

Steps Program

Policy

Date effective: 4 February 2020 to 30 September 2020

1. Purpose

This policy ensures that housing remains affordable and secure for households in urban public housing with income and/or assets higher than the eligibility limits.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- Households in public housing are not placed in housing stress.
- No household is transitioned out of public housing into homelessness, at risk of homelessness, or housing stress.

3. Scope

This policy applies to public housing tenancies in urban areas.

4. Policy detail

The Department recognises that while some households have income and assets that exceed the public housing eligibility limits outlined in the Income and Assets policy, they may have difficulty accessing or sustaining a tenancy outside of public housing.

Until 30 September 2020, households who are ineligible for urban public housing due to their income and/or assets exceeding the public housing eligibility limits will have the following Step Up and Step Out programs applied.

4.1. Step Up

A household is eligible for Step Up if:

- household income exceeds the public housing income limits by up to \$385 per week; or
- household assets exceed the public housing assets limits, but household income does not exceed the income limits.

Households eligible for Step Up will have their rent calculated at 30% of household income. Where the amount calculated is higher than full rent, full rent is charged.

Households will not be required to move out of public housing, however they may be required to transfer to another public housing premises in line with the Entitlement policy and the Public Housing Transfers policy.

4.2. Step Out

A household whose income exceeds the public housing eligibility limits by \$386 per week or more will be charged full rent for the premises in line with the Rent policy.

Households in Step Out will be transitioned out of public housing into more independent forms of housing. As each household has different circumstances, the Department will work closely with affected tenancies to identify alternative housing options. Household circumstances will be considered when determining a reasonable timeframe to end the tenancy. The Department will seek to have a timeframe that is mutually agreed with the tenant, but will be as a minimum in accordance with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999*.

The Executive Director Service Delivery may decide to not require a household in the Step Out program to move out of public housing if:

- their circumstances are likely to change soon so that they will be eligible for public housing (for example, if the tenant is moving to retirement and does not have retirement income to sustain other housing); or
- the household has vulnerability factors that present a barrier to accessing or sustaining stable accommodation outside of public housing. Vulnerability factors may include one or more of the following:
 - Age
 - Health
 - Mental and/or physical disability
 - Domestic and Family Violence
 - At risk of homelessness
 - Household's needs cannot be met by affordable or private rental market

Where the Executive Director Service Delivery allows a household in the Step Out program to remain in public housing, the decision will be reviewed every six months.

Where a household is not required to move out of public housing, they may be required to transfer to another public housing premises in line with the Entitlement policy and the Public Housing Transfers policy.

5. Discretionary decision making

No discretion can be applied to this policy.

6. Complaints and/or appeals

If a client is not satisfied with either a decision or action of the Department, they can access the Department's complaints and/or appeals processes. For further information, please refer to the Complaints and/or Appeals policies.

7. Review of the policy

If at any time the legislative, operating or funding environment is so altered that the policy is no longer appropriate in its current form, the policy shall be reviewed and amended accordingly.

8. References

8.1. Legislation

Housing Act 1982

Residential Tenancies Act 1999

8.2. Policies

Appeals policy

Complaints policy

Discretionary Decision Making policy

Employment Incentive Scheme policy

Entitlement policy

Income and Assets policy

Public Housing Transfers policy

Rent policy

Rental Rebate policy

9. Document change control table

| Release date | Version number | Approved by (position) | Section amended | Category |
|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| 4/02/2020 | 1.00 | Acting Chief Executive Officer | all | New |