

1. Introduction

Wayss provides housing to people who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness or family violence. This policy is to establish Wayss' criteria for a person to be considered eligible at the time of allocation and ongoing eligibility for allocation at both Transitional & Crisis and medium-longer term housing. This policy explains how Wayss make allocation decisions relating to all vacant properties in our social housing portfolio.

Wayss is a Child Safe organisation and child safety is at the forefront of our program delivery. Our policies ensure that child safety is a primary part of everyday thinking and practice. All personnel, contractors and volunteers have an obligation to ensure we keep children safe from harm and abuse.

We're committed to upholding the rights of all of our stakeholders and creating a workplace that fosters inclusion and diversity. We believe that by bringing our authentic selves to Wayss, we can contribute to building strong teams, cultivating leaders, and creating an organisation that is well-suited for every individual. It's essential to us that we establish an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, can be themselves and feel safe, valued and respected. Regardless of whether you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or LGBTIQ member, are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, or a person living with a disability, as an individual associating with Wayss, you have the right to participate and engage in an environment that is free from discrimination and bias, and we strive to create a workplace that honours that commitment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to eligibility for applicants seeking to be housed in transitional, crisis or medium to longer term housing (including rooming houses), that are owned or managed by Wayss.

This policy does not include eligibility or allocations for specialist disability or funded crisis accommodation.

3. Policy Statement

3.1. Guiding Principles

Wayss aims to:

- ensure that support agencies supporting people seeking housing have access to the eligibility criteria, have been provided with guidance on how to apply for housing and, if required, are provided with (or referred to) appropriate supports to make an application for housing through the Victorian Housing Register.
- communicate clearly to support agencies and stakeholders about our eligibility criteria and allocations process.
- ensure that an offer of housing matches the applicant's needs wherever possible e.g., property size, location, access to support services, etc.
- offer and allocate vacancies in a timely and efficient manner that meets regulatory performance requirements.
- comply with all contractual, legal, financial and regulatory obligations.

4. Victorian Housing Register (VHR)

The Victorian Government amended the Housing Act 1983 (Vic) in 2016, to establish the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). This is a single waiting list for public housing and long-term social housing owned and managed by participating community housing providers.

Under the Housing Act 1983 the purpose of the Victorian Housing Register is to facilitate the appropriate allocation of tenancies in social housing, having regard to:

- the relative housing needs of eligible applicants,
- the health safety and support needs of eligible applicants, and
- the availability of social housing.

Wayss is a participating agency of the VHR. This means that when a vacancy occurs in long term social housing, we will make the offer of housing from the VHR.

The VHR has two categories:

Priority Access is for people:

- who are homeless and receiving support
- are escaping or have escaped family violence
- with a disability or significant support needs
- with special housing needs

Register of Interest is for:

- all eligible applicants to register their interest for social housing
- applicants who may have low support needs
- applicants who are on low to moderate income

All allocations within Wayss long term social housing will be made to applicants on the VHR.

4.1. Transitional and Crisis Housing Allocations – Eligibility

Wayss manages the Transitional Housing Management (THM) programs delivered across the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Southern Metropolitan region. The THM program is a Victorian Government initiative to assist individuals and families in housing crisis who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness or family violence, with the provision of transitional and crisis housing. The THM program is coordinated with the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and together they make up the Victorian Homelessness Service System.

The aim of the THM program is to ensure that:

- those most in need have access to transitional and crisis housing (through allocation by Local Area Service Networks and nominating agencies)
- renters/occupants are supported to establish and/or maintain appropriate, secure and sustainable housing at the conclusion of their tenure in transitional housing (in collaboration with Support Agencies)
- renters/occupants are afforded appropriate rights in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) and government policy

Support Agencies that have nomination rights to THM properties will be advised prior to a vacant property being ready to be re-tenanted. The nominating Support Agency then provides information regarding the next client to be housed in that property. Applicants nominated must meet the eligibility criteria for social housing as determined by Homes Victoria and documented above.

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When a vacancy arises in a property without nomination rights, Wayss places that vacancy on the Vacancy Management System (VMS) in the Victorian Government Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP), and client applications are submitted by the respective Support Agencies. An assessment panel is convened by Wayss to determine the most suitable client for that vacancy. Refer to our **Transitional Housing Policy** for further information.

4.2. Medium to Longer Term Housing Allocations – Eligibility

Medium to longer term housing includes Wayss owned properties, properties managed on behalf of Council, and Rooming Houses.

Wayss is a participating agency of the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) and uses the VHR to make allocations to vacant medium and longer term housing. Further information regarding the VHR can be found at:

<https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/victorian-housing-register>

To be eligible for social housing tenancy with Wayss, applicants are required to meet the eligibility criteria as determined by Homes Victoria. These guidelines are available here:

<https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility>

Applicants, advocates and stakeholders can contact Wayss directly on (03) 9791 6111 and our Initial Assessment and Planning team can provide assistance regarding applying for social housing.

