

Community Housing for Seniors Policy

Policy Type	Governance Policy	Version:	3.0
Responsible Officer	Manager Community Wellbeing	Date Approved:	16 September 2020
Review Officer:	Senior Community Housing Officer	Review Due:	16 September 2024
Author:	Senior Community Wellbeing Officer	Commencement:	16 September 2020

1. PURPOSE

Mareeba Shire Council is committed to contributing to an improved quality of life for seniors by ensuring equitable access to affordable accommodation in the Mareeba Shire. Council delivers a Long Term Community Housing service for seniors in the towns of Mareeba, Mount Molloy, Kuranda and Dimbulah.

As a registered provider of long term community housing under the Queensland State Regulatory System for Community Housing, Council is required to implement community housing policies and procedures. This policy establishes a formal process to ensure there is a consistent approach to managing the community housing facilities of the Mareeba Shire Council.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the operation of the community housing service of the Mareeba Shire Council and to the management of the property assets.

Mareeba Shire Council delivers a Long Term Community Housing service with 108 units across the towns of Mareeba, Mount Molloy, Kuranda and Dimbulah. Council has funding agreements with the Department of Housing and Public Works for 84 of the properties and is obliged to adhere to the relevant Departmental regulation and policies for funded properties. For the properties that do not have a funding agreement, Council aims to apply social housing principles and manages these in a consistent manner to the funded properties.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 ELIGIBILITY

Mareeba Shire Council's housing service is specifically for seniors, which means that to be eligible to apply for Council housing the applicants must receive the Age Pension or other approved pensions including Department of Veterans' Affairs, or be over the age of 55 years and receiving a Disability Support Pension, unless otherwise approved by Council.

The Mareeba Shire Council *Community Housing for Seniors Policy* adopts the eligibility process currently used by the Queensland Government which involves a need-based assessment for community housing assistance. Implementation of these criteria is a requirement of the *Housing Regulation 2015* and stipulated in the Queensland Government's *Social Housing Program Specifications*. All applicants for community housing are

Human Rights Compatibility Statement

The *Human Rights Act 2019* (HR Act) (Qld) came into effect on 1 January 2020 and will mean fairer laws, policies and practices by public entities when dealing with the community on a day-to-day basis. This policy has been drafted in alignment with obligations under s 58 of the HR Act.

assessed against the common intake eligibility criteria as identified in the Queensland Government's *Social Housing Eligibility Criteria*.

In addition to the requirements of the Queensland Government's *Social Housing Eligibility Criteria*, preference will be given to applicants who have been resident in the Mareeba Shire Council area for a number of years and / or have relatives who are residents of the Mareeba Shire. It is recognised that social and community connection is an indicator of a sustainable tenancy and consideration is given to tenant connection to community as well as existing or available formal and informal support networks.

3.2 ALLOCATION

Mareeba Shire Council aims to match the needs of the tenants to the most suitable, available property and adheres to the Queensland Government's *Allocations Policy for Funded Social Housing Providers* when allocating new tenants to vacant funded properties. Council also applies the same principles to allocating new tenants to unfunded properties.

3.3 MATCH TO PROPERTY

Mareeba Shire Council's properties include 104 single bedroom units and 4 two-bedroom units and Council manages allocations and ongoing eligibility to ensure that the properties meet the ongoing and changing needs of the household; and to ensure that the community benefit of these properties is maximised.

3.4 ONGOING ELIGIBILITY

Council reviews the circumstances of all tenants on an annual basis, as is required by the Queensland Government's *Social Housing Eligibility Criteria*. Council will take into consideration any mitigating factors and exercise discretion in relation to the ongoing eligibility criteria.

Social housing is available for the duration of need, however, if a tenant is no longer eligible, or social housing is no longer the most appropriate form of housing for a tenant, Council will work with the household to exit to other suitable long-term accommodation.

3.5 ASSET MANAGEMENT

Council manages the housing assets in accordance with Council's current asset management principles to ensure the houses are maintained to the appropriate standard, as required by the Queensland Government.

3.6 TENANT REQUESTS FOR FIXTURES OR MODIFICATIONS

All requests for modifications must be approved in writing by Council, prior to a tenant organising the work. Tenants may have to remove fixtures/modifications if they were not approved, or are not to Council standard, and upon vacate the property must be returned to its original condition at the tenant's cost.

In addition, there are certain modifications or improvements which must be approved by the Queensland Government.

3.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

If a tenant or applicant is dissatisfied with the service or actions of the Council or Council staff, the tenant or applicant can lodge a complaint or an appeal against that decision in accordance with Council's *Administrative Action Complaint Policy* and procedures. If the affected person is not satisfied that a complaint has been satisfactorily resolved, he/she will be informed of any further review mechanisms that are available and given the details of any statutory right of review.

This may include a review by the Department of Housing and Public Works, Queensland Human Rights Commission or Queensland Ombudsman.

4. REPORTING

The following reporting is required by the Queensland Government to monitor the delivery of the Community Housing service:

1. Quarterly Performance Report (funded properties only)
Responsible: Manager - Community Wellbeing.
Reporting: performance data regarding tenancy management with a biannual asset management component.
2. Community Housing Annual Financial Return (funded properties only)
Responsible: Manager - Community Wellbeing / Finance
Reporting: annual financial performance.
3. Community Housing Survey (all properties)
Responsible: Manager - Community Wellbeing.
Reporting: annual report regarding tenant circumstances for all properties.

5. DEFINITIONS

1. Funded property - a unit which is subject to a funding agreement with the Queensland Government
2. Household - means everyone listed on the tenancy agreement regardless of age or relationship
3. Rent - rent is paid where a household is covered under the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (Queensland).
4. Social Housing - public and community housing that is available to provide housing stability to vulnerable people who aren't able to access and sustain housing in the private market.
5. Unfunded property - a unit which is not subject to a funding agreement with the Queensland Government

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Housing Act 2003 (Queensland)
Housing Regulation 2015 (Queensland)
Human Rights Act 2019 (Queensland)
Information Privacy Act 2009 (Queensland)
Mareeba Shire Council Community Housing Rent Procedure
Mareeba Shire Council Administrative Action Complaint Management Policy
Mareeba Shire Council Customer Service Charter
Mareeba Shire Council Tenant Information Guide & Procedures
Queensland State Regulatory Code
Queensland Government's Allocations Policy for Funded Social Housing Providers
Queensland Government's Allowable Expenditure Policy
Queensland Government's Community Housing Rent Policy
Queensland Government's Community Housing Tenancy Management Policy
Queensland Government's Social Housing Eligibility Criteria
Queensland Government's Social Housing Program Specifications
Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (Queensland)

7. REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Manager Community Wellbeing to monitor the adequacy of this policy and implement and approve appropriate changes. This policy will be formally reviewed every four (4) years or as required by Council. Current legislation, regulations, guidelines or procedures will prevail over the Community Housing for Seniors Policy in the event that these are reviewed and updated.