

Eligibility and Allocation of Housing Policy [H01]

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the principles to be followed in allocating YWCA Australia (YWCA) properties to eligible applicants. YWCA allocates its housing to eligible applicants in a selection process that is transparent and accountable, and meets all legislative requirements, industry standards and guidelines. YWCA follows agreed federal and state allocation policies as part of maintaining its registration to provide community and/or social housing in each jurisdiction.

The overarching aims of this policy are to ensure we:

- allocate housing to eligible applicants fairly and appropriately.
- match individual housing needs to available properties.
- build sustainable communities.
- maintain compliance with regulatory bodies and contractual requirements for housing management.

2. Scope

This policy covers the allocation process from application to acceptance, including:

- Confirmation of eligibility.
- Matching the needs of applicants to available housing.
- Appropriate treatment of applicants with special needs or property requirements.
- Offers of housing.
- Appealing decisions related to allocations.
- Confidentiality.

This policy applies to YWCA staff responsible for working with YWCA residents and properties.

This document is a national policy covering YWCA Housing and YWCA National Housing. All references to YWCA Housing include both unless specifically stated otherwise. Where state-based variations exist in policies and procedures, these will be identified in this document.

This policy applies to all forms of housing owned and/or managed by YWCA including community and affordable residential rental properties and rooming houses.

Allocation rules and procedures vary between housing categories, jurisdictions, and programs. This policy provides guidance on differing rules that affect the allocation process.

3. Definitions

Affordable Housing	Rental housing programs targeted at low to moderate income households in which rents are set at a discount to market rent (rather than as a percentage of renter/resident income).
Allocation	A property is offered to a specific person.
Applicant	A person who has applied for social housing.
Eligible	A person has met the criteria required for them to be considered for housing in a YWCA property or program.

Nomination Rights	An agency or provider outside of YWCA has the right to determine which applicants are to be assessed and considered for housing in certain properties.
Priority	Applicants on housing registers or waitlists identified as having a priority housing need as per the requirements in that state.
Public housing	Housing owned and managed by state government housing authorities.
Resident	For brevity, the term 'resident' refers to renters and tenants of rented premises, and residents of rooming houses.
Waitlist or Register	A state-based government approved and/or operated housing database that potential applicants are required to listed on to be eligible for housing allocation.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Leader- General Manager Housing Operations

- Ensuring good management of evidence in the tenancy management system.
- Keeping records in the tenancy management system in accordance with this policy.
- Reviewing evidence and making decisions where required.
- Incorporating this policy and associated procedures into staff inductions and training.
- Escalating feedback about this policy to the policy owner and/or policy writer.
- Ensuring YWCA complies with this policy and associated procedures.
- Authorising any changes made to this policy and associated procedures.

4.2 People and Culture

- Incorporating this procedure into staff induction and training.
- Ensuring staff are aware of and have access to this procedure.
- Escalating feedback about this procedure to the document owner/writer.

4.3 Employee

- Making housing allocation decisions in accordance with this policy.
- Keeping records in the tenancy management system in accordance with this policy.
- Recommending improvements to this policy and the associated procedure.

5. Policy

YWCA allocates its housing to eligible applicants in a selection process that is transparent and accountable, and meets all legislative requirements, industry standards and guidelines. YWCA follows agreed federal and state allocation policies as part of maintaining its registration to provide community and/or social housing in each jurisdiction.

The overarching aims of this policy are:

- To ensure YWCA provides safe, secure, and affordable housing that meets the needs of the applicant.
- YWCA housing is allocated to eligible applicants fairly and appropriately.

- YWCA maintain compliance with regulatory bodies and contractual requirements for housing management.

YWCA housing eligibility and allocation criteria for housing is designed to:

- be fair and equitable.
- relieve households from housing stress.
- is in accordance with its contractual, legal, and regulatory obligations.
- supports the financial viability of YWCA's housing programs.

YWCA is committed to promoting successful and sustainable tenancies when matching applicants to its properties. This means that YWCA will allocate housing in a way that:

- gives appropriate priority to households in need of housing assistance.
- considers the health, safety, and support needs of applicants.
- matches individual housing needs with available properties.
- supports sustainable and harmonious communities.

