

Baptcare Affordable Housing Policy

Document Information

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Overview

Purpose

The purpose of Baptcare Affordable Housing's (BAH) Allocations Policy is to explain to renters and prospective renters how BAH determines eligibility and allocates its properties.

Who Does It Apply To?

This policy applies to all long-term rental properties owned and/or managed by BAH.

Definitions

- a) Applicant - Means a person who has applied for housing via the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) or, where permitted by this policy, directly to BAH
- b) DFFH - Means the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- c) Director of Housing - Means the Victorian government statutory authority that owns all public housing land in Victoria and is the principal funding body for community housing
- d) Nomination rights - Means arrangements between BAH and third-party support providers where the support provider nominates applicants for certain vacant properties
- e) Priority Access - Applicants on the VHR who have been assessed as having a priority housing need. The Priority Access categories are:
 - Emergency management housing
 - Priority transfers
 - Homeless with support
 - Supported housing
 - Special housing needs
 - Special housing needs (aged 55 years and over)
- f) Public Housing - Housing owned and managed by DFFH
- g) Social Housing - Housing that is owned and managed by either DFFH or a community housing provider
- h) Social Housing List - Means the list of BAH's social housing set out in Schedule 2 of the *Participation in the Victorian Housing Register: Registered Agency Agreement*. This includes all agreed Targeted Social Housing and Non-Targeted Social Housing but does not necessarily include all housing owned and/or managed by BAH
- i) Targeted Social Housing - The properties that are considered Targeted Social Housing under agreements between BAH and the Director of Housing Victorian Housing Register (VHR)
- j) Victorian Housing Register (VHR) - The statewide common application record for people seeking public housing and community housing

Policy

Overview

This policy describes how BAH selects applicants for housing from the Victorian Housing Register and under other circumstances.

Principles

BAH establishes eligibility and allocation criteria for its housing program in order to:

- fulfil its social mission
- ensure that its housing is made available to relieve households from housing stress
- ensure the allocations criteria support the financial viability of its housing programs
- ensure that all BAH's eligibility assessments and allocations are undertaken in a clear and transparent manner
- ensure compliance with BAH's contractual, legal and regulatory obligations.

Allocations

BAH is a participating registered agency under the Victorian Housing Register (VHR). When BAH has a vacant property it will generally make an allocation of housing from the VHR, in accordance with its agreed Social Housing List. However, Determinations of the Director of Housing allow BAH to use discretion and apply agency-specific eligibility and allocation policies that are in accordance with any nomination agreements which may be in place.

In addition, where properties fall outside BAH's agreed Social Housing List, allocations may be made from outside the VHR. For example, from:

- Local churches
- Referrals from support services
- Partner agencies
- Through direct contact with BAH

Allocations may include new applicants or renters who have been approved for transfer from both the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and other participating registered agencies.

Eligibility

BAH requires all applicants to its agreed Social Housing List to be eligible to be registered with the VHR. All applicants with a current VHR application are understood by BAH to meet the VHR eligibility criteria.

Where an applicant is being considered for a vacancy and is without a current VHR application but meets the VHR eligibility criteria and is suitable for that vacancy, BAH will ensure the applicant completes a VHR application at the time of making an offer of housing.

Applicants can complete VHR applications in the following ways:

- online through MyGov at www.my.gov.au,
- in person at any Department of Families, Fairness and Housing office or community housing organisation that accepts applications over the counter
- through a designated service provider.

Information about the process and full eligibility criteria are available on Housing Victoria's website at www.housing.vic.gov.au/apply-social-housing.

To be eligible for the VHR an applicant must generally live in Victoria and:

- Be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia (exemption applies to Asylum Seekers and refugees)
- Meet the income and eligibility limits for their household
- Have an independent income
- Not own a property in which they could live.

Exceptions to these criteria may be made under certain circumstances, for example, where an applicant is experiencing family violence.

Exceptions to these criteria may also apply to any properties owned and/or managed by BAH that are not on the agreed Social Housing List.

Income and asset eligibility criteria are updated regularly and published on the Housing Victoria website.

