

Family violence rapid rehousing

People escaping family violence need urgent access to safe housing. This fact sheet provides information for service providers about the family violence rapid rehousing program.

Background

Family violence rapid rehousing is designed to quickly help vulnerable households experiencing family violence into safe and affordable homes.

It will provide transitional accommodation (leases up to 12 months) in the private rental market with subsidised rent for people experiencing family violence.

Family violence assistance can be provided to victims or perpetrators who are required to leave their home to ensure that safety is maintained within the home.

Family violence rapid rehousing complements the current social housing portfolio by maintaining a pool of private rental properties. Suitable applicants are matched to affordable accommodation from the pool of properties. Rent payable by the occupant will not exceed 30 per cent of the income of the household plus Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA).

Homes will be safe. It is critical that people feel safe in their new homes and are able to recover from the trauma of family violence. Allocations will be sensitive to the needs of affected clients.

Family violence rapid rehousing is a housing assistance provided by Homes Tasmania. It is delivered in partnership with registered community housing providers and Housing Connect.

Family violence rapid rehousing tenants will be provided with support to plan for their long-term housing solutions and to connect them to appropriate therapeutic care if needed through [Housing Connect](#).

Suitable applicants

Suitable applicants are:

- families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to leaving a violent relationship

- perpetrators who need alternative housing can be assisted so the family can remain in the family home. In general, perpetrators may have a police order or court order in place; however, discretion can be exercised to determine appropriate assistance within the program.

All applicants must be 16 years of age or over and be able to live independently. They must meet the minimum eligibility requirements for social housing, with the exception that there are no income or asset eligibility requirements for family violence rapid rehousing.

Families and individuals with goals towards reunification should work with services on achieving those goals through an alternative program.

Where a family or individual reunites with the perpetrator of family violence, Housing Connect and the community housing provider will work with relevant services, including Safe@Home, police and support services, to transition the family or individual to alternate accommodation.

How suitable applicants will be selected

Families and individuals may approach Housing Connect directly or be referred by a range of referral services. These services may have already undertaken a risk assessment of the families or individual's circumstances and can provide advice about the suitability for rapid rehousing.

Housing Connect will ensure that the suitable applicant is listed on the Housing Register.

Suitable applicants may be new to the Housing Register or may have an existing social housing application.

How tenants will be selected

Once a suitable property is available, Housing Connect and community housing providers work collaboratively with other service providers to match suitable applicants with suitable properties.

Households escaping from family violence with an existing housing application are assessed as priority applicants under the Housing Assessment and Prioritisation System (HAPS).

Perpetrators with an existing housing application may or may not have priority status.

Participation in the family violence rapid rehousing initiative will not affect a person's social housing application status.

Suitable properties

Suitable properties are sourced from the private rental market and must be located close to services, especially:

- health services
- public transport
- shops/grocery stores (open on weekends)

- a police station (preferably staffed 24 hours)
- preschools and primary and high schools
- childcare services.

Properties must also meet minimum standards of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*.

Property location

The table below outlines the preferred locations for properties in the South, North and North-West.

Properties in small regional towns are not preferred (though exceptions may apply) as the occupants may be too visible in smaller communities and the full suite of services and transport may not be available.

South	North	North-West
Inner Hobart area Glenorchy area (near Glenorchy, Claremont, Moonah, West Moonah) New Norfolk Kingston Huonville Clarence area (near Bellerive/Rosny)	Launceston area (near inner Launceston , Newnham , Invermay , Kings Meadows, Norwood, Punchbowl, Youngtown) Riverside Prospect Hadspen George Town Deloraine Scottsdale St Helens	Devonport Burnie Ulverstone Wynyard Penguin Smithton Queenstown

Property attributes

Accessible properties are preferred, and a range of property sizes are needed:

- small units for one or two adults, no children, and possibly small/medium pets
- medium units or small/medium houses for one or two adults plus one to three children, and possibly small/medium pets
- medium/large houses for one or two adults, four or more children, and possibly small/medium pets.

Suitable properties will include:

- a stove
- a refrigerator
- a microwave
- a washing machine

- at least one bed (double) for a one-bedroom unit, two beds for two-bedroom home and three beds for three-bedroom homes
- a couch to suit the number of bedrooms
- a dining table with a minimum of two chairs.

Further information about the preferred and non-preferred property attributes is contained in the table below.

Preferred property attributes	Not preferred
Near other residential properties. Foot and vehicle traffic.	In a commercial or industrial area away from other homes. In a small town where everybody knows everybody.
Surrounded by other houses.	Property located adjacent to public area, park or vacant land.
Fenced front and rear yard.	Unfenced property.
Clear line of sight from property to street. Outdoor security lighting.	Fence, building or vegetation obscures path from street to front door. There is not enough light to see people approach.
Two external entrances, solid doors. Able to check identity of visitors without opening the door.	Only one entrance, hollow-core door(s). Resident cannot identify visitor without opening door.
Windows provide natural light and can be secured in a way to prevent access to the home.	Insecure windows that enable people to enter the home.

Roles and responsibilities

Homes Tasmania administers the program, including approving suitable properties, and monitoring and reporting on the program.

Homes Tasmania provides community housing providers with a tenancy management payment for approved properties.

