations aligned with project objectives and eligibility requirements.

## **HOUSING OFFERS**

When a property becomes available, CHC will make an offer to the most suitable and eligible applicant based on the information provided.

Applicants have 24 hours to accept or decline the offer.

- If the offer is declined, the application will be closed, and the property will be offered to the next eligible applicant.
- If accepted, the applicant is expected to sign a tenancy or occupancy agreement within five (5) days of the property becoming available.

## **TENANCY AND OCCUPANCY AGREEMENTS**

All tenants or occupants are required to enter into a 12-month fixed-term Residential Tenancy Agreement or Occupancy Agreement, depending on the program.

## **RENT**

Rebated rent is generally set at 74.9% of the market rent and should not exceed 30% of the gross household income. This aligns with recognised housing affordability benchmarks and is intended to minimise risk of financial stress.

Rent is charged and reviewed in accordance with relevant program agreements, policies, and legislation.

## **PAYMENT OF RENT**

Tenants are required to pay two (2) weeks' rent at the commencement of their tenancy. Rent must then be maintained in advance, either weekly or fortnightly. CHC does not require payment of more than two (2) weeks in advance.

Accepted payment methods include:

- PayWay card
- Centrepay deduction
- EFTPOS at CHC's office
- Bank cheque
- Bank deposit

## BOND

All tenants are required to pay a bond equivalent to four (4) weeks' rent at the tenancy commencement. Bonds are lodged in accordance with legislative requirements.

## CHANGES TO THE HOUSEHOLD

Tenants must seek CHC's approval to add an unlisted household member who is not currently listed on the tenancy/ Occupancy agreements. When assessing requests, CHC will consider:

- Relevant program guidelines and occupancy standards.
- Whether the additional person will cause overcrowding.
- Household income and continued eligibility.

If a household member has moved out of the property, tenants must notify CHC in writing as soon as possible. This notification should include the name of the departing individual, the date they vacated the premises, and any relevant changes to household composition or income. CHC may request additional information to update tenancy records and assess any implications for rent or eligibility

## MUTUAL EXCHANGE

Mutual exchange of affordable housing tenancies is not permitted.

## ANNUAL ELIGIBILITY AND RENTAL REVIEWS

CHC reviews each tenant's eligibility and the market rent annually, consistent with program and legislative requirements.

Market rent is determined through valuation or comparison and adjusted annually in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for tenants maintaining a continuous lease. Rebated rent will remain below 80% of market rent.

Continued tenancy may be offered where:

- The tenant continues to meet income and asset eligibility criteria.
- The total tenure does not exceed program limits.

If a tenant's income falls below the minimum or above the maximum threshold for the program, CHC may issue a notice to terminate in accordance with legislation.

## HARDSHIP

Tenants who experience financial hardship may request a temporary rent reduction.

With appropriate evidence, CHC, at its discretion, may adjust rent to 30% of household income plus 100% of Commonwealth Rent Assistance for a limited period. All hardship requests must be submitted in writing and approved by the Chief Operating Officer.

In exceptional cases (domestic violence, illness, crisis), CHC may approve temporary rent reduction to \$5/week for up to 2 weeks (once every 12 months, COO approval required)

### **ENDING A TENANCY**

CHC may terminate a tenancy where the tenant:

- Breaches the tenancy agreement.
- Fails to provide updated income or eligibility information.
- No longer meets program eligibility criteria.
- Occupies a property required for redevelopment.

### **BREAK LEASE**

Tenants wishing to end their tenancy with CHC must provide written notice in accordance with the terms outlined in their Residential Tenancy Agreement and relevant legislation. The notice should specify the intended vacate date and be submitted with sufficient lead time, typically 21 days unless otherwise agreed. CHC will confirm receipt of the notice and provide guidance on the vacating process, including final inspection, return of keys, and bond arrangements.

Tenants who vacate before the end of a fixed-term agreement may be charged a break lease fee of up to three (3) weeks' rent, in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

### **APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

Tenants and applicants who believe CHC has made an incorrect decision may request a formal review.

Complaints or appeals can be submitted using the online form available on the CHC website. Refer to the CHC Complaints and Appeals Policy for further information.

For specialised programs that include scored assessments or suitability criteria (e.g., BtRtB), appeals will review whether the decision was made in accordance with policy, evidence requirements and procedural fairness. Appeals do not reconsider or substitute the delegated decision-maker's judgement in relation to program alignment or neighbourhood suitability determinations.