Specific Eligibility Criteria

BAH may apply additional eligibility criteria for a specific property depending on the housing program. This may include an allocation that is targeted towards specific groups, including but not limited to:

- Older women aged 55+ living in insecure housing and at risk of homelessness
- Applicants with significant links to the local area where housing is sought
- Applicants with support services in the area where housing is sought
- Applicants with employment in the area where housing is sought
- Households which meet other eligibility criteria as set by housing programs such as the National Rental Affordability Criteria (NRAC)
- Applicants who can demonstrate they have sufficient income to pay the rent for a property and that the rent does not exceed 30% of their income.

BAH will communicate clearly with applicants and stakeholders as to the eligibility criteria that will apply to that property or program prior to an allocation being made.

Additional requirements for eligibility

In addition to meeting the VHR eligibility criteria for the BAH Social Housing List, all applicants must:

- Have no previous debt with BAH, or have entered into a debt repayment agreement where such a debt exists
- Be able to demonstrate that, where anti-social behaviour has occurred in a previous rental agreement, a plan is in place to ensure that such behaviour will not continue to occur
- Be aged 18 years and over
- Not have ownership or part-ownership of a house, unit or flat unless they are prevented from selling their equity or residing in the property due to specific circumstance such as Family Violence.

Approach to Allocation

The Victorian Housing Register

For all allocations to its Social Housing List BAH will seek applicants from the VHR. BAH will allocate 75% of vacancies in Targeted Social Housing to applicants who are on the Priority Access list of the VHR.

To manage its portfolio of properties in a dynamic manner, BAH may also choose to allocate properties outside its Targeted Social Housing to Priority Access applicants.

Sourcing applicants

BAH will first seek suitable applicants from the VHR.

There may be instances when no suitable applicants are available from the VHR. Under these circumstances, BAH will seek applications from other sources and ensure that all applicants are VHR-eligible and have completed a VHR application before being offered housing. This is for the purposes of reporting against the VHR Priority Allocations Target.

Sources of applications outside the VHR may include referrals from support services, partner agencies, and local churches and through direct contact with BAH. Such applications may be for our Social Housing List as well as properties that fall outside the list as agreed with DFFH.

Nomination rights

Where nomination rights apply, BAH will:

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

Matching households to the right housing

To ensure that BAH manages its properties in the most efficient and effective manner, applicants will be matched to properties so that an allocation:

- Is the right size for the applicant's household
- Is in an area consistent with the applicant's needs
- Assists the applicant to access employment or any support services that they need
- Makes the best use of housing stock owned and/or managed by BAH
- Encourages a sustainable rental
- Meets any expressed needs of the applicant so far as they are known, such as modifications for people with a physical disability or mobility impairment, availability of car parking or room for carers.

BAH aims to make sure that properties with specific features that are in high demand and short supply are only allocated to those applicants who need them, including:

- Properties that are suitable for older people
- Properties that have been built or modified to meet the needs of people with a disability
- Properties on the ground floor
- Properties with level access
- Properties with a yard/garden.

Supporting sustainable and harmonious communities

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

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

Rights and Responsibilities

Renters' rights and responsibilities are protected under the Residential Tenancies Act and other Acts of parliament.

It is important for renters to know and understand their rights and that along with rights come responsibilities. At the beginning of their rental, renters are given a series of documents including a 'Rights and Responsibilities' booklet. This booklet describes both the renter's and the rental provider's rights and responsibilities.

Information and support can also be obtained through Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Tenants Union of Victoria.

Consumer Affairs Victoria

1300 55 81 81

www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Tenants Union of Victoria

1800 068860

www.tenantsvic.org.au

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or as required based on changes in authorising legislation.

This policy will be available on the BAH website: www.baptcare.org.au/services/housing/affordable-housing

Related Documents

- BAH Transfers and Succession Policy
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 (Vic)
- Housing Registrar Performance Standards
- DFFH Victorian Register Operational Guidelines
- Legal agreements between BAH and the Director of Housing relating to the Victorian Housing Register and funding programs.

Revisions and History

Next Review Date:	March 2024	
Revision History	Section	Commencing
Policy no. 7.1, v. 1-6.1 6.2	Updates to Residential Tenancies Act	17/6/2021 21/3/2023

Document Control

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