



Employee Housing Policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework for the allocation and rental of Council owned housing.

This Policy supports Council's Workforce Management Plan (WFP) objectives in attracting and retaining highly skilled employees through provision of suitable housing.

The Policy also provides guidance on the allocation of housing to employees and specifies the rentals applicable to Council owned houses.

The Policy also provides information to protect Council's Housing assets in conjunction with tenants.

Application

This Policy applies to all employees who have the provision of council housing in their employment contracts.

Employees who access vacant council housing during visits to the Shire are excluded from this Policy.

Definitions

Garden maintenance means lawns will be kept watered (except in times of total water bans), lawns will be mown and whipper-snipped, garden beds weeded and free of dead vegetation and wind borne and general rubbish within the garden is picked up and removed.

Provisions

1. General

- 1.1 All employees who are provided with a Council supplied housing are required to pay rent, with the exception of senior staff who are provided housing as part of their remuneration package.
- 1.2 Council maintains a wide range of flexible housing stock that it uses to accommodate different family types and living circumstances.
- 1.3 Council will enter into a rental agreement with the employee, with the agreement linked to the employee's tenure.
- 1.4 Where couples reside in a Council owned house, the rental agreement will be in the name of the employee only. In the event of a relationship breakdown between couples, and the employee intends to remain employed with Council, they will retain the right to remain at the property. When both persons in the relationship are employed by Council, additional accommodation may need to be sought by the employees concerned if the situation requires.
- 1.5 Where the employee intends to leave Council's employment, the tenancy of the premises will end upon the cessation of employment and all parties will be required to vacate the property in accordance with the tenancy agreement, this Policy and the conditions of the employee's contract of employment.

2. Allocation of Council Owned Housing – Internal/Employees

- 2.1 In order to recruit and retain staff, the senior officer positions of General Manager and Director Shire Services as part of their salary package.
- 2.2 Houses will not be allocated to new or existing employees who own or reside in a residence in the Shire.

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- 2.3 The Director Shire Services is the primary person responsible for ensuring that all Council premises are maintained to a standard which a reasonable person would consider appropriate.

3. Allocation of Council Owned Housing – External/Non-employees

- 3.1 When a property is not in use by Council employees, and circumstances allow, Council may facilitate a rental agreement with external organisation, non-employees or contractors.
- 3.2 The amount of rent is set by the General Manager and be based on market rental values, as appraised by real estate agents from adjacent regional centres, i.e. Broken Hill and/or Cobar.
- 3.3 The rent is to be paid weekly.

4. Allocation of Council Owned Housing – External/Contractors

- 4.1 Where contractors are engaged for a short-term engagement, for example between say three to six months, Council may provide a fully functional residence, as part of the contract arrangement.
- 4.2 Where contractors are engaged to provide trade related services that are managed by Council, a Grade 6 Housing accommodation may generally be supplied if available.
- 4.3 All agreements under this clause are to be in writing and approved by the General Manager prior to commencement of tenure.

5. Quality and Grading of Housing

- 5.1 Council housing has been graded into six separate categories, based on the type, condition and configuration of each structure.

Grade 1 Housing

Grade 1 housing is the highest quality of housing provided by Council. It generally pertains to housing with expensive construction costs and a higher standard of fixtures and fittings. Housing in this grade is of brick veneer construction with en-suite, a large number of rooms, lockable garages and established landscapes.

Grade 1 housing will be allocated to the General Manager employed by Council on a weekly rental basis with the usual tenancy agreement, with the rental forming part of the employment salary package.

Council has one Grade 1 house being at:

- 16 Ross Street, Wilcannia – This residence is a brick veneer house with 3 bedrooms, study, en-suite, lounge, dining and two car garage.

Grade 2 Housing

Grade 2 housing is of high-quality cladded construction. It generally pertains to housing that is in very good condition. Housing in this grade is of timber construction with cladding and has a number of rooms, lockable garages and established landscapes.

Grade 2 housing is in very good condition with a presentable interior. These houses will be allocated to department Directors and Managers, with the rental forming part of the employment salary package.

Tenancy is supplied on a weekly rental basis with the usual tenancy agreement.

