



Victoria Government Gazette

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Housing Act 1983

VICTORIAN HOUSING REGISTER – DETERMINATIONS OF ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, PRIORITY CATEGORIES AND PRIORITY CRITERIA FOR APPLICANTS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

I, Nick Foa, Director of Housing, make the following determinations pursuant to section 142E(1) of the **Housing Act 1983** for the purposes of allocating tenancies in social housing to applicants on the Victorian Housing Register.

These determinations take effect on the date they are published in the Government Gazette and expire 12 months after that date.

Dated 16 May 2017

NICK FOA
Director of Housing

DIRECTOR OF HOUSING DETERMINATIONS

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of these determinations is for the Director of Housing to determine the:

- a) eligibility criteria that must be met by an applicant to be eligible for a tenancy in social housing;
- b) priority categories for identifying the relative needs of eligible applicants for social housing; and
- c) criteria that must be met by an eligible applicant for a particular priority category to apply to that eligible applicant,

for the purposes of allocating tenancies in social housing to applicants on the Victorian Housing Register (Register).

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are five criteria an applicant must meet to be eligible for an allocation of a tenancy in social housing from the Register:

- proof of identity
- Australian citizenship or residency
- Victorian residency
- income eligibility
- asset eligibility

3. INCOME ELIGIBILITY

Primary applicants must have an independent income to be eligible for social housing. An independent income is an income paid directly to the person for their use and is not subject to a Centrelink parental income or assets test.

A household income should be within the income eligibility limits specified in these determinations. Income limits are based on household type and there are different limits for Priority Access applications and for Register of Interest and Transfer applications.

To determine total household income, assessable incomes are added together.

If a household exceeds the income limit for the category they are applying for, they are not considered eligible for that category.

The Priority Access income limit is based on income eligibility limits for a Commonwealth Low Income Health Care Card.

The Register of Interest and Transfer income limit is based on income eligibility limits for Commonwealth Rent Assistance and is set out as follows:

SPECIAL

Limits for Register of Interest applicants

Income limits

Household	Weekly income
Single person	\$970
Couple, no dependants	\$1,485
Family (one or two parents) with dependent children	\$2,003

Every six months, on 1 April and 1 October, the income limits above will be increased by 1.1 per cent to reflect increases in the general cost of living.

Limits for Priority Access applicants

Income limits

Household	Weekly income
Single person	\$543
Couple, no dependants	\$939
Family (one or two parents) with one dependent child	\$973
Each additional dependant	\$34

Every six months, on the 1st of April and 1st of October, the income limits above will be increased by 1.1 per cent to reflect increases in the general cost of living.

Considerations

Eligibility for group households or extended families is determined by the income of each family unit within the household.

If Centrelink income is the only income received by each household member, the household is considered eligible even though their total income amount may be over the household income limit.

If an applicant or household member is not receiving a Centrelink benefit or pension they are entitled to, the amount to which they are entitled is counted in the assessment when calculating income eligibility, unless the applicant can provide documentation confirming that they are not entitled to the income.

Where an applicant's Centrelink income is temporarily reduced due to an activity test or administrative breach, their income eligibility assessment is still made on the applicant's full Centrelink entitlement.

Where a non-custodial parent has regular access visits from their children, the income limit used for determining eligibility is based on the household including those children. Every second weekend and half school holidays or more constitutes regular access.

Where a partnered couple apply for social housing but one partner is ineligible because they hold a temporary spouse visa or they are permanent residents but subject to the Centrelink two year waiting period, the relevant couple income limit is applied when determining income eligibility.

Where an applicant subject to the Centrelink two year waiting period is receiving income from wages, self-employment or child related payments, they are not considered to have an independent income for social housing eligibility purposes.

Applicants or household members that include people who are in prison are not required to provide income documentation for that person until they are released from prison. Income eligibility can be assessed once the applicant is released from prison.

If a top-up Veterans Affairs payment in addition to a Centrelink payment makes an application ineligible, the designated service provider may use discretion to still approve the application.

Assessable and non-assessable income

Assessable income is any income that is not deemed non-assessable income.

Non-assessable incomes are usually payments that are provided for a specific purpose such as the Pharmaceutical Allowance, Large Family Supplement, Caregiver allowances and other financial support for families involved in caring for foster children, or payments that are to facilitate employment or training such as the Education Entry Payment.

Incomes specifically excluded from assessment are the Bereavement Payment, Book Allowance, Carers Allowance, Care Allowance, Child Care Benefit, Double Orphan Pension, Large Family Supplement, Family Tax Benefits for 6th and subsequent child, Fares Assistance, GST Components of Allowances, Language, Literacy & Numeracy Supplement, Large Family Supplement, Mobility Allowance, Orphan Pension, Path Internships Incentive, Pharmaceutical Allowance, Pension Supplement, Pension Education Supplement, Restitution Payment from Foreign Governments, TAC Impairment Annuity Benefit, Telephone Allowance, Travel, Meals, Laundry and Accommodation Allowances, War Disability Pension and Youth Disability Allowance.

