

Social Housing Rent Policy (WA)

1. Purpose

This purpose of this policy is to outline how HOME in PLACE (Australia) Limited (HOME in PLACE) calculates rent and manages the rent review process for social housing tenancies in Western Australia.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all social housing tenants who live in general social housing properties that are owned or managed by HOME in PLACE. Social housing refers to housing for eligible Band A¹ households.

3. Policy Statement

HOME in PLACE's rent policy aims to ensure a clear and consistent approach to rent setting for all tenants to who this policy applies. HOME in PLACE will explain how rent is worked out and meet our legal duties and contractual obligations when calculating and reviewing rent.

HOME in PLACE calculates how much a tenant should pay in rent considering the market rent for the property and any subsidy entitlement to assist tenants to meet the cost of their rent including Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).

Rent setting and gross household income

Rents will be calculated at no more than 25% percent of household assessable income and 100% of any Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) a tenant is entitled to receive or market rent - whichever is lower. Properties in our affordable housing program will be set at a percentage below market rent.

When applying for a rent subsidy a tenant must declare all assessable income and provide proof of the amount received by the spouse/partner and each other household member aged 16 years and over. Proof of income must be original, relate to the type of income and acceptable as evidence of proof of income.

Evidence required for the purpose of calculating rent or eligibility for a rent subsidy include:

- Tenants/applicants in receipt of a Centrelink or Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) pension or benefit will need to provide a Statement of Benefit from Centrelink or DVA that is not more than four weeks' old;
- Wages and salary earners will need to provide their last 3 months' payslips if available; and
- Those who are self-employed will need to provide their last financial year income tax assessment from the ATO.

¹ As Band A households are defined in the Department of Communities (WA) Community Housing Income and Asset Limits (CHIAL) Policy

For the purpose of determining rent, tenants not in receipt of an income or with an income lower than the base statutory benefit who are eligible to make application for a statutory benefit but choose not to, will be deemed to be receiving the base statutory benefit for which they would be eligible. Examples:

- A person who loses their job but would prefer to live off savings than apply for unemployment benefits.
- A person who loses all or part of their payment for a period because they have breached the Centrelink Activity Test.

Tenants rent is subsidised only up to the level of market rent for the property.

Tenants who fail to supply income details and verification prior to the due date will no longer be eligible for a rental subsidy and will be charged market rent until the date the required information is received.

Changes to household members and/or household income

Tenants are required to advise HOME in PLACE immediately if there is any change to the household composition and/or household income of \$10 per week or more.

Communication regarding rent setting

Tenants are advised under which rent program their property is managed and how their rent is calculated prior to signing their residential rental agreement with HOME in PLACE. Tenants will be notified, in writing, of any changes in their rent charges and the date the changes start.

Market rent

Market rent is the amount a landlord might reasonably expect to receive, and a tenant might reasonably expect to pay, for a tenancy. It is determined based on the amount of rent charge for similar properties in similar areas.

The market rent value is reviewed once each year, if there are changes to the market rent tenants will be advised in writing.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)

Commonwealth Rent Assistance is a payment from Centrelink for people who receive more than the base rate of Family Tax Benefit and who pay rent above a rent threshold limit set by the Commonwealth government. If a person is eligible for CRA this means that the amount of rent paid is based on a percentage of household income and 100% of the household CRA entitlement.

Rent and/or income reviews

HOME in PLACE will undertake a general income and rent review of all tenants covered by this policy at least annually. Tenants will be required to provide updated information about their income, and the income of all other household members, within 21 days of HOME in PLACE requesting this information. Rent reviews may result in the rent payable changing, tenants will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review and any changes to the amount of rent payable.

Rental bond

HOME in PLACE tenants are required to pay a rental bond before they move into the property. The amount of bond is equivalent to 4 weeks' of the market rent. The bond will be held by Consumer Protection; bonds are returned to tenants at the end of a tenancy if there are no rent or other arrears or damage to the property. If pets are allowed at the property and the tenant has consent to have a pet HOME in PLACE may ask the tenant to pay a pet bond, this will not exceed \$260.

Assistance

HOME in PLACE has a range of policies, including its POL-025-60 Hardship Policy to assist tenants whose circumstances have changed or who have incurred additional costs associated with their health, disability, remote location or other circumstances that impact on their cost of living. HOME in PLACE is committed to working with tenants to assist them to sustain their tenancy and maintain a stable and secure home. Tenants are encouraged to contact HOME in PLACE if they are experiencing rent difficulties.

Review of Decisions

Decisions about the calculation of rent subsidies, the cancellation or rent subsidies and eligibility for a rent subsidy are reviewable decisions. If a renter is not satisfied with as service provided by HOME in PLACE or does not agree with a decision it has made, they can ask for a formal review. To do this the renter can complete a Review of Decision FOR-001 Appeals Request Form.

4. Definitions and Acronyms Glossary

For clarification of any definitions or acronyms contained within this document, please click on the [Glossary](#) for information.

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