4.3. Specific Eligibility Criteria

Properties have additional eligibility criteria. This may include:

- applicants must be Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia, any exception to this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis
- households on the Priority Access or Register of Interest
- target groups such as, but not limited to, people with a disability, veterans, people over 55, victim survivors of family violence and Targeted Care Packages etc.
- applicants who are receiving support from a specific support agency who have nomination rights to the vacant property
- applicants who meet other eligibility requirements as set by the National Rental Affordability Scheme

To be eligible for social housing, you should live in Victoria and meet current income and asset limits.

4.4. Former Renter Debt

Having a former renter debt with Wayss does not impact on eligibility. However, renters will be placed on an agreed payment plan to repay arrears of previous Wayss tenancies.

5. Allocating Vacant Properties

When a vacancy notification has been received, Wayss will document the vacancy and consider eligibility criteria for the property.

For a reasonable offer to be made, Wayss will ensure that the allocation:

- meets any specific eligibility criteria
- is the right size for the applicant's household
- makes the best use of the housing stock managed by Wayss

5.1. Minimum Bedroom Size

This table shows the minimum bedroom entitlement per household. Please note Wayss has only a small number of properties within our portfolio of 4 or more bedrooms.

| HOUSEHOLD GROUPS | MINIMUM BEDROOMS |
|---|------------------|
| Single person or couple | 1 bedroom |
| Single person or couple with one other household member | 2 bedrooms |
| Single or couple with two other household members | 2 bedrooms |
| Single or couple with three other household member | 3 bedrooms |
| Single or couple with four other household members | 3 bedrooms |
| Single or Couple with 5 household members | 4 bedrooms |

5.2. Housing Needs Assessment

Before an offer of housing is made, Wayss (or the support provider if not Wayss) will meet with applicants to:

- check that the applicant/s is still eligible for social housing.
- ask the applicant/s to provide reasonable evidence to substantiate any requirements that are not contained in the VHR application, if required.
- better understand the applicants housing need and support requirements contacting support services listed on the application with the applicant's consent.

Wayss' Property Services team will then meet with applicants to:

- provide the applicant/s with information about Wayss, the property, rights and responsibilities of Residents and Wayss.

5.3. Assessing Income

The assessment of gross household income is based on the evidence supplied by the applicant. For more information on income assessment, please refer to our **Rent Setting Policy**.

5.4. When an Offer of Housing has been made

An offer of housing is the formal process that, if accepted, will result in the signing of a tenancy agreement for a household. An offer of housing relates only to permanent ongoing social public housing and is not a part of the process for transitional or crisis housing applications. A formal offer of housing will be made in writing to the applicant through their support provider.

Support agencies have two weeks in which to fill the vacancy. The number of days in which an applicant must respond to the offer of housing is dependent on their service provider's policies and procedures. If the applicant requires more than the specified days to consider the offer, they must contact their support provider to seek an extension.

5.5. Sustainable Tenancies

At the establishment of a new tenancy, Wayss will work proactively with renters to ensure that they understand their rights and responsibilities, the features of their property, how rent is calculated, how to contact Wayss and what they can expect of Wayss during their tenancy. Wayss will maintain

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engagement with new renters throughout the tenancy establishment phase to help them settle into their property and community and if/where required engage with support providers.

6. Complaints and Appeals

Wayss welcomes its renters to query any decisions it makes and/or ask questions about our work practices. If a renter wishes to provide feedback to Wayss and/or believes a decision made by Wayss is incorrect, the first step is to request that the complaint be reviewed, or that the decision be reconsidered by Wayss as per our ***Client Feedback and Complaints Policy***.

A renter or applicant may wish to:

- make a complaint about the way in which Wayss has provided a service to them in making an application.
- appeal a decision made by Wayss in relation to the person's application for social housing.
- make a complaint regarding their application status on the Victorian Housing Register – this complaint can be made directly to Homes Victoria.

7. Collection Statement

All personal information Wayss collects will be done in accordance with our ***Client Privacy Policy***.

8. Review

Wayss will review this policy every three years or sooner if there are legislative changes, or Wayss receives feedback or complaints about service delivery that may impact on this policy.

9. Related Resources

9.1. Standards and Guidelines

Department of Human Services Standards: Section 1 – Empowerment

Homelessness Services Guidelines and Conditions of Funding May 2014

Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies

Victorian Housing Registrar Community Housing Regulatory Framework

9.2. Legislation

Housing Act 1983 (Vic)

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2018 (Vic)

9.3. Wayss Related Policies and Documents

Client Privacy Policy

Client Feedback and Complaints Policy

Rent Setting Policy

Transitional Housing Policy

10. Change History

| Date | Version | Summary of changes | Approver |
|------------|---------|--------------------|---|
| 30/03/2023 | 1.0 | Initial Re-draft | General Manager, Homelessness and Housing |
| 24/04/2023 | 1.0 | Draft Approved | CEO |