

## Community Housing for Seniors Policy

Policy Type	Governance Policy	Version:	4.0
Responsible Officer	Senior Community Services Officer	Date Approved:	16/10/2024
Review Officer:	Manager Customer & Community Services	Review Due:	16/09/2028
Author:	Senior Community Services Officer	Commencement:	16/10/2024

### 1. PURPOSE

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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 provides 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

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This policy applies to the operation of Mareeba Shire Council's long term community housing service, including the management of property assets. The Policy applies to organisations contracted to deliver the community housing service on behalf of Mareeba Shire Council.

Mareeba Shire Council provides 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 manner consistent with the funded properties.

### 3. POLICY STATEMENT

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#### 3.1 ELIGIBILITY

Mareeba Shire Council's community 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. Discretion may be applied to this eligibility criteria in specific circumstances to maintain high occupancy rates.

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 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**

Allocation of new tenants to vacant, funded properties adheres to the Queensland Government's *Allocations Policy for Funded Social Housing Providers* and aims to match the needs of the tenants to the most suitable, available property. The same principles apply 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. Allocations and ongoing eligibility are managed 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**

The circumstances of all tenants are reviewed on an annual basis, as is required by the Queensland Government's *Social Housing Eligibility Criteria*. Consideration is given to any mitigating factors and discretion is exercised 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, assistance will be provided to the household to exit to other suitable long-term accommodation.

### **3.5 ASSET MANAGEMENT**

The housing assets are managed 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 by Council or an organisation contracted to deliver the community housing service on behalf of 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 the property must be returned to its original condition at the tenant's cost. At the end of the tenancy, the improvements will become the property of Council, unless otherwise specified in the approval.

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 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 Management Policy* and procedures.

If a tenant or applicant is dissatisfied with the service or actions of an organisation contracted to deliver the community housing service on behalf of Council, the tenant or applicant can lodge a complaint or an appeal against that decision in accordance with that organisation's complaints policy.

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

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

Where delivery of the community housing service is contracted out, responsibility for reporting will be defined in the service deed.

## 5. DEFINITIONS

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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* (Qld).
4. **Social Housing** – public and community housing that is available to provide housing stability to vulnerable people who are not 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

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*Administrative Action Complaint Management Policy* (MSC)

*Allocations Policy for Funded Social Housing Providers* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

*Allowable Expenditure Policy* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

*Community Housing Rent Policy* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

*Community Housing Rent Policy Guideline* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

*Community Housing Rent Procedure* (MSC)

*Community Housing for Seniors Tenant Information Guide* (MSC and Mareeba Community Housing Company)

*Community Housing Tenancy Management Policy* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

*Customer Service Charter* (MSC)

*Housing Act 2003* (Qld)

*Housing Regulation 2015* (Qld)

*Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld)

*Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld)

*Queensland State Regulatory Code* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

*Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (Qld)

*Social Housing Eligibility Criteria* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

*Social Housing Program Specifications* (Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy)

Note: Current legislation, regulations, State government guidelines and procedures will prevail over the Community Housing Rent Procedure to the extent of any inconsistency.

## 7. REVIEW

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It is the responsibility of the Manager Customer & Community Services 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.