

Policy Number: 49

Policy Name: Allocation of Long Term Housing

(replaces: Policy 5 Inheritance, Policy 12 Swaps of Property, Policy 13 Transfers, Policy 44 New Member Selection and Policy 49 Allocation of Vacancies.)

Version No. 10

Established: 2018

Present Version Passed: 9.5.2023

Next Scheduled Review: 2025

PURPOSE

The Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative (NGRHC) recognises that appropriate and practical allocation of Co-operative properties is representative of good governance and provides fair and equitable treatment of all members and prospective members. All allocations of property will be done in accordance with the Allocations Framework of the Victorian Housing Register. All aspects of this policy apply to all members and staff of NGRHC.

This policy establishes the approach of NGRHC to:

- The prioritisation and allocation of vacant properties in its long-term rental housing portfolio
- Successful and sustainable tenancies and communities through matching applicants to properties
- How the allocation of housing is affected by the cessation of membership (according to Co-op National Law Application Act 2013 ss117).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all long-term rental properties owned or managed by NGRHC. The VHR 'Allocations Framework' is the basis of this policy and provides more detail on long-term rental housing program.

This policy applies to the following mechanisms of the housing program implemented by NGRHC:

- Victorian Housing Register – Framework
- Dynamic Portfolio Management
- Eligibility
- Promoting Successful and Sustainable Tenancies
- Matching Households to the Right House
- New Renter-Members conditions
- Transfers
- Allocation of housing affected by the Cessation of Membership

RELEVANT CO-OPERATIVE OBJECTIVES

Housing Registrar Performance Standards for Registered Housing Providers.

POLICY STATEMENT

Approach to allocation – guiding principles

NGRHC will allocate long-term housing in a manner which:

- is fair, transparent and equitable;
- relieves households from housing stress;
- is in accordance with its contractual, legal and regulatory obligations;
- supports the financial viability of NGRHC's long term housing programs; and

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- supports the Co-op’s governance capability and development;

NGRHC is committed to promoting a successful and sustainable tenancy when matching applicants to its properties. This means that NGRHC 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; and
- enables greater participation in the life and functions of the Co-op community;

Victorian Housing Register

NGRHC uses the Victorian Housing Register (VHR, which was established in August 2016) to recruit new Co-op members. The VHR is a common register for all applicants seeking public and community housing in Victoria. Under the VHR’s allocations framework, NGRHC is required to target 75% of allocations of true vacancies of social housing to Priority Access applicants.

Allocations Framework

NGRHC has established an Allocations Framework that establishes the following for its housing programs:

Program	Approach to allocation for Program	Source of applicants 1	Eligibility 2	No. units 3
Social Housing (General Lease) <i>Long-term housing owned by the Director of Housing and leased to NGRHC.</i>	NGRHC targets 75% of allocations of true vacancies of Social Housing to applicants from the <u>Priority Access category</u> under the VHR.	VHR only	VHR criteria	44
	NGRHC targets 25% of allocations of true vacancies of Social Housing to applicants from the <u>Register of Interest category</u> under the VHR.			14
			Total	58

1. Under the Allocations Policy where the source of applicants is specified in the Allocations Framework as “VHR only” then NGRHC will seek all applicants from the VHR unless no suitable applicants are available. In this situation NGRHC may seek applicants from other sources and NGRHC will ensure that all applicants complete a VHR application before or shortly after being offered housing for the purposes of compliance and reporting.

2. See Eligibility for Long Term Housing Policy for further details.

3 Number of units indicative of General Lease Deed of Variation 4th August 2016 and may be subject to change.

Dynamic portfolio management

NGRHC will apply dynamic portfolio management which seeks to maximise its utilisation for the benefit of the Co-operative now and in the future. When the opportunity arises, this includes options such as member transfers resulting from downsizing or upsizing, health, safety and general wellbeing.

Eligibility

In making any allocation NGRHC will ensure that they comply with legal requirements concerning eligibility for housing. The eligibility rules that apply to programs are specified in the VHR Allocations Framework.

VHR eligibility is determined by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). All applicants for NGRHC must have been accredited on the VHR and meet the General Eligibility for Co-operative housing by:

- Attending a Co-operative Housing Information Session;
- Submitting an application for general Co-operative Housing after attending the Co-operative Housing Information Session; and
- Passing the interview process
- Rental background check including, but not limited to, TICA check and references.

Promoting successful and sustainable tenancies

NGRHC is committed to treating all applicants fairly and will not unlawfully discriminate against any potential applicant or applicants.

NGRHC will assess all applicants before making an offer of housing to determine suitability for a particular vacancy. If NGRHC declines to offer an applicant housing, it will inform the applicant accordingly.

Matching households to the right house

In allocating housing, NGRHC will also have regard to the VHR operational guideline, '*Matching Clients with Housing and Special Accommodation Requirements*'

NGRHC will 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 employment or any support services that they need;
- makes the best use of housing stock managed by NGRHC;
- encourages a sustainable tenancy; and
- meets any particular expressed needs of the applicant within NGRHC's financial capability so far as they are known at the commencement of the tenancy, such as modifications for people with a physical disability or mobility impairment, availability of car parking or room for carers.

NGRHC will ask applicants to provide reasonable evidence to substantiate any particular requirements, if this is not contained in a VHR application.

NGRHC supports sustainable and harmonious communities.

NGRHC understand that while households are matched to the right house initially, the composition of households change over the long term. Renter-Members are encouraged to consider NGRHC's responsibility to maximise the use of their assets, and therefore income, to benefit all ongoing renter-members and rightsize should their circumstances change.

