

Transitional Housing Program for Women & Children

Adoption Date:
27 April 2021

Review Date:
27 January 2022

Version:
3

Responsible Department:
Community Development

TRIM Document Number:
D04463535

Contents

Introduction	3
1. Aims of Transitional Housing Program	3
2. General Eligibility Criteria	3
3. Eligibility criteria relating to Housing Need	4
4. Tenancy Duration	4
5. Rent Policy	4
6. Referral and Nomination Process	5
7. Allocation Process	5
8. Managing Tenancies	6
A. Appendix A – Additional Rules	7

Introduction

This housing document describes how Council will provide transitional housing to women and children who have been victims of domestic or family violence and may be currently residing in emergency/temporary accommodation.

The Council has made a commitment to help address the shortage of transitional housing for this vulnerable section of the community by providing 6 asset owned dwellings and 3 private rental dwellings, each consisting of 2 bedrooms for this purpose. Location of dwellings shall remain confidential for tenant safety reasons.

The identified dwellings will be managed by registered Community Housing Providers (CHP) appointed by the Council to undertake all tenancy and property management operations.

1. Aims of Transitional Housing Program

To provide stable and affordable rental accommodation to women and their dependent children who are ready to escape domestic violence.

The program provides subsidised rental accommodation for a maximum 3 years after which the tenant will be required to transition into either the private rental market or other housing options, at no cost to the Council or the responsible Council appointed CHP

The allocation of transitional accommodation will be assessed by a Panel and can only be accessed through an agency referral process described under the heading, *7. Referral and nomination process*.

2. General Eligibility Criteria

Applicant must:

- Be a resident of Randwick Local Government Area or previously had a connection with or been a resident of the Randwick Local Government area, prior to fleeing a domestic violence situation
- Provide proof of identity and residence
- Be able to sustain a successful tenancy with support
- Be aged 18 or older
- Meet the maximum household income limits for the relevant household sizes and combinations detailed in the NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines (current version)
- Have a regular income (government or non-government) and/or be willing to engage in obtaining employment and/or meet Housing Pathways income eligibility limits.
- Be escaping domestic/family violence and at risk of being homeless

Applicants who have assets or property which could reasonably be expected to solve their housing need will not be considered eligible.

3. Eligibility criteria relating to Housing Need

Women with dependent children and who are ready to escape domestic violence or exit SHS/Crisis accommodation and have outreach support plan.

Women must be willing to re-engage in paid employment, or at the very least meet the Housing Pathways income eligibility limits.

No current unmanaged substance abuse or mental health conditions

Agree to comply with the additional rules (see Appendix 1):

Preference given to:

- Australian citizens and permanent residents
- Spouses of Australian citizens and permanent residents
- Women with dependent children who are ready to exit SHS/Crisis accommodation, have previously lived in Randwick LGA prior to leaving the home as a result of DFV situation, or
- Women who are able to demonstrate they have adequate training/skills/work experience to support them to engage in employment programs with the aim of securing paid employment.
- will agree to participate in provision of support services from an appropriate support service where identified.

4. Tenancy Duration

The maximum period of program for eligible tenants is three years. At the end of three years the tenant will be required to relocate into alternative accommodation.

A Residential Tenancy Agreement (RTA 2010) will be entered into between the tenant and CHP appointed by the Council.

If the tenant secures employment and continues to be employed in the workforce, an additional 2 year non-renewable tenancy period may be negotiated with the tenancy manager. Tenants who have successfully secured the additional 2 year non-renewable tenancy period will pay a weekly rent in accordance with the Council's Affordable Rental Housing rent policy.

When the maximum tenancy is reached, the Community Housing provider as the tenancy manager should assist the tenant to assess alternative housing options. In this regard, a tenant may be given up to 3 months to move to alternative housing if needed.

5. Rent Policy

Tenants will sign a fixed term Agreement under the RTA 2010 to be reviewed annually to confirm income eligibility.

Rent will be charged at 25% of weekly household gross income (inclusive of 100% Commonwealth Rental Subsidy and/or any government subsidy payments).

In Council's asset owned properties, a bond is payable by the tenant – 2 weeks subsidised rent will be collected as rental bond. In private rentals managed by Council, bond is not payable by the tenant.

Tenant is responsible for their utilities usage expenses.

6. Referral and Nomination Process

Randwick Council in partnership with its appointed Community Housing provider will invite Domestic Violence services and homelessness services in the district to nominate eligible applicants using nomination form.

An applicant must be nominated by a SHS or Crisis Accommodation Provider or other organisation deemed suitable to receive a nomination form and complete a disclosure consent to facilitate information relating to the nomination form.

The nominating agencies must explain to the client why sharing some personal information with the tenancy manager is important and gets their consent by signing the nomination form.

The agency worker nominating a client is responsible for:

- Discussing the aims of the program, and all other conditions, with the client before lodging the nomination e.g. length of lease, requirement to engage in support services etc
- Establishing with the client if program is appropriate for them
- Completing the Nomination Form, and returning it with relevant supporting information to the community housing provider responsible for managing the property
- Providing to the tenancy manager appropriate and relevant information relating to their client's support needs.
- Maintaining on-going contact and actively engaging with the client throughout the nomination process
- Contacting the client to tell them about the decision of the housing application
- Ensuring the client has relevant ID papers, rent and bond before entering into the agreement

An allocation panel consists of representatives from the responsible community housing provider and a council officer is responsible for assessing and determining which referral will be eligible. The tenancy manager/community housing provider acting on the Council's behalf is responsible for arranging panel meetings and advising the outcome to all of the referrals received.

7. Allocation Process

Before the client moves into the property, the tenancy manager/community housing provider organises an allocation conference with the client, and her support service/refuge representative, where relevant, to formalise all tenancy management details. Discussion to include:

- Defining any roles and responsibilities
- Coordinating appropriate support service to check in on well-being of client, if appropriate
- Accessing or provision of household goods – fridge, beds and other major furnishing
- Identifying employment/training strategies to re-engage with paid employment

- Any issues that may impeded the client's ability to maintain their tenancy, and putting in place strategies to manage them
- Transition and exit planning for the tenant at the end of the program or when the tenant is no longer eligible for the program.

8. Managing Tenancies

Tenancy management and maintenance functions are to be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of a signed service agreement between Council and the CHP:

In addition to the roles identified in this policy, additional tasks include:

- Sign up of tenancy agreements
- Ensuring tenant is aware of the additional obligations of living in the dwelling
- Setting and charging rent in accordance with council policy, and conducting annual rent and eligibility review
- Managing tenancy or property issues
- Transition and exit planning, managing breaches of tenancy.

A. Appendix 1 – Additional Rules

If the following circumstances change this may impact on the tenant being eligible to remain in the property. Examples of such situations or circumstances are:

- if another person starts residing in your home.
- You have reconciled with the person responsible for the domestic/family violence you and your dependents have been subjected to
- Any of your children stop being in your care, under certain circumstances.

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