



COMMUNITY HOUSING FOR SENIORS
***TENANT INFORMATION GUIDE &
PROCEDURES***



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1 OVERVIEW

This information is based on the Mareeba Shire Council *Community Housing for Seniors Policy*. In partnership with the Queensland Government, Mareeba Shire Council (Council) provides community housing to eligible persons. It currently manages 108 units and is responsible for their upkeep and selecting new tenants. The majority of the properties are one bedroom, although there are four two-bedroom properties available. There are certain one-bedroom properties which are not suitable for couples due to their small size.

Applicants must have a current application for housing with the Queensland Government. In addition, to be eligible for Council housing the applicants must satisfy either of the following:

- Receive the Age Pension/DVA Pension; or
- Aged 55 years or over receiving a Disability Support Pension.

In addition to this guide, further information can be found in Council's *Community Housing for Seniors Policy* and *Community Housing Rent Procedure* which are available on Council's website at www.msc.qld.gov.au or by calling 1300 308 461 for a copy.

2 ELIGIBILITY & TENANCY INFORMATION

2.1 ELIGIBILITY

Mareeba Shire Council's housing service is specifically for seniors. The target group for new tenants is seniors who are over 55 years receiving an eligible pension such as the Age pension, Service pension or 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* (Queensland) 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*. The criteria include:

- Australian citizenship or residency;
- Queensland residency*;
- Property ownership;
- Liquid assets;
- Independent income;
- Household income;
- Appropriateness of current housing;
- Reviewing intake eligibility.

*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 long-term 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 supports and informal networks.

2.2 ALLOCATION

The Queensland Government's *Allocations Policy for Funded Social Housing Providers* details the requirements for community housing providers assisting clients into and through the housing system, as appropriate to their needs. The policy, and related procedures, establish processes for referrals, matching to a vacancy and offers of accommodation.

The movement of a tenant or household from one community housing property to another is managed as per the Queensland Government's *Allocations Policy for Funded Social Housing Providers*. The household's needs will be assessed and matched to the property.

Tenants will be reviewed annually, or as their circumstances change, against the Queensland Government's *Social Housing Eligibility Criteria* to confirm continued suitability to the Long-Term Community Housing Program.

2.3 BEDROOM ENTITLEMENT

The following are examples of households that are suited to the single-bedroom and two-bedroom properties:

1 bedroom

- A single person
- A couple

2 bedrooms

- A couple who require the second bedroom for support needs and/or health related reasons such as a disability
- An eligible adult and a live-in carer
- Two single adults over 55 years of age on an approved Age pension

Council applies the following principles to the two-bedroom units:

- i. If one member of the household is not eligible for social housing or does not meet the target age group, then that person will be named as an approved occupant on the Tenancy Agreement.
- ii. Approved carers will be listed as an approved occupant if they are not eligible for social housing and/or do not meet the target age group.
- iii. In the instance that one tenant vacates a 2-person household, and there is no demonstrated need for a second bedroom, Council will provide support to assist the remaining tenant to move into a suitable 1-bedroom property when one becomes available.

2.4 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*. This review includes consideration of:

1. Household income;
2. Property ownership; and
3. Household need and match to property.

Tenants must advise if there are any changes to their circumstances e.g. their source of income changes or they take ownership of property or other assets as this can affect ongoing eligibility. Additional reviews may be undertaken when there is a change in household circumstances such as:

- Reduction or increase in income (not related to annual pension increases);
- Changes to household members.

Social housing is available for the duration of need, however, if 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. Council will take into consideration any mitigating factors and exercise discretion in relation to all ongoing eligibility criteria.

3 GENERAL INFORMATION - KEYS, LOCKOUTS & PETS

3.1 KEYS

Tenants are provided with two keys for each property. All doors in a property are keyed alike so that one key opens all entry doors and screen doors. Additional keys required for family members or friends will incur additional charges. These must be organised through Council because they are registered keys.

