



WELFARE RIGHTS & ADVOCACY SERVICE

Applying for Public Housing

One of the major functions and aims of the Department of Housing is to provide appropriate and affordable housing for people who for various reasons are unable to access the private market.

The Department of Housing provides rental accommodation for more than 35,000 households in metropolitan and country areas of Western Australia and is also responsible in part for the growth and development of community housing stock.

This fact sheet explains who is eligible for public housing, what documents are needed, how to apply for public housing, how housing is allocated and the types of housing available.

Completing an Application for Public Housing

To apply for public housing you will need to complete the Department's form Application for Rental Housing. These forms are available from all Department of Housing offices. Once the form is completed they can be lodged at any office and the application will then be assessed for eligibility. An applicant will also need to establish proof of identity and provide income details when lodging the form.

Zones

Rental housing in the metropolitan area is divided into zones representing groups of adjoining suburbs. You will be asked to choose the zone you wish to live in. Unfortunately it is not possible to apply for a specific suburb.

A link to a map of the zones in the Perth metro area can be found below:

http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/WhichZone_brochure.pdf

Types of Accommodation

The type of accommodation you are entitled to depends on family size.

The Department will allocate accommodation to meet your/your family's needs.

- For **Family** – Parent(s) and children or sharing adults. You may be allocated a house/duplex, townhouse or apartment.
- For **Singles** – Person or couple (under 55 years) with no children living with you. You may be allocated an apartment or townhouse.
- For **Seniors** – Single person or couple (55 years of age or older) with no children living with you. You may be allocated an apartment, townhouse or duplex.

If you plan to keep a dog or cat, you will need to advise the Department because you can only keep pets in accommodation that has an enclosed yard.

Eligibility

To be eligible for public rental housing you must meet the following criteria:

- **Be an Australian citizen or permanent resident.**

If you are not an Australian citizen or permanent resident you can apply for assistance and be placed on the waiting list but you cannot be allocated housing until you have been granted permanent residency or citizenship. Applicants with visas allowing temporary residency are not eligible for public housing. New Zealand citizens are eligible to apply for public housing subject to meeting all other eligibility criteria, including income and asset limits.

- **Live in Western Australia and receive income there** (wages or Centrelink entitlements)
- **Meet public housing income limits** (see Income eligibility tables below).
- **Not own property or land.**

Discretion can sometimes be exercised if a person has difficulties in disposing of a property for example: where the sale will realise limited or negative personal equity for the applicant or where the asset owned is a single block of residential land of little value and the applicant has no prospect of building a home on it.

Note: if you are already housed in social housing or government funded accommodation you are not eligible for Department assistance although discretion can be exercised where for example circumstances warrant a person being placed on the Department’s priority waiting list. This may occur where a community housing tenant demonstrates an urgent need that the community housing provider is unable to meet.

- **If less than 60 years of age the applicant must not have cash assets in excess of \$38,400 for singles or \$63,800 for couples.**
- **If over 60 years of age the applicant must not have cash assets in excess of \$80,000 for singles or couples.**
- **If the applicant has a disability they must not have cash assets in excess of \$100,000 (singles or couples).**
- **Be able to prove your identity** – see our factsheet - Proof of Identity.
- **Be 16 years of age or above.**

Income eligibility Criteria

Applicants for public housing must have an income that falls within the Department’s current income eligibility limits. This is assessed on a gross (before tax) weekly basis.

Applicants, partners and/or co-applicants must be eligible at the time of the application, while on the waiting list and when an offer of housing is made.

To be eligible for public housing the combined weekly gross income of the applicant, partner and any co-applicant must be below the following limits (see the Department’s Eligibility relating to income policy).

Number of people in household	Metro & country		NW & remote areas	
	Single Income	Dual Income	Single Income	Dual Income
1	\$430	-	\$610	-
2	\$580	\$670	\$820	\$940
3	\$695	\$790	\$980	\$1120
4	\$815	\$930	\$1,150	\$1,320

Dual Income - refers to an income earned by partners in the paid workforce and includes Centrelink Benefits (i.e. Newstart) but not the Basic Family Tax Benefit A.

For households with more than 4 people add \$115 per additional person.

For people with a disability:				
	Metro and Country		North West/Remote	
Number of people in Household	Single Income	Dual Income	Single Income	Dual Income
1	\$540	-	\$760	-
2	\$725	\$830	\$1,025	\$1,180
3	\$870	\$1,000	\$1,225	\$1,400
4	\$1,020	\$1,160	\$1,440	\$1,650

For households with more than 4 people and at least one person with a disability add \$145 per additional person.