Property owners (or their agents) will:

- ensure their property is clean, tidy and fit for initial occupancy
- provide evidence of current insurance for their property (including landlord and tenant damage cover)
- enter into a head lease with a community housing provider for a one-, two- or three-year term that takes effect from the date that the community housing provider enters into a residential tenancy agreement with the tenant
- prescribe and receive rent from the community housing provider

- be responsible for the payment of council rates, maintenance repairs (excluding fair wear and tear) or improvements and all other property owner obligations as per the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*
- liaise with community housing providers regarding tenancy and property management.

Community housing providers will:

- identify homes suitable for the initiative from the private rental market
- ensure property owners provide evidence of current insurance documentation for their property (including tenant damage cover)
- ensure properties are furnished, secure and suitable for occupancy
- allocate properties to suitable applicants on the Housing Register
- enter into a residential tenancy agreement with suitable applicants for a maximum of 12 months
- receive \$17 000 per approved property per annum to assist with tenancy management costs (including tenant damage where cost recovery from tenant is unsuccessful)
- provide tenancy management services in accordance with the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*
- manage vacancies and meet the costs of any rental arrears.

Housing Connect will:

- assist with identifying private rental properties for lease by community housing providers
- provide advice and information on the initiative
- ensure a family violence worker in each region is available to provide intake and assessment services and assess and submit suitable applications using SHIP-Tas
- provide housing support services, including case coordination, maintaining linkages with therapeutic services and exit planning for the end of the lease.

Therapeutic, statutory services and crisis shelters will contact the family violence worker in Housing Connect to refer clients who may be suitable for the initiative.

The tenant will enter into a lease with the community housing provider and will be responsible for:

- water usage
- payment of income-based rent (no greater than 30 per cent of income) plus CRA
- tenant damage
- all other obligations under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* applicable to tenants.

Property approval process

Properties that meet the suitable property requirements will be identified by the community housing providers. The community housing provider will then complete a property approval form and submit it to Homes Tasmania for approval.

Properties will be considered by Homes Tasmania within two business days of receiving the completed form. Properties can be approved for a period of up to three years.

The Director, Housing Policy and Programs has discretion to approve more (or fewer) properties in a particular region if required due to an identified change in demand and need.

Payment will occur on receipt of evidence of the tenancy agreement with the occupant.

Application for re-approval of a dwelling must occur not less than 10 weeks prior to expiry of the initial approval. The provider will submit a property re-approval form to Homes Tasmania. Where a client has been in a property for 12 months or more a further grant will not be approved (subject to discretion of the Director, Housing Policy and Programs).

Tenancy arrangements

The community housing provider will receive \$17 000 per annum, per property, which will contribute to the costs of:

- subsidised rent and waiving of bond payments
- rent arrears and any periods of vacancy
- furnishings and appliances
- any necessary security or safety upgrades
- losses associated with unrecoverable tenant damage
- fixed water and electricity costs and connection fees.

Community housing providers can apply for funding for security upgrades from the Department of Justice under the 'Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes' program. Further information is available from Safe at Home at safeathome@justice.tas.gov.au or by phoning (03) 6165 4988.

The time housed in these properties is flexible. Leases will be for short term (three months or less) in the first instance but can be extended up to a maximum of 12 months.

Terminations

In accordance with the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*, the lease can be terminated by agreement by both parties.

If the tenant wishes to terminate the lease, Housing Connect may provide support to the tenant to negotiate an agreement with the community housing provider to terminate the lease.

Where a lease is terminated, the community housing provider will source another suitable applicant for allocation to the property from the Housing Register.

The community housing provider will assist the exiting tenant to contact Housing Connect to ensure a social housing application or other form of housing assistance is made.

Tenancy disputes

Dispute resolution processes will be as prescribed under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*. Parties to agreements may make use of representative bodies such as, but not limited to, Consumer, Building and Occupational Services, the Residential Tenancy Commissioner or the Tenants' Union of Tasmania.

Exit planning

Family violence rapid rehousing is transitional accommodation. Exit planning will occur in consultation with Housing Connect to ensure that long-term housing needs are met and to determine any ongoing support needs.

The outcome may include exiting into social housing (if eligible), exiting into an alternative affordable private rental or, where it is a positive, sustainable and desired outcome, the tenant may lease the property directly with the owner/agent.

Where the tenant leases the property directly with the owner/agent, the property will no longer be eligible for a further grant under rapid rehousing (subject to discretion by Homes Tasmania).

If the family or individual vacates the property after leasing directly with the owner/agent, then the property could again be submitted to Homes Tasmania for approval for a rapid rehousing grant.

Tenants exiting out of family violence rapid rehousing can have a priority exiting status under the Housing Assessment Prioritisation System (HAPS) if applying for social housing and will be eligible to apply for private rent assistance.

If social housing is identified as the most suitable exit option, a process is available for a tenant's circumstances to be considered if they have outstanding debt to Homes Tasmania. Discretion may be applied to lift any suspension on their application so they may be shortlisted for properties.

How success will be measured

Effective	Secure housing is sustained: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• low exits into homelessness• low repeats.
Occupancy	Vacancy rates are low.
Safe	Tenants are safe in their homes.
Satisfaction	Tenants are satisfied that the housing meets their needs.
Activity	A pool of at least 50 houses is maintained.

More information

Contact Housing Connect on 1800 800 588 between 9 am and 5 pm for more information about family violence rapid rehousing.