Any keys lost, misplaced or accidentally broken are to be replaced at the tenant's cost. If a key is stolen, then the unit will need to be rekeyed to prevent stolen keys being used to gain entry.

3.2 LOCKOUTS

When tenants have locked themselves out of their home, it is the tenant's responsibility to organise access and all costs will be covered by the tenant. The options include:

- During office hours - tenants can go to Council's Customer Service Centre at Rankin Street in Mareeba to collect a key. Kuranda tenants can collect a key from Council's Kuranda Customer Service Centre at the Kuranda Library.

The spare key is signed out to the tenant and returned by the tenant at their earliest convenience.

- After hours - contact the Council After Hours Call Centre on 1300 308 461 and they will arrange for a locksmith to attend. There will be a charge for this service which will be paid by the tenant.

Tenants are encouraged to leave a key with a trusted neighbour or a family member or friend if they are concerned that they may lock themselves out. Another option includes a key safe fixed to the property, preferably at the rear of the property.

3.3 CRITERIA FOR PETS

Mareeba Shire Council recognises that pets can provide companionship, security, and contribute to the health and wellbeing of our tenants. Tenants may keep one (1) dog or (1) one cat where the pet and property comply with Section 3.11.2, Local Laws, *Animal Management Act 2008* and other applicable regulations, statutes and laws.

Principles

- Pets can provide companionship, security, and contribute to the health and wellbeing of people;
- Pets will be assessed on pet type and will not be limited to dogs and cats;
- Pets will only be approved if the pet/property complies with existing laws;
- Not all pets will be approved by Council;
- The pet must be right for the lifestyle and environment of both the pet and tenant;
- Tenants in the community have the right to live without interference from other tenant's pets. Pet owners may face action under the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* if a pet causes a grievance under the General Tenancy Agreement.

Animals Permitted

- All animals require approval from Council;
- One (1) dog or one (1) cat per unit unless otherwise agreed by Council;
- Dogs and cats are to be desexed, micro chipped and a Veterinarian Certificate provided if required;

- Dogs must be registered as required by *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008*;
- Dogs are not to weigh more than 10 (ten) kilograms, unless otherwise approved;
- Registered service dogs (including all assistance e.g. Guide dog, hearing dog and assistance dog) greater than 10 (ten) kilograms will be permitted. Copy of certification as per Council's Local Law requirements of a guide dog or hearing dog or assistance dog to be supplied with application.

Property Requirements for Animals

The approval of a pet will be subject to Council's assessment that the property is appropriate for the animal type. The tenant will be responsible to:

- Provide adequate fencing or enclosure. The tenant is responsible for the cost associated with the installation and maintenance of the yard and fencing to safely enclose the animal;
- Remove all unwanted rubbish and pet faeces regularly;
- Apply a flea treatment at the end of the tenancy, if relevant;
- Remove the approved fencing at the end of the tenancy.

4 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE & MANAGEMENT

4.1 MAINTENANCE - TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of tenants to keep their homes clean and in good condition, as per the Tenancy Agreement. Tenants are also responsible for the maintenance of the yard and gardens, including the disposal of garden waste.

All other maintenance is coordinated through the Council unless permission has been granted. Any maintenance carried out without Council approval may result in the tenant paying to return the property to its original condition (as per tenancy regulations under the Residential Tenancies Authority).

The property is to be left in the same condition it was first tenanted with fair wear and tear taken into consideration. Tenants who smoke inside will be required to pay for any paint damage that occurs from the smoke.

4.2 MAINTENANCE - COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

A maintenance service is provided to all Mareeba Shire Council tenants. All maintenance issues or enquiries must be reported to the Community Housing Officer as soon as possible.

These can be reported by:

Phone: 1300 308 461 (24-hour service)
Email: info@msc.qld.gov.au
In person: Mareeba Customer Service Centre or Kuranda Library

As the lessor, Mareeba Shire Council will make arrangements for any necessary repairs that may be required. This maintenance service operates during office hours, and an after hours service is also available for emergency maintenance.