Although other household members' incomes are not assessed for eligibility they will be considered when assessing the rate of rent once the tenancy commences.

Documents you will need to prove income eligibility

If you are an employee: payslips or an Employer Income Verification Statement for the previous three months.

If you are self-employed: a current tax assessment from the ATO.

If you are not employed: a recent Centrelink or Veterans' Affairs statement of income (not older than 4 weeks).

What income is counted when assessing eligibility?

Any benefit or allowance that is counted by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs in assessing a benefit;

Wages/salary for applicants in paid employment including salary sacrificed superannuation payments and fringe benefits.

Other income sources including child support payments, additional Family Tax Benefit A at 10% (Basic exempt) and additional Family Tax Benefit B at 5%, or dividends on shares/investments or interest "deemed" on money in non-interest bearing accounts above \$8,250 for singles and \$15,500 for couples.

Income derived from a business if applicant is self-employed.

What income is not counted when assessing eligibility?

Payments and income sources not counted when assessing eligibility are listed in the Eligibility relating to income policy in the Department of Housing's rental policy manual.

http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/Rental_Policy_Manual.pdf

What if I have a previous poor public housing tenancy record?

In some cases the Department will refuse assistance, or place conditions on further assistance to a person with substantiated breaches of the *Residential Tenancies Act WA1987* (RTA) from previous public housing tenancies. This applies to applicants for both wait turn and priority assistance.

If you previously rented with the Department and you had your tenancy terminated for rent arrears, poor property standards or disruptive behaviour (under the 3 strike policy) the Department will consider any new application to decide if further assistance will be offered to you and whether any conditions will be imposed before you are re-housed, for example you may only be offered a fixed term tenancy or you might be required to engage with a particular support service before you will be offered a tenancy.

Anyone who has been convicted of operating or attempting to operate a drug laboratory from public housing premises will not be eligible for public housing.

If you have a debt from a previous tenancy or an unpaid bond assistance loan you will be required to enter into a repayment plan. You can use the Debt Discount Scheme where for every dollar repaid the Department will waive a dollar.

Listing the application

Once you lodge an application for public housing if you are eligible the Department will send you a letter confirming you are on the waiting list.

Current waiting times for public housing are quite long. While you are on the waiting list you will be sent an annual survey asking if you still wish to be housed. If you don't reply to this survey without a valid reason you may be taken off the waiting list. It is important that the Department always has current and correct contact details for you.

You must meet all income and eligibility limits on an ongoing basis to remain on the waiting list and you are required to list all income and assets on the Annual Housing Application Review form that is sent out to you each year.

You can agree to be listed on the joint amalgamated wait-turn list. This list allows the applicant to also be offered accommodation from community housing providers such as Foundation or Access Housing.

Allocation of accommodation

When you reach your turn on the waiting list and a suitable property becomes available the Department will contact you. You usually have three days to view the property and decide whether you will accept it.

The Department considers an offer valid if it is in your zone of preference and matches the number of bedrooms you are entitled to. If you decline a valid offer of accommodation you will be removed from the waiting list.

Valid reasons for declining a property generally need to be on medical grounds.

More detail about the allocation process can be found in the Department's Allocation Policies in the Rental Policy Manual.

http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/Rental_Policy_Manual.pdf

Priority Housing

If your housing need is urgent, and you meet all eligibility criteria, you may be eligible for priority assistance. Examples of situations that may contribute to an urgent housing need include primary homelessness, escaping domestic violence, matters associated with child abuse and the need to reunite a child with their family.

An applicant making a priority housing claim will need to prove their case with support letters from relevant agencies and services.

More detail about requesting priority housing and the process involved can be found in the Department's Priority Assistance policy in the Rental Policy Manual.

http://www.dhw.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/Rental_Policy_Manual.pdf

If you think you may be eligible for priority assistance contact a tenant advocate or homelessness support services such as RUAH.

Appealing a Department of Housing decision

If your housing application is rejected or withdrawn you can appeal to the Department of Housing Regional Appeals Committee. You need to lodge an appeal within 12 months of the adverse decision.

More detail about the appeal process can be found on the fact sheet [Appealing a Department of Housing Decision](#).

<p>Please note: This information contains general information only and is accurate at August 2015. It does not constitute legal advice.</p>
