

Allocation of Long-Term Social Housing Policy

Policy Statement

Guiding principles

Eligibility for housing

This policy outlines National Affordable Housing Consortium – Victoria’s (NAHV) establishes eligibility criteria for long-term social housing to fulfil its social mission and to ensure that its housing is made available to relieve households from housing stress.

Accordingly, NAHV will:

- only allocate long-term social housing to eligible applicants;
- communicate clearly to applicants and the community as to who is eligible for long-term social housing with NAHV; and
- comply with its contractual, legal and regulatory obligations relating to eligibility for long-term social housing.

Approach to allocation

NAHV will allocate long-term social housing to eligible applicants with a commitment to:

- relieve households from housing stress;
- provide secure affordable and appropriate housing
- give appropriate priority to households in greatest need of housing assistance;
- fair, transparent and equitable processes;
- meeting contractual, legal and regulatory obligations;
- matching for success; and
- supports the financial viability of NAHV’s long term social housing programs.

NAHV is committed to creating a successful outcome for the tenant and the community when matching applicants to its properties. This means that NAHV will allocate housing in a way that:

- considers the health, safety, social, cultural and support needs of applicants and connects applicants with available support services as appropriate;
- considers a place-based approach when matching individual housing needs with available properties;
- takes into consideration the individual attributes as well as the match for the person with the neighbourhood and the resources available to support success;
- supports economic and social participation;
- supports sustainable and harmonious communities; and
- is outcomes focussed.

Purpose

This policy outlines NNAHV responsibilities and requirements of tenant eligibility & social housing allocations.

This policy establishes the approach of NNAHV to:

- eligibility for its long-term social housing programs;
- the prioritisation and allocation of vacant properties in its long-term social housing portfolio; and
- successful and sustainable tenancies and communities through the “matching for success” of applicants to properties.

Scope
This policy applies to all long-term Targeted and Non-Targeted Social Housing properties owned or managed by NAHV.
This policy does not apply to properties managed by NAHV on behalf of other property owners where the owner retains responsibility for the allocation of housing.
Human Rights Considerations
In deciding what action to take, NAHV employees must give proper consideration to the relevant human rights in accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 s38(1) (the Charter). This consideration should include the potential impact the proposed action they are undertaking through this policy may have on the person's (and their household's) rights under the Charter.
Eligibility for housing
NAHV participates in the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). The VHR is a common register for all applicants seeking public and community housing in Victoria. DHHS has established common eligibility criteria for the VHR that are set out in the Eligibility Criteria Operational Guidelines. The VHR's eligibility criteria apply to all long-term social housing owned, managed or controlled by NAHV in Victoria. All applicants with a current VHR application are considered by NAHV to meet the VHR eligibility criteria. Applicants without a current VHR application can provide evidence to NAHV that establishes they meet the VHR eligibility criteria. NAHV will then assist such applicants to make a VHR application either through referral to a suitable service or by assisting the applicant to lodge a VHR application.
Additional assessment to match for success
In addition to meeting the VHR eligibility criteria, the process of matching for success in the NAHC service model incorporates the following pathways:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A person needs support and is already connected, Personal Housing Plan (PHP) agreed by the applicant, support partner organisation and NAHV. 2. Existing support relationships are in place; however, the person is not yet registered for housing, then NAHC can support the person to make a VHR application either through referral to a suitable service or by assisting the applicant to lodge a VHR application, and follow with support to co-develop the PHP with the applicant, and support services. 3. For people with complex needs who do not have support in place, NAHC acts to connect applicants with NAHC partner support providers, then to offer tenancy and agree the PHP worked on collaboratively. 4. A person who has complex needs, however, does not want support. NAHC will need to determine if matching for success will work by assessing to ensure the applicant will be capable of sustaining a tenancy without support. 5. A person who can independently plan and execute their goals but has a high vulnerability because of the need for housing assistance. NAHV to develop the PHP with the applicant and provide a warm referral if required. 6. Some people will have the attributes but not match for success in the community for which they have applied. In some instances resources to support the person may be the gap. NAHV recognises the person's needs, aspirations, strengths, and rights in relation to access to housing. When a match for success is not achieved, the person will be provided with information on the reasons and referred back to the housing register or community referral agency.
Specific requirements for particular long-term social housing programs
NAHV has some particular long-term social housing programs where additional eligibility criteria to the general eligibility criteria apply. This can include, for example, programs targeted at providing housing for elderly people. NAHV will communicate clearly with applicants and stakeholders as to the particular eligibility criteria that apply to these programs.