Council will determine whether a request for maintenance is urgent or non-urgent and will endeavour to respond in accordance with Queensland Government guidelines. The customer request for maintenance will be acknowledged within 5 working days, in accordance with Mareeba Shire Council's *Customer Service Charter*.

4.3 PEST CONTROL

Council organises treatment for ants, spiders and cockroaches on a scheduled basis. Any additional treatments required during the tenancy for any other pests will be the responsibility of the tenant.

Tenants with a pet dog or cat will be required to ensure the property is free of fleas at the end of the tenancy.

4.4 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AT THE END OF THE TENANCY

Tenants are expected to maintain the home in good repair, having regard to the condition at the start of the tenancy. Notwithstanding fair wear and tear, the tenant is responsible to maintain the property in this state.

Any costs to return the property to this condition will be the responsibility of the tenant and may include general cleaning, mould removal, removing modifications and repairs to property damage.

4.5 GARDEN MAINTENANCE

Tenants are responsible for maintaining their lawns and gardens to a satisfactory standard including keeping the lawn mowed and removing weeds. If applicable, palm fronds, small branches and fallen fruit must be removed to maintain the yard in a tidy condition.

Tenants must avoid planting trees near sewerage and drainage pipes or within 3 metres of the house as this may cause structural problems to foundations, roof and guttering. Tenants are not permitted to plant any trees/shrubs that grow higher than 3 metres at maturity, bamboo, prickly plants such as bougainvillea, or vines that cling to property.

Tenants are also responsible to prune and maintain any plants they have added to the property. They may be asked to remove them at the end of tenancy to return the garden to its original condition. Tenants are responsible for the removal of garden waste.

Tenants must not install new garden beds without written approval.

If large trees or shrubs which were not planted by the tenant require pruning, the tenant is required to notify the Community Housing Officer and, if the works are deemed necessary, Council will organise for these works to be completed at Council's cost. The tenant is responsible for any costs associated with trees, shrubs or vines that they have planted and may be required to remove these if the property will be damaged by the plants.

4.6 TENANT REQUESTS FOR FIXTURES OR MODIFICATIONS

All requests for modifications must be approved by Council, prior to a tenant organising the work. To obtain approval, the tenant must submit a formal request by completing the Mareeba Shire Council *Property Modification Request Form*.

Tenants are advised not to purchase any equipment or materials associated with the proposed modifications until Council approval has been provided. Examples of modifications which will require approval by Mareeba Shire Council include garden sheds, carports and air-conditioning.

Tenants may have to remove fixtures/modifications if they were not approved or are not to Council standard. The property must be returned to its original condition at the tenant's cost.

There are certain modifications or improvements which must be approved by the Queensland Government and, in that case, the State's approval process may take at least 8 weeks.

On receipt of an approved *Property Modification Request Form* the tenant may proceed with the alteration or fixture to be installed, noting:

- All costs, with the exception of the building application, will be paid by the tenant. The Mareeba Shire Council will cover the costs related to the building application.
- The tenant is responsible for the maintenance of all approved modifications or additions to the property, for the duration of the tenancy. At the end of the tenancy, the improvements will become the property of Mareeba Shire Council, unless otherwise specified on the Council's *Property Modification Request Form*.
- All improvements added by the tenant at their cost will be excluded from consideration during rent appraisals for the length of the tenancy.
- Mareeba Shire Council will not reimburse tenants for costs expended on improvements and alterations to the property when they vacate.

4.7 CAPITAL WORKS

Major capital works are carried out to maintain the properties, where required, on an annual basis in accordance with Council's budget planning. Examples include external painting, internal painting and kitchen replacements.

The purpose of Capital Works is to ensure the assets of the Mareeba Shire Council are maintained in good and working condition and in doing so maintain the living conditions of the tenants. Council's capital works program is informed by the Community Housing Asset Management Plan where the condition of the property is formally assessed. This plan means that Council can prioritise works across the units to ensure the properties are maintained in an acceptable standard, as defined by the Queensland Government's *Maintenance Management Framework*.