YWCA seeks to support applicants to remain connected to or build connections with support services, local opportunities, and their community.

YWCA aims to encourage equity through the housing allocation process. Where required, applicants are assisted to maintain their independence and improve their quality of life through the allocation process.

YWCA upholds accountability and transparency through its record keeping practices. Applicants are given the opportunity to appeal organisational decisions to ensure fair and transparent outcomes.

5.1 Allocation decisions

YWCA believes that quality allocation processes that match an applicant with appropriate and suitable housing substantially contributes to the creation of sustainable tenancies and harmonious communities.

YWCA will carefully 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 an appropriate wait list or housing register application). YWCA will ask applicants to provide reasonable evidence to substantiate any housing requirements if it is not contained in their registered application.

YWCA will, to the best of its ability at any given time, match applicants 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 any support services that they need.
- makes the best use of housing stock owned or managed by YWCA.
- encourages a sustainable tenancy.

- 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.

YWCA aims to make sure that properties with specific features that are highly desired/in demand are allocated to applicants requiring them, based on greatest 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.

5.2 Sourcing Applicants

YWCA will in the first instance seek suitable applicants for vacancies based on the requirements of any housing program that may be applicable to the property.

YWCA may source appropriate prospective applicants through partnerships with other organisations at its discretion. YWCA will ensure that all prospective applicants for its properties have completed any required applications and/or registrations prior to accepting an offer of housing from YWCA.

YWCA will advertise property vacancies in our Affordable Housing program on our website and through online real estate listing websites as appropriate/required. In Victoria, YWCA may search for suitable applicants via the VHR Register of Interest category.

5.2.1 Allocation via the Victorian Housing Register

Generally, allocations to YWCA's long term social housing in Victoria will be made to applicants on the Victorian Housing Register (VHR).

The VHR is a single register for all Victorian social housing applications, managed by Homes Victoria in line with the publicly available Eligibility Policy Framework and Operational Guidelines.

Allocations may include new applicants or renters/residents who have been approved for transfer from an existing social housing property. Once an applicant has been found via the VHR they will be required to confirm their eligibility and property requirements prior to an offer being made.

The VHR has two categories:

- **Priority Access:** for applicants most in need of housing; and
- **Register of Interest:** for applicants who do not meet the priority access criteria but are eligible and seeking to live in social housing.

Category		Description	Application type
Priority	Emergency Management Housing	For people whose housing is no longer safe or habitable, due to an emergency, for example, a bushfire, flood or storm.	New and Transfer Application
	Priority Transfers	For existing public or community housing renters who require relocation due to the current property being unsafe or unsuitable, is to be sold, redeveloped, or better utilised.	Transfer
	Homeless with Support	People who are homeless and receiving support. Applications are lodged by support workers.	New Application
	Supported Housing	For households who need a home with major disability modifications, or that receive independent living assistance or care for: Aged care Disability, including through NDIS Acquired brain injury Mental health or Children, youth and families' programs. Applications are lodged by support workers.	New Application
	Special Housing Needs	The special housing needs category helps individuals or families whose housing has become unsuitable and who have no other housing options. Reasons applicants might apply under this category include: Insecure housing Inappropriate housing Unsafe housing Urgent medical need.	New Application
	Special Housing Needs aged 55 and over	For singles or couples aged 55 years and over who are not eligible for the other priority access categories.	New Application
Register of Interest		For all other applicants who meet the eligibility criteria for the VHR but do not satisfy the additional priority access criteria.	Transfer or New applications

5.3 Nomination Rights

YWCA engages in arrangements with referral agencies in some jurisdictions regarding the nomination of applicants for housing allocations to specified properties. Where an agency outside of YWCA has nomination rights to a property, YWCA will establish and maintain suitable protocols and agreements so that nominations for vacancies are appropriate and referred in a timely manner. YWCA is committed to ensuring our property portfolio is assigned and utilised to the best of its capacity for our communities, clients, and stakeholders.

