



# Priority Housing Need Policy

## Purpose

To outline how we (The Department of Communities) identify and assess applications for priority housing assistance.

## Scope

This policy relates to you if we have told you that you are potentially eligible for priority housing assistance.

## Definitions

<b>Homelessness (for public housing assessment)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Primary homelessness: rough sleeping</li><li>• Secondary homelessness: temporary accommodation (includes people moving frequently from one form of temporary accommodation to another, including emergency housing, boarding houses, or staying with family or friends, couch surfing)</li><li>• Tertiary homelessness: inappropriate housing (refers to people staying for longer than 13 weeks in rooming houses or equivalent tertiary accommodation).</li></ul>
<b>Household</b>	A group of individuals (adults and children) who share or will share the same accommodation.
<b>Householder</b>	An individual (adult or child) that belongs to or is part of a household.
<b>Family and Domestic Violence</b>	An ongoing pattern of behaviours intended to coerce, control or create fear within a family or intimate relationship. This includes physical, financial, emotional, or psychological abuse, sexual violence, neglect, intimidation, or any other behaviour which causes the victim to live in fear
<b>Child in Care</b>	A child who is under the legal care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Department of Communities.

<b>Priority housing need</b>	<p>The applicants' circumstances dictate that their requirement for social housing is of higher priority than those without a priority housing need. Their access to housing will be prioritised based on their individual circumstances and requirements.</p> <p>This includes requests to transfer to an alternative public or community housing property.</p>
<b>Third Party</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family member or friend</li><li>• Support worker/agency</li><li>• Medical professional</li><li>• Communities' employee who has previously assisted the person</li><li>• Court officer or legally appointed guardian.</li></ul>

## Policy statements

### 1. Priority Housing Need Eligibility

To be identified as having a priority housing need, you must be:

- a. eligible for public housing
- b. able to demonstrate that you cannot access alternative housing options
- c. able to demonstrate that your priority need continues,  
and
- d. able to demonstrate risk factors, outside your control are threatening or will threaten the safety or wellbeing of your household (including children) in your current living situation,  
or
- e. able to demonstrate personal vulnerabilities are being or will be impacted by your current living situation, leading to deterioration of your wellbeing.

Children and adults up to the age of 25 that are eligible for public housing, and have been the subject of one of the following under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* for a period of 6 months or more, will be identified as having a priority housing need:

- Provisional Protection and Care,
- Protection Order (Time-Limited),
- Protection Order (Until 18),
- Protection Order (Special Guardianship), or
- Negotiated Placement Arrangement.

### 2. Priority Housing Need Factors

We will consider the safety and wellbeing of your household when we are determining your ongoing priority housing need. This includes the following key risk and vulnerability factors:

- a. Family and domestic violence as defined in the Family and Domestic Violence Policy.
- b. Homelessness.
- c. Neighbourhood tensions that negatively impact on the safety of your household.
- d. Acute and chronic medical conditions or a disability impacting on the ability to access alternative housing options.
- e. Whether you or a member of your household need to access essential support services and facilities.
- f. Family reunification, including where it relates to a child under the care of the CEO.

- g. The risk of a child entering into the care of the CEO.
- h. A housing need for a family that is or is about to be caring for a child in care of the CEO.
- i. Cultural considerations.
- j. Overcrowding that impacts on the safety or wellbeing of your household.

### **3. Supporting Priority Housing Need**

You may need to provide additional information to support your ongoing need for priority assistance.

We will assess the need for priority housing assistance based on the information you provide.

We may need to talk to you about your circumstances. If you are not comfortable or are unable to talk to us, you may choose to give us permission to talk to a third party who has your written consent to share your information with us.

### **4. Assessing Priority Housing Need**

We will consider the following when assessing your need for priority assistance:

- a. Circumstances where you may not be able to provide required information.
- b. Circumstances where your current living situation is hindering your wellbeing due to cultural needs or requirements.
- c. The history of your current tenancy, including any current action to terminate your tenancy (only if you are requesting a transfer to an alternative public housing property).

### **5. Ongoing Eligibility for Priority Housing Assistance**

Your ongoing eligibility for priority housing assistance will be reviewed:

- a. through the annual review process,
- b. when you or a third party, with your consent, advise us of a change in your circumstances,
- c. if you want to change the location preference of your application.

If you have been approved for a priority transfer and need to terminate your tenancy or your interest in the tenancy, to maintain the safety of your household, while you are waiting for a transfer you will retain your priority transfer listing date.

## **Related legislation**

- *Housing Act 1980*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1987*

- *Residential Tenancies Regulations 1989*

## Related policies

- Family and Domestic Violence Policy
- Cultural Diversity and Language Policy
- Housing for People with Disabilities Policy
- Application Management Policy
- Clients with Complex Housing History Policy

## Document control

<b>Publication date</b>	January 2025
<b>Review date</b>	January 2028
<b>Owner</b>	Executive Director – Statewide Services
<b>Custodian</b>	Director – Housing Practice and Support

## Amendments

Version	Date	Author	Description
1	April 2018	[position title – not name]	This policy replaced the Priority Assistance Policy. This policy improves clarity of the strategic policy intent for the identification of priority housing need and the provision of priority housing assistance
2	January 2022	[position title – not name]	Updated policy format. Amendment to Statement 1 b. and c. to align with minister rapid response items and directional change by identifying a

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			<p>client's need based on risk and vulnerability.</p> <p>Amendments made to section 2 to align with section 1 amendments.</p> <p>Removal of previous section 5 Clients' previous and current history with the Housing Authority will be reviewed. Covered in new stand-alone Applicants with an Adverse History Policy.</p>
3	January 2025	Senior Operational Improvement Officer	<p>Priority Housing Need Eligibility updated to include specific references to the safety and wellbeing of children</p> <p>Priority Housing need Factors expanded, to expressly reference family violence, circumstances related to a children in care or at risk of entering into the care of the CEO and overcrowding.</p> <p>Added the option to have a third party supply supporting information on behalf of the person</p> <p>Under Ongoing Eligibility for Priority Housing Assistance (previously Reassessing Priority Housing Need), expanded details on when eligibility is assessed and who may provide advice of changed circumstances.</p> <p>Added information regarding the option to vacate a property while waiting for a priority transfer.</p>