4.8 ANNUAL PROPERTY INSPECTIONS

Council will conduct annual property inspections and legislated maintenance which includes testing the safety switch and testing smoke alarms. Council will provide tenants with the appropriate notice in writing, in accordance with the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (Queensland).

Tenants will be advised in writing if additional inspections are required.

4.9 ENTRY TO THE PROPERTY

Entry to the property by the Lessor or approved persons is allowed for valid reasons, such as maintenance, inspections, or valuations. Tenants will be notified in writing and where applicable will be issued an entry notice. Minimum notice periods apply: 7 days for inspections, or 24 hours for repairs, follow-up inspections after a Notice to Remedy Breach, inspecting work completed, or a valuation. Notice periods do not apply in an emergency, or if the tenant agrees to entry without notice.

5 COMPLAINTS & DISPUTES

5.1 SERVICE COMPLAINT

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 Complaints Management Policy* and procedures.

Complaints can be submitted via:

Phone: 1300 308 461

Email: info@msc.qld.gov.au

Online: <https://msc.qld.gov.au/contact-council/>

Post: Mareeba Shire Council, Community Housing,
PO Box 154, MAREEBA Q 4880

Fax: 07 4092 3323

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.

5.2 TENANCY COMPLAINTS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD DISPUTES

The *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (Queensland) establishes the tenant's responsibilities and obligations to ensure the peace and quiet, enjoyment of their home, and neighbourhood.

Any complaints regarding tenants will be investigated and Council will intervene and provide solutions where it is required to do so under the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (Queensland).

If an approved pet causes a nuisance or if complaints are received that a tenant's pet is interfering with the reasonable peace, comfort and privacy of neighbours, Council will investigate, and appropriate action will be taken. If a tenant is in breach of the Tenancy Agreement or of Local Government laws, Council may withdraw approval to keep a pet and the tenant may be required to remove the pet permanently from the property within a timeframe designated by Council.

In the case of neighbourhood disputes, it is not Mareeba Shire Council's policy to actively intervene in these matters, but Council will refer tenants to services which can assist in resolving neighbourhood disputes.

5.3 DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTRE

The Dispute Resolution Centre provides mediation services and can help to settle disputes without legal action.

The Dispute Resolution Centre is run by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and involves guiding discussions between the two parties involved to work out an agreement that suits them both.

Mediators will not take sides and will not make judgements. The service maintains the tenant's privacy, is usually free, helps a tenant make their own decisions about the dispute and most importantly, will help to have the problem resolved.

5.4 SERIOUS INCIDENTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

Tenants must contact emergency services by calling 000 in the instance of a serious or life-threatening event including fire, the threat of violence, break and enter, or other incident.

If residents suspect that illegal activity is taking place at one of Council's properties they should, in the first instance, contact Police Link on 131 444.

As soon as possible after any such incident, residents must contact Council to provide details. This will allow Council to undertake repairs or investigate further, if appropriate.

6 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

6.1 WHERE ARE THE COTTAGES AND UNITS LOCATED?

Council's Community Housing properties are mostly located close to shops and in quiet areas. They are often neighbouring other Community Housing units or cottages. The properties are located in 4 towns with 83 properties in Mareeba, 14 properties in Kuranda, 6 properties in Dimbulah and 5 properties in Mt Molloy.

6.2 HOW DO I APPLY?

To be considered for Council's community housing service, applicants must have a current application lodged with the Department of Housing and Public Works. When a property becomes vacant, it is offered by Mareeba Shire Council to an applicant referred by the Department of Housing and Public Works.

6.3 HOW LONG IS THE LEASE FOR?

Council offers tenants a periodic lease meaning that there is no fixed-term agreement. The main reason that an agreement would be terminated by Council is if the tenant does not comply with the terms and conditions agreed to in RTA Form 18a General Tenancy Agreement.