5.4 Affordable housing allocations

Affordable housing will be allocated to low- and moderate-income households (and on exception very low-income households), and a range of household configurations.

Allocation decisions will be based on:

- The associated state or Commonwealth affordable housing program guidelines, together with specific requirements that might be laid down by funders, councils, or property owners,
- Achieving a mix of income bands,
- Additional criteria specific to the property or program, such as a demonstrated connection to an area or a requirement to live in a senior's living unit, and
- Priority/preference given to low to moderate income earners where at least one household member is engaged in regular employment.

Bedroom categories for affordable housing properties are the same as for social housing properties.

5.5 Offers of housing

An offer of housing is the formal process that, if accepted, will result in the signing of a rental agreement for a household. A formal offer of housing will be made in writing to the applicant. The applicant will have 4 business days to respond to the offer of housing. If the applicant requires more than 4 days to consider the offer, they must contact YWCA to seek an extension. YWCA will seek to understand the reason that the extension is required, and this consent will be considered reasonably. Applicants are required to commence their tenancy within an agreed timeframe which is usually 7 business days of accepting an offer of housing.

If an applicant from a state waitlist or register accepts the offer of housing, YWCA are required to notify the outcome on the state waitlist or register.

If the applicant from a state waitlist or register refuses the offer of housing, YWCA are required to notify the outcome on the state waitlist or register.

5.5.1 Affordable housing offers

YWCA will generally be unable to give more than one offer of housing to affordable housing applicants due to the limited availability of housing stock.

Where an applicant refuses an offer of housing within an affordable housing program, the applicant may be required to reapply for another affordable housing property.

5.5.2 Withdrawal of offers

YWCA reserves the right to withdraw an offer of housing made where:

- Applicants are no longer eligible for social/affordable housing.
- The type of property that will be required has changed.
- False information has been supplied.
- An applicant has become incarcerated, hospitalised or is in care.
- An applicant has previously received the maximum number of offers of housing.
- An applicant has not responded to an offer within a reasonable timeframe.
- An offer of housing is unsuitable or unsafe.
- Repeated attempts to contact an applicant have been unsuccessful.
- YWCA is required to use a property for an alternative purpose.
- YWCA has concerns for the capacity of an applicant to manage a tenancy, either with or without support.

6. Transparency and accessibility

This policy is made available on the YWCA Housing website www.ywcahousing.org.au/policies.

7. Appeals

Staff will inform residents of their right to appeal organisational decisions and to complain about the services of YWCA in accordance with the appeals and complaints process.

8. Record keeping

Housing staff will retain all necessary applicant and allocation information, including that pertaining to decisions, complaints, and appeals, in the tenancy management system.

9. Confidentiality

All YWCA staff will hold in confidence any personal or sensitive information disclosed through the allocations process unless disclosure is required under law or consented to by the person subject of that information, in accordance with the YWCA Privacy Policy.

Document Data Control

Eligibility and Allocation of Housing Policy				
Responsible Body			Director, Development and Housing	
Accountable Officer			General Manager, Housing Operations	
Supersedes			-	
Associated documents			Sustaining Tenancies Policy Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy	
Legislation			Housing Act 1983 (VIC) Housing Act 2003 (QLD) Housing Regulations 2015 (QLD) Housing Act 1982 (NT) Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (VIC) Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 (VIC) Residential Tenancies & Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (QLD) Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT) National Affordable Housing Agreement Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Queensland Human Rights Act 2019 National Community Housing Standards Social Service Standards (VIC) Guidelines for registered housing agencies Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies. Consumer Charter for Community Managed Housing and Homelessness Services (VIC) National Community Housing Regulatory Code Victorian Community Housing Regulatory Code State based agreements between YWCA and statutory bodies	
Approval and Amendment history				
Review period – 2 years				
Approval date	Effective date	Version	Amendments	Next review
May 2022	May 2022	1.0	Superseded Eligibility and Allocation	May 2024
Jul 2022	Jul 2022	1.1	Minor wording updates	July 2024
Jun 2024	Jun 2024	2.0	Reviewed to incorporate WHF principles	Jun 2024