No income

In limited circumstances, applications listing independent household members who do not receive any income can be approved and placed on the Register, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria. However, applicants are required to provide documentation from Centrelink stating either:

- why they are not entitled to or in receipt of an income (for example they have temporary residency status or are on a two year waiting period, or they have received a compensation payout or an employment termination payout); or
- they are entitled to an income but are not claiming it.

Applicants who do not receive any income may be referred to a support organisation, to assist them with their housing application and any other needs.

4. ASSET ELIGIBILITY

The value of the assets for an applicant's entire household is calculated to determine if they are eligible for social housing. If households have assets that would mean they can afford other forms of long-term housing, they are not eligible for social housing.

The value of the assets of a household should be within the specified asset eligibility limits set out below. Asset limits are different for Priority Access, Register of Interest and for people requiring disability modifications.

If a household exceeds the asset limit for the category they are applying for, they are not considered eligible for that category.

Applicants or household members that include people who are in prison are not required to provide asset documentation until they are released from prison. Asset eligibility can be assessed once the applicant is released from prison.

Asset limits

Register application type	Asset limit
Priority Access	\$5,024
Register of Interest and Priority Transfers	\$30,143
Disability modifications	\$100,477

On 1 April every year asset limits above will be increased by 2.4 per cent to reflect increases in the cost of private rental.

Assets included in assessing eligibility

The dollar value of each household member's share in any of the following assets are added together to determine eligibility for social housing:

- Baby Bonus (formerly known as maternity payment)
- cash holdings and other investments, such as shares and realisable superannuation funds
- Family Tax Benefit Lump Sum Supplement – annual lump sum increase to the rate of Family Tax Benefit Part A and Family Tax Benefit Part B paid to families following reconciliation of entitlement at end of financial year
- mobile homes and recreational vehicles such as caravans and boats
- net fixed assets of a business
- shares in estates
- land
- Older Australian's Bonus
- Pension Bonus scheme
- funds managed by a court appointed administrator
- loss of wages component of victims of crime lump sum compensation payment.

Ownership of real estate

An applicant or household member who owns or has an interest in real estate (excluding land) is ineligible for social housing unless they cannot make 'effective use' of the property because:

- they are unable to reside in the property or continue to reside in the property; or
- it is 'unrealisable', that is, they are unable to sell their equity in the real estate.

Examples of circumstances where the property cannot be put to 'effective use' are:

- family violence – documentation confirming this is required from a support worker who is providing support to person(s) experiencing family violence;
- the person cannot or should not occupy the property for medical or health and safety reasons and they are experiencing difficulty selling the property. For example, the person is a police witness and at risk if they remain in the property or the property is unsuitable for a person with mobility difficulties; or
- the property is part of a contested property settlement and the household member cannot occupy it or sell their equity.

Where an applicant or household member is unable to make 'effective use' of the property and is unable to realise their equity, the property is exempted from assessment as an asset. However, if the applicant receives their interest or share in the real estate prior to being offered social housing and their assets are over the asset eligibility limits, the applicant is not eligible to be allocated a tenancy from the Register.

5. PRIORITY CATEGORIES

Sections of the Register

Applicants for social housing who meet the eligibility criteria are placed on the Register according to their housing need. The Register consists of two application types:

- Priority Access – for people most in need of housing; and
- Register of Interest – for people who do not have an urgent housing need but are seeking to live in social housing.

Priority categories for identifying the relative housing needs of applicants

People who are in urgent housing need are prioritised for social housing. In broad terms, this might mean:

- the applicant is homeless
- the applicant is experiencing or has experienced family violence in their home
- the applicant needs to move for health reasons
- the applicant's home is too small for everyone in their household
- the applicant is living in emergency, crisis or transitional housing
- the applicant's social housing property is to be sold or redeveloped
- the applicant is staying with someone temporarily while they look for a home or
- the applicant is aged 55 years and over and is unable to sustain any other housing options on the basis of affordability.

The table below outlines the categories of the Register in order of priority and includes:

- priority categories for the purposes of identifying the relative needs of eligible applicants for social housing, and
- the priority criteria that must be met by an eligible applicant for a particular priority category to apply to that eligible applicant (with further detail provided in the sections below the table).

