

Eligibility and Allocation Policy

Introduction

Veteran Housing Australia (VHA) practise clear and transparent processes when allocating properties to clients. This policy is to establish VHA's criteria for a person to be considered eligible at the time of allocation and ongoing eligibility defined within VHA or program guidelines.

Aim

VHA has a selection process that is accountable, meets all legislative requirements, industry standards and guidelines and appropriately matches individual housing needs with available properties. Within this, VHA conforms to agreed federal and state allocation policies as part of maintaining its registration to provide community or social housing in each jurisdiction.

Principles of VHA Eligibility and Allocation Policy

INFORMATION TO CLIENTS

Prospective clients are provided with clear, detailed information about the eligibility requirements (including income and assets), potential location and features of the accommodations available and any mandatory disclosures under the RTA. An offer letter is provided to each client with acceptance timelines for accepting the offer, acknowledging that in the instance the offer is not accepted it will be offered to the next eligible client. Language support is also provided when advertising a vacancy if required.

ALLOCATION AND ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES

- Veterans or widows of veterans and their families
- All eligibility assessments (of prospective and current VHA clients) and at the time of allocating housing, VHA will comply with National and State laws regarding equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation
- VHA will adhere to any contractual arrangements that apply to program specific, funding or government stated eligibility criteria as stated in any such agreement. VHA will allocate from waitlists and central registers in appropriate locations and adhere to the agreements surrounding their use for allocation purposes
- VHA will apply systematic instructions and tools to ensure operational staff carry out their duties using fairness, transparency and in line with required Acts, Regulations and Standards
- VHA allocates housing to specific groups within communities who are at greater financial, cultural and/ or social disadvantage, including people with disabilities, mental health issues, single parents, aged and indigenous people. Where programs allow, VHA seeks to allocate a set proportion of all available housing to such groups

ASSESSING INCOME

The assessment of gross household income is based on the evidence supplied by the client. This evidence includes:

- Centrelink payment information
- Payslips and Notice of Assessment from the Australian Tax Office (ATO)
- Statements from other income sources (e.g. workers compensation, shares)

VHA must be satisfied that the information provided is a true reflection of the household income including a minimum of:

- 13 weeks of pay slips
- 4 weeks of Centrelink benefits
- Previous year Payment Summary (formerly group certificate) or;
- 3 month Notice of Assessment from ATO or Certified Practising Accountant

OTHER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following clients are not eligible to be housed with VHA:

- Previous clients of VHA with unattended debts
- Clients who own realisable residential real estate
- Primary client not an Australian citizen or permanent resident

MATCHING

VHA will endeavour to achieve sustainable housing outcomes via consideration of the individual needs of the client and the available dwelling.

DECISION MAKING

VHA believes that a sustainable tenancy starts with a quality allocation of housing for a suitable client.

Documented operational processes and guidelines are designed to ensure housing services staff are able to effectively assess eligibility and allocate suitably matched properties to clients, while adhering to policy principles and adopting a leading practice approach.

Decisions are made with care and diligence and with consideration of the program and/or contractual requirements under which the property may be managed.

Decisions that consider both the eligibility and the suitability of a client and a property are necessary to ensure not only future clients are housed successfully in VHA's housing programs, but also to ensure the future capacity for VHA to sustain tenancies in them.

Housing Services staff undertake in-depth program induction, supervision and ongoing training.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE TENANCIES

Working within program guidelines and legislative requirements, VHA will use allocation strategies to facilitate sustainable tenancies. During application, eligibility assessment and allocation processes, VHA will work proactively with clients to identify any barriers to sustaining tenancies, and will take clients' needs, preferences and tenancy skills into account in making allocations. Where applicable, VHA will also take into account the needs and preferences of other household members.

At the establishment of a new tenancy, VHA will work proactively with clients to ensure that they understand their rights and responsibilities, the features of their property, how rent is calculated, how to contact VHA and what they can expect of VHA during their tenancy. VHA will maintain engagement with new clients throughout the tenancy establishment phase to help them settle into their property and community and if/where required engage with support providers.

CLARITY OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED

All materials and formats used ensure information is easy to read, alternative formats are available and indicated in information.

Forms, information documents and advertising materials are reviewed on a regular basis; this includes feedback surveys to our new clients and annual feedback from surveying our current clients. Improvement strategies are developed and implemented as needed.

DIVERSITY

VHA is committed to a balanced social mix of households in the community. Each State operation within VHA has a commitment to helping build connected, thriving communities and seeks to empower its clients through its approach of creating an equitable and sustainable social mix within its portfolios, in line with the company's Vision and Mission. VHA always works towards any contract or agreed specified allocation objectives.

TARGETING DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS AND USING ALLOCATION PROCESSES

VHA applies target group ratios to properties it owns in its general property stock, that are not subject to existing requirements with government and/or other stakeholders, to ensure people with social and financial disadvantage will have appropriate consideration and priority.

Nomination rights may also be applied under various programs to some VHA stock for exclusive use to partner support agencies. Partnership Agreements are reviewed on an annual basis. Tenancy and Housing Services staff follow VHA operational guidelines in undertaking allocation processes.

Allocations are made in accordance with State Legislation and contractual requirements. Allocations are overseen by the General Manager to ensure that clients who meet the eligibility criteria are suitably housed.

CLIENT FEEDBACK AND APPEAL OF DECISIONS

VHA welcomes its clients to query any decisions it makes and/or ask questions about our work practices. If a client wishes to provide feedback to VHA and/or believes a decision made by VHA is incorrect, they can lodge client feedback and/or an appeal using the VHA Client Feedback Policy or the VHA Appeals Policy.

Related legislation

STANDARDS

**National Community Housing Standards: Standard 1.2; Establishing and Maintaining Tenancies;
Section 3 - Tenants Rights and Participation**

Department of Human Services Standards: Section 1 - Empowerment

LEGISLATION

Housing Assistance Act 1996 (COM)

Housing Act. 1983 (VIC)

Housing Act 2003 (QLD)

RESIDENTIAL TENANCY ACTS

Residential Tenancies Act. 1997 (VIC)

Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW)

Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)

Residential Tenancy Act 1997 (TAS)

Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA)

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (QLD)

CODES, FRAMEWORKS AND AGREEMENTS

The National Affordable Housing Agreement

**OOH, Homelessness Assistance Program Guidelines and Conditions Funding 2006-
2009 (VIC)**

Consumer Charter for Community Managed Housing and Homelessness Services

Western Australian Community Housing Regulatory Framework - Performance

Outcome 1 - Tenant and housing services

National Regulatory Code

Victorian Regulatory Framework

The Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter Act 2006 (VIC)

VHA RELATED POLICIES AND PROCESSES

VHA Client Promise