

Backyard units policy

Purpose

This policy provides the principles for using backyard units to achieve good social housing outcomes for tenants of social housing providers in Tasmania.

Policy context

Backyard units are a type of social housing that is available to large tenant households with young household members aged 15 to 25.

Young people can be at risk of homelessness if they leave their family home into insecure or unaffordable private rentals. Family stresses and large households can cause young people to move out.

Providing backyard units is a way of helping young people transition to a more independent living arrangement that is secure, comfortable and affordable and enables them to stay connected with their family.

Backyard units are demountable dwellings placed in the backyards of existing social housing properties owned by Homes Tasmania. They increase the size of a social housing property by adding a one- or two-bedroom unit for young people to enjoy their own space while maintaining a strong connection with their family or support network.

Four types of units are available: studio, one-bedroom unit, two-bedroom unit, and fully accessible unit for young people with disabilities. They range in size from 4.5 m wide by 8 m long to 4.5 m wide by 13 m long.

The portable units can be moved on site in one day and can be dismantled and relocated when they are no longer required by the household.

Backyard units have the added advantages of rapid construction that predominately occurs off site and they have little impact on the household during installation.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a backyard unit, a tenant household must:

- be an existing tenant of a property that is owned by Homes Tasmania
- be managed by any social housing provider
- need the backyard unit for an existing household member aged 15 to 25
- be considered a large household – defined as four or more household members
- have space in the backyard of their social housing property for a backyard unit.

Application and approval process

Backyard units are applied for via social housing providers.

A social housing provider, as tenancy manager, determines if a tenant is suitable for a backyard unit.

The decision to approve a backyard unit is made by Homes Tasmania, subject to availability or committed funds and assessed need.

Social housing providers may apply for a backyard unit by contacting 1800 995 653 or emailing HousingProjects@homes.tas.gov.au

Approval for a backyard unit will be based on:

- eligibility
- recommendation by the social housing provider
- the availability of a backyard unit
- suitability of site (see below)
- local council approval, if appropriate (see below).

On approval, Home Tasmania will determine how long a backyard unit is permitted on the site. The occupant(s) of a backyard unit must not be older than 25.

The social housing provider will be responsible for working closely with the tenant household to plan for the exit of the young person, and removal of the backyard unit, at least six months prior to the end of the term of permitted use.

Suitability of site

Homes Tasmania will conduct the following site suitability and installation process:

- A preliminary site assessment, including infrastructure and planning regulations, will be undertaken to determine if placing a backyard unit at the site is feasible.
- Once confirmed, approval will be sought from the local council.
- If council approval is obtained, confirmation of the backyard unit will be sought from the social housing provider and the tenant, and delivery timeframes agreed.
- The unit will then be identified or commissioned.
- Infrastructure works, including plumbing and electricity, will be completed at the address prior to delivery.
- The unit will be delivered and installed (by crane) at the property, then connected to services.
- A building surveyor will assess the unit to ensure it is compliant with statutory requirements.
- Once the required certificates are issued, the unit is able to be occupied.

The local council is the planning authority that will determine the correct planning assessment pathway for the backyard unit. The council may determine that no planning permit is needed.

Tenancy management

Under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*, a backyard unit is treated as an additional bedroom of a social housing property, not an additional dwelling.

A single tenancy agreement applies to the household. A property with a backyard unit is valued as having an additional bedroom.

Change of household circumstances

The approval process will provide the approved term for the permitted use of a backyard unit.

During this term, the social housing provider will monitor ongoing need, which will be informed by a change in household circumstances notification and/or rent reviews.

Social housing providers will notify Homes Tasmania when they confirm that the unit is no longer required to meet the household's needs.

The program management, works and costs associated with the removal and relocation of the units is the responsibility of Homes Tasmania.

The social housing provider can refer another household to apply for a backyard unit, noting that the decision to reallocate a unit sits with Homes Tasmania.

Our contact details



housingprograms@homes.tas.gov.au



www.homestasmania.com.au