Should the tenant wish to leave, two weeks' notice must be given in writing. If the Council wishes the tenant to leave without grounds, two months' notice will be provided. Tenants can lodge their intention by submitting a RTA Form 13 Notice of Intention to Leave.

6.4 IS THERE A BOND ON THE PROPERTY?

Yes, there is a bond. The bond is equivalent to four weeks rent as per the legislation.

Eligible tenants can apply for a bond loan if they do not have sufficient funds for their bond. This is organised through the Queensland Government. Bonds are required to be paid in full when the Residential Tenancy Agreement is signed unless the tenant has an approved bond loan. Bonds can be increased when the rent increases.

6.5 WHAT DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR?

The tenant is responsible for:

- Keeping up to date with their rent payments;
- The costs associated with the maintenance of the garden and yard;
- Utilities such as electricity and telephone;
- Fixtures or modifications to the property installed by the tenant (e.g. garden locker or air conditioner) that have been approved by Council in writing;
- Repairs to personal appliances e.g. TV, fridge, microwave.

6.6 DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR WATER?

Tenants are not required to pay water charges on the property. However, water restrictions must be complied with and tenants are required to be sensible in their water usage.

If an irrigation system or sprinkler is used, it must be water efficient and operated appropriately to conserve water. When watering gardens and lawns by any means, tenants should:

- apply water at a rate so that it does not pond, pool or run off;
- not apply water when the soil is already adequately moist to sustain plant growth, whether because of rain or other watering;

- apply water in such a manner so that it does not fall on buildings or hard surfaces and run to waste;
- use a manual timer with a maximum timing capability of 30 minutes with an efficient sprinkler;
- not apply water in windy conditions where the distribution pattern of the irrigation or sprinkling systems will be affected;
- apply water only to gardens that are sufficiently mulched to reduce evaporation;
- water early in the morning or early evening/night to avoid evaporation.

6.7 HOW MUCH RENT IS CHARGED?

Rent will be charged in accordance with the Queensland Government's *Community Housing Rent Policy*. The market rent is compared to 25% of the tenant's assessable income plus rent assistance. The rent charged is the lower of the two amounts.

Additional information can be found at the housing department's website.

6.8 WHEN IS THE RENT INCREASED?

The rent is reviewed at least once a year using the Community Housing Rent Calculator which considers the household's income. Two months' notice will be given prior to any increase in accordance with tenancy regulations. Eligibility for Commonwealth Rent Assistance depends on the pension type and amount of rent paid and the personal financial circumstances of the tenant.

Contact Centrelink or Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) for more information about rent assistance.

6.9 WILL I RECEIVE RENT RECEIPTS?

Tenants paying their rent by Centrepay or electronic funds transfer do not receive rent receipts, while those who pay by cash at a Customer Service Centre will be provided with a receipt at the time of payment. Tenants who pay by cheque over the counter at a Customer Service Centre will be provided with a receipt on request.

6.10 WHO DO I CONTACT IN AN EMERGENCY?

Please contact 000 if there is an emergency.

All other non-urgent police matters should be directed to Police Link on 131 444. Also contact Council to advise them of the situation.

6.11 DO I NEED TO NOTIFY COUNCIL IF I'M GOING AWAY?

If you are absent from your home due to a lengthy hospital stay or planning a trip, please contact the Community Housing Officer as soon as possible. Absences of more than 28 days will require a Mareeba Shire Council *Tenant Absence Form* to be completed, preferably 1 week before you leave.

6.12 WHERE DO I FIND TENANCY INFORMATION?

Information about renting in Queensland can be found on the Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) website at www.rta.qld.gov.au or the RTA can be contacted on 1300 366 311.

7 CONTACT COUNCIL

If you require further information, please contact Council by:

Phone: 1300 308 461

Email: info@msc.qld.gov.au

Online: <https://msc.qld.gov.au/contact-council/>

Post: Mareeba Shire Council, Community Housing,
PO Box 154, MAREEBA Q 4880

Fax: 07 4092 3323

Council appreciates feedback to enable services to improve and evolve to meet the changing needs of the community.