New Renter-Member Guidelines

New renter-members will be placed on a fixed term lease for the first year of their tenancy and pay a bond equivalent to one month's rent. The extension of the lease and therefore continued membership, depends on the following factors:

- New renter-member is expected to honor their commitment to participate in the life of the Co-op
- Respect the Rules of NGRHC
- Keep the property clean and tidy
- Maintain the garden (this includes watering plants and trees)
- Always stay two weeks ahead in their rent
- Notify NGRHC of any new persons staying at the property
- Notify NGRHC of any changes to their income
- Be courteous to staff and fellow renter-members

Transfers

NGRHC recognises that occasionally it may arise that renter-members may ask to be transferred for different reasons including:

- Location is no longer suitable
- Preference to right size due to a change in household circumstances
- Property no longer supports the needs of their household (e.g. disability access and modifications).

When this happens the renter-member may formerly lodge a request with the Asset Management Sub Committee (ASC) to be transferred to another NGRHC property and be placed back on the VHR.

Conditions of transfer

- Any transfer shall be regarded as a new tenancy for the purpose of the rental agreement only and current membership status will not be affected
- Renter-members must have been with the Co-op for a minimum of 12 months unless their situation fits the criteria for a priority transfer.
- Renter-members can only transfer if they do not have rent arrears
- As per VHR operational Guidelines Renter-members will only be allocated a property which is the right size for their household
- When a vacancy occurs, staff at NGRHC will refer to the transfer waiting list before accessing the VHR for possible applicants
- All transfer requests will be assessed by the Asset Management Sub Committee (ASC) and decisions will be based on the renter-member meeting all participation, attendance requirements, rent payment history and the care of their current property rather than based solely on the NGRHC waiting list.
- NGRHC will not be responsible for any costs involved in the transfer of properties
- Renter-members cannot apply for another transfer for two years unless their situation fits the criteria for a priority transfer.

Allocation of housing affected by the Cessation of Membership

Cessation of membership can create the opportunity for a new membership by an existing member of the household or a person coming into the household (e.g. carer of children).

In the event of Cessation of Membership due to any reason listed under Co-operatives National Law (CNL ss117 – see link below) the NGRHC will discuss application of new members based on:

1. VHR eligibility
2. Membership eligibility (based on new renter-member selection process)
3. Matching household composition to the appropriate house size and number of bedrooms as required by DFFH.

Membership Cessation Guidelines

- **Pre-existing household members who are not on the lease do not have an automatic claim for membership with NGRHC**
- New application for membership will be completed by pre-existing household members if so desired and submitted to the Committee of Management
- If the applicant is not on the VHR and does not meet the VHR eligibility criteria, NGRHC will consider the impact that approving the application would have on their ability to meet their charitable mission, and obligations to the Housing Registrar and Homes Victoria to house eligible low-income households.
- If selected as a new renter-member, the membership is conditional upon agreement to downsize when a suitable property becomes available if required.
- If selected as a new renter-member, the membership is conditional of signing a new Residential Rental Agreement which may come with new terms and conditions.

Members are advised to read this policy in conjunction with the Co-operatives Act, the Residential Tenancies Act and the Rules of the NGRHC.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

Applicant	Applicant means a person who has applied for housing via the VHR or, where permitted by this policy, directly to NGRHC
Community housing affordable housing program	The housing program of NGRHC described in further detail in the Allocations Framework.
DFFH	Means the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Director of Housing	Means the Victorian government statutory authority that owns all public housing land in Victoria and which is the principal funding body for community housing
Fixed Term Residential Rental Agreement	A Residential Rental Agreement (previously known as the Lease) which is for a specified fixed term. Up to 5 years or less.
Priority Access	Applicants on the VHR who have been assessed as having priority housing need. The Priority Access Categories are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Management Housing

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Priority Transfers• Homeless with Support• Supported Housing• Temporary Absence• Special Housing Needs• Aged (55 years and over)
Public housing	Housing owned and managed by DFFH
Renter-members	Those eligible to vote according to the NGRHC Rule Book.
Rightsizing	Convert to a property of appropriate or optimum size for the members current circumstances.
Social housing	The housing program of NGRHC described in further detail in the Allocations Framework.
True vacancy	means all vacancies excluding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• renter-members to renter-members transfers (but not Priority Transfers via the VHR); and• tenancies started by relocated renter-members that are returning
VHR	The Victorian Housing Register, the state-wide common application for people seeking public housing and community housing

RELATED DOCUMENTS

The Rules of the NGRHC
Tenancy Agreement (RTA prescribed form)
NGRHC Policy: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Policy
NGRHC Policy: Code of Conduct
NGRHC Policy: Eligibility for long-term housing
NGRHC Policy: Privacy and Information Sharing
NGRHC Policy: Complaints and Appeals
NGRHC Policy: Rent Arrears Management
NGRHC Policy: Rent Management

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

This policy implements NGRHC's obligations under:

- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013 (Authorised version incorporating amendments at 15 June 2015). <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/co-operatives-national-law-application-act-2013/004>
- Consumer Affairs: Ending a lease <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/ending-a-lease-or-residency/if-the-landlord-or-owner-wants-the-tenant-to-leave/landlord-giving-notice-to-vacate>
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- DFFH Victorian Housing Register Operational Guidelines
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Act No. 43/2006

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on the NGRHC website www.ngrhc.org.au/policy