Approach to allocation

Allocations Target - Victorian Housing Register

Under the VHR's allocations framework, NAHV is required to meet an annual Priority Allocations Target. This requires NAHV to allocate an agreed percentage of vacancies in Targeted Social Housing to Priority Access applicants in each financial year. As not all of NAHV's properties are Targeted Social Housing, this Target is adjusted so that NAHV can make allocations across its portfolio in order to meet the Target.

NAHV will implement procedures to monitor its performance against the Priority Allocations Target regularly to ensure that NAHV complies with its obligations.

Sourcing applicants

NAHV will at first instance seek suitable applicants from the VHR. Where a suitable applicant being considered for a vacancy does not have a current VHR application but is eligible for social housing under the VHR and suitable for that vacancy, then NAHV will ensure that such applicants complete a VHR application at the time of making an offer of housing.

Nomination rights

Where nomination rights apply, NAHV will:

- establish appropriate arrangements in protocol agreements with referral agencies who have responsibility for nominating applicants for vacancies, to ensure timely and appropriate referrals; and
- require that referral agencies nominate applicants who have a current VHR Priority Access application.

Other legal requirements

NAHV will ensure in making any social housing allocation that it complies with any other legal requirements concerning eligibility for housing or allocation of housing.

Promoting successful and sustainable tenancies

NAHV is committed to treating all applicants fairly and will not unlawfully discriminate against any potential applicant or applicant.

NAHV will assess all applicants before making an offer of housing to determine suitability for a particular vacancy (and eligibility if the applicant does not currently have a VHR application). If NAHV declines to offer an applicant housing, it will inform the applicant accordingly.

Matching households to the right house

When matching a household to a property NAHV considers the appropriateness of the property to the person's expressed needs. This consideration will include:

- the applicant's connections and linkages to the community, including their need for access to support services, schools and medical facilities in the area.
- Housing Size Guidelines
- any Special Accommodation Requirements such as, access to particular location requirements, property access needs or property construction type for medical reasons

NAHV will ask applicants to provide reasonable evidence to substantiate any particular requirements, if this is not contained in a VHR application.

Supporting sustainable and harmonious communities

NAHV may, to the extent necessary, adopt different strategies in allocation in response to:

- a high concentration of social housing stock in a particular area;
- a high concentration of tenants with multiple health, social or economic issues in a particular area or building;
- existing tenancy management issues (or a potential for them to develop);
- existing neighbourhood tensions or disputes which may be exacerbated if allocations are not sensitively handled; and a mismatch of supply and demand making the property hard to let.

Complaints and Appeals

If an applicant is not satisfied with a service provided by NAHV or does not agree with a decision it has made, they can ask for a formal review. To do this, the applicant can complete either a complaint or appeal form, details of which appear in the NAHV Complaints and Appeals Policy. This policy is available from NAHV's office or downloaded from our website www.nahc.org.au/NAHV

Applicants who are unhappy with the resolution of a complaint or appeal under the complaints and appeals procedure may refer the complaint to the DHHS Housing Appeals Office.

Transparency and Accessibility

This procedure will be available on the NAHV website www.nahc.org.au/NAHV

NAHV may from time to time implement changes to this policy. The revised policy will apply to all tenancies on and from the date of the change. All tenants will be advised in writing of the changes and if/how it will affect their tenancy.

Relevant Legislation and Standards

- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Legal agreements between NAHV and the Director of Housing relating to the VHR
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- DHHS Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding
- Victorian Housing Register – Eligibility Criteria Operational Guidelines
- VHR Clients with special accommodation requirements

Related Policies and Procedures

- NAHV Privacy Policy
- NAHV Conflict of Interest
- NAHV Rent Setting Policy

Definitions

In this policy:

Applicant - means a person who has applied for housing via the VHR or, where permitted by this policy, directly to NAHV

DHHS - means the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

Director of Housing - means the Victorian government statutory authority that owns all public housing land in Victoria and which is the principal funding body for community housing

Nomination rights - means arrangements between NAHV and third party support providers where the support provider nominates applicants for certain vacant properties

Priority Access - Applicants on the VHR who have been assessed as having a priority housing need.

Public housing - Housing owned and managed by DHHS

Social Housing - Housing controlled or managed by NAHV that houses Eligible Persons from the Priority Access or Register of Interest sections on the VHR.

Targeted Social Housing - The properties that are considered Targeted Social Housing under agreements between NAHV and the Director of Housing.

VHR - The Victorian Housing Register, the state wide common application for people seeking public housing and community housing.

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