	Category	New or Transfer applicants	Income limit / Asset limit
Priority Access	<i>Emergency Management Housing</i> – for people whose housing is no longer safe or habitable, due to an emergency, for example, a bushfire, flood or storm.	<i>New and Transfer</i>	<i>Register of Interest</i>
	<i>Priority Transfers</i> – for people who are social housing tenants and require urgent relocation to another social housing property as their current property is unsafe; is to be sold; redeveloped or better utilised.	<i>Transfer</i>	<i>Register of Interest</i> <i>For asset limit: Register of Interest unless a household member requires full or major modifications then the asset limit is the disability modification asset limit</i>
	<i>Homeless with Support</i> – for people who are homeless or experiencing family violence and need support to obtain and establish appropriate, long-term housing.	<i>New</i>	<i>Priority Access</i>

	Category	New or Transfer applicants	Income limit / Asset limit
Priority Access	Supported Housing – for people who live in unsuitable housing and have a disability or long-term health problem requiring major structural modifications and/or personal support to live independently.	New and Transfer	Priority Access (new) Register of Interest (transfer) <i>For asset limit: Priority Access unless a household member requires full or major modifications then the asset limit is the disability modification asset limit</i> OR <i>policy consideration can be applied to exempt households with significant personal support needs from the Priority Access limit, and instead assess them against the Register of Interest asset limit</i>
	Special Housing Needs – for people who are living in housing that has become unsuitable and who have no alternative housing options.	New and Transfer	Priority Access (new) Register of Interest (transfer) <i>For asset limit: Register of Interest (transfer) unless a household member requires full or major modifications then the asset limit is the Disability Modification asset limit</i>
	Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over – for people who are eligible for social housing who are aged 55 years and over, and are not eligible for another priority category.	New	Priority Access
Register of Interest	Register of Interest – no additional criteria apply.	New and Transfer	Register of Interest <i>For asset limit: Register of Interest unless a household member requires full or major modifications then the asset limit is the disability modification asset limit</i>

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PRIORITY CATEGORIES

To be eligible for one of the priority access categories the applicant must meet the general eligibility criteria for the Register outlined in Section 2 above and also be able to demonstrate eligibility for one or more priority categories.

a. Emergency Management Housing

The Emergency Management Housing category is for people whose housing is no longer safe or habitable, due to an emergency, for example a bushfire, flood or storm.

To confirm eligibility, an applicant's support organisation, a recovery agency such as the municipal council, or a tenancy manager must confirm their housing is no longer safe or habitable, due to an emergency.

b. Priority transfers

The Priority Transfers category is for existing social housing tenants that require urgent relocation to another social housing property because their current property is unsafe or unsuitable, is to be sold, redeveloped or better utilised.

To be considered eligible, the type of circumstances that must be demonstrated include:

Safety issues: there are safety issues, for example, due to family violence, anti-social behaviour, threats to safety in a rooming house, risk of ex-prisoner tenant re-offending etc.

Manifestly unsuitable housing: the existing housing is manifestly unsuitable resulting in a situation where a person cannot continue to live there independently, for instance, because they need major disability modifications or level access or they cannot accommodate a live-in carer.

Uninhabitable housing: the property is uninhabitable, for example, because there has been a fire, flood or vandalism.

Family re-unification: a need to re-unify a family, for example, if a court has ordered that a child should stay with their parent three nights a week and there is not enough bedrooms to accommodate the child.

Stock utilisation: a need to better match tenants to properties that improves stock utilisation. For example, where a tenant wishes to downsize from a four bedroom house to a two bedroom house as their children have grown up and moved out of the family home.

Move out of a property: a need to move a tenant due to an expiry of a head-lease or to enable redevelopment or upgrade of the property.

c. Homeless with Support

The Homeless with Support category is for individuals or families who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or experiencing family violence who:

- have no alternative housing options;
- are receiving support through a government-funded support program; or
- who are exiting care or custody under health, child protection or justice arrangements.

d. Supported Housing

The Supported Housing category is for people or families whose existing housing is highly unsuitable (including social housing) because:

- major structural modification is required of their existing housing due to a household member's disability or health condition, but such modification cannot be made; or

- they are unable to access required assistance of personal support through an approved support provider to be able to live independently or their housing is significantly detrimental to, or exacerbates, their physical or mental health condition.

e. Special Housing Needs

The Special Housing Needs category is for people who are living in housing that has become unsuitable and have no alternative housing options.

There are four priority reasons that a person can be considered eligible for the Special Housing Needs category. The type of circumstances that an applicant must demonstrate to be eligible for this category include:

- Insecure Housing (i.e. living in temporary, emergency or crisis housing or with friends or relatives);
- Inappropriate housing, comprising severe overcrowding, unsuitable housing and family reunification;
- Unsafe housing, comprising of family violence and serious threat of physical danger; or
- Urgent Medical Needs, with a serious medical condition, where the person urgently requires alternative housing.

f. Special Housing Needs – 55 years and over

This category is for people aged 55 years and over who wish to be considered for social housing who are not eligible for any other priority access category. This category only applies to single people or couples (i.e. both applicants will need to be aged 55 or above).

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