

Wait lists

Policy

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1. Policy Statement

Applicants who are eligible for public housing are placed (and allocated from) separate wait lists maintained in each urban centre, remote community, town camp or community living area.

2. Purpose

This policy ensures that public housing stock is utilised correctly and allocated fairly to those in need, whilst recognising that some clients will be in greater need than others.

3. Scope

This policy generally applies to all clients who have had their application for any form of public housing approved. Exemptions appropriate to specific types of public housing or locations of public housing will be clearly identified.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Front-line staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply wait list policy as outlined. • Bear in mind policies relating to access and equity, as well as discretion. • Forward difficult or unusual cases to the Manager.
Housing Reference Group (HRG)	Provides cultural advice regarding applicants for remote communities, town camps and community living areas.
Service providers	Manage the supported accommodation options and advise the Department of their eligibility criteria and vacancies
Director / Executive Director	Has the discretion to move a client on the wait list

5. Policy detail

Applications may be listed on multiple wait lists (such as remote community, town camp, urban or community living area). However, on allocation all duplicate applications will be cancelled and removed from other wait list/s.

Applicants may also elect to extend their application to the Integrated Wait list, which may provide alternative, transitional or temporary housing options until public housing is available.

Generally, the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities ('the Department') allocates public housing in urban centres and community living areas to applicants in the order in which they apply – with some exceptions. Refer to the Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy for further information.

In urban centres, there is a general wait list and a pensioner wait list. Applicants may only be on the wait list of one regional centre at a time, but can transfer to another centre at any time. Refer to the Public Housing Transfers policy for further information.

Applications for housing in remote communities, town camps and community living areas are allocated according to need and will only be placed on the wait list following endorsement of the applicable Housing Reference Group. Refer to the Housing Reference Groups policy for further information.

Choice of location generally cannot be accommodated. The Department will endeavour to consider specific location requirements where possible and where specific need is demonstrated.

The Department is unable to provide information to clients on how long they will have to wait for public housing, as it is impossible to predict due to the many factors that influence allocation of housing.

5.1. Applicant responsibilities

While on a wait list, applicants must maintain regular contact with the Department to ensure accurate contact details are recorded.

Applicants are required to regularly confirm their details and provide notice of changed circumstances to the Department regarding the following:

- residential and postal address;
- telephone numbers;
- next of kin, or contact details of alternative contact person;
- income details including eligibility for aged pension; and
- household size.

Applicants in urban centres are required to confirm their continuing eligibility and need for public housing with their local housing office twice a year. The Department will assist applicants to meet this obligation by sending reminder letters until allocation. Failure to meet these obligations will result in the application being cancelled and removed from the wait list.

5.2. Accrued wait times

5.2.1. Changes in circumstances

If there are changes to a household's structure while on the wait list, there will be no loss of accrued wait times, providing that new household eligibility criteria is met. However, whilst a group of singles may disband and each person retains credit for time on the wait list, they are not entitled to take this credit to any new group of singles.

5.2.2. Relationship breakdown

If a relationship ends, the primary client will automatically retain their position on the wait list. The secondary client must contact the Department to determine their own position on the wait list. The secondary client will retain all credit for waiting time to which they are entitled. Secondary clients are not entitled to credit for waiting time accrued by the primary client before the relationship began. Final discretion lies with the Manager.

5.2.3. Changes to pensioner status

If a non-pensioner single applicant is granted an age pension or Mature Age Allowance, they will be transferred to the pensioner wait list with no loss of accrued waiting time.

5.3. Cancellation of applications

Applications will be cancelled and removed from all specified public housing wait lists if the applicant advises that public housing is no longer required. Applications for public housing in urban centres may be cancelled where:

- the applicant fails to respond to any form of contact whilst on the wait list, including reminders to confirm details or provide updated information to the Department;
- the applicant household no longer meets eligibility criteria; or
- applicant rejects an offer of housing without good reason (no credit for wait time will be given if they choose to reapply for public housing). Applications in urban and community living areas may be cancelled where:
- the applicant leaves the Northern Territory for an extended period of time, unless for prolonged medical treatment or rehabilitation.

5.4. Reinstatement of application

Cancelled applications may be reinstated if there are compassionate grounds which have impacted an applicant's ability to meet their obligations whilst on the wait list, including maintaining contact with and providing information to the Department.

The applicant must make contact with the Department within six months of the date of cancellation; and provide evidence of continual residence in the Northern Territory for the application to be reinstated. Approval for reinstatement of an application rests with the Manager. If an application is reinstated, there will be no loss of wait time.

6. Discretionary decision making

Discretion can be applied to this policy under the Discretionary Decision Making policy.

7. Complaints and/or appeals

If a client is not satisfied with either a decision or action of the department, they can access the department's complaints and/or appeals processes. For further information, please refer to the Complaints and/or Appeals policies.

8. Review of the policy

If at any time the legislative, operating or funding environment is so altered that the policy is no longer appropriate in its current form, the policy shall be reviewed and amended accordingly.

9. References

9.1. Legislation

Housing Act 1982

9.2. Policies

Appeals policy

Access and Equity policy

Allocation and Commencement of a Tenancy policy

Complaints policy

Discretionary Decision Making policy

Housing Reference Groups policy

Priority Housing policy

Public Housing Transfers policy