Council has two Grade 2 houses being at:

- 6-8 Reid Street, Wilcannia – This house is timber framed with cladding, with lounge, dining and three bedrooms and a two-car garage.
- 63 Woore Street, Wilcannia – This is a transportable house, with lounge, dining, three bedrooms and one car garage. This house is currently allocated for use by short-term contractors and is provided fully furnished.

Grade 3 Housing - \$160 per fortnight

Grade 3 housing is an acceptable quality of housing. Housing in this grade is of timber construction and cladding with a number of rooms, lockable garages and established landscapes. The quality of housing under this grade is of a lesser standard, but of an acceptable condition.

Some of these houses maybe allocated to staff, depending on availability of Grade 2 housing and the demands for managerial position housing. These houses will generally be allocated to Council employees on a weekly rental basis with the usual tenancy agreement, with the rental being deducted from the employee's salary.

Council has five Grade 3 houses being at:

- 47 Hood Street, Wilcannia – This is a timber framed house with cladding, comprising of a lounge, three bedrooms, shed and one car carport.
- 44 Woore Street, Wilcannia – This is a timber framed house with cladding comprising of a lounge, dining room, three bedrooms, and one car garage.
- 28-30 Field Street, Wilcannia – This is a timber framed house with cladding, comprising of a lounge, dining, three bedrooms and one car garage.
- 57 Woore Street, Wilcannia – This house is a transportable house, with lounge, three bedrooms and one car garage.
- Victory Park Caravan Park Caretaker's House – This is an elevated timber frame house with cladding, with lounge, study and three bedrooms. Located in a flood prone area, the house is protected by an established levee bank.

Grade 4 Housing - \$140 per fortnight

Grade 4 housing consists of new transportable buildings. These houses comprise of a number of detached dwellings linked with a common driveway and landscaped areas. Each building will consist of one bedroom, study, open plan living area, bathroom and laundry.

The style of building is suitable for single accommodation. Each building will be of the same configuration and located in a communal living environment. The new flats will have basic white goods and furniture packs.

Council has 4 Grade 4 houses being at:

35-37 Hood Street – 3 modern 2 bedroom transportable units with carports and a shared yard area.

Ivanhoe Depot – 1 modern 2 bedroom transportable house

These houses will be utilised for administration and technical staff on a weekly rental basis with the usual tenancy agreement, with the rental being deducted from the employee's salary.

Grade 5 Housing - \$130 per fortnight

Grade 5 housing consists of smaller one bedroom style housing configured as a residential flat. Housing in this grade is of timber construction and clad, with one bedroom, carport, shared driveways and open space areas. The quality of housing under this grade is of an older style with visible wear and tear to the interior and exterior.

These buildings will generally be allocated to administration and technical staff on a weekly rental basis with the usual tenancy agreement, with the rental being deducted from the employee's salary

Council has six Grade 3 houses being:

Flats 1 to 6, Ross Street, Wilcannia – These flats are one bedroom, with lounge, small kitchen and one carport.

Grade 6 Housing - no cost

Grade 6 housing is short term accommodation of one bedroom with communal bathroom, toilet, laundry and kitchen facilities. This grade of housing relates to ATCO style accommodation for short term use.

Council has one Grade 6 ATCO compound as follows:

- ATCOs, Bourke Street, Wilcannia – The ATCOs consist of Donga style accommodation with up to 8 bedrooms, with a communal kitchen, bathrooms, and showers.

This accommodation is designed and suited to visiting tradespeople undertaking works on behalf of Council on a short term basis.

6. Financial Information

6.1 Rental value and CPI

Rentals should increase by CPI annually or an agreed figure by Council, from the first full pay period after 1 July each financial year.

As at 1/7/2021 the rentals will be as follows.

- Grade 1: N/A Part of the TRP for the tenant
- Grade 2: N/A Part of the TRP for the tenant
- Grade 3: \$160 per fortnight
- Grade 4: \$140 per fortnight
- Grade 5: \$130 per fortnight
- Grade 6: no cost

6.2 Rental Income

Rental income derived from employee housing will be paid to Council and used directly for the maintenance of Council housing.

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6.3 Utility Costs

The cost of utility services including electricity charges, gas supply costs and water usage are included in the rental cost for each tenant.

The following utility costs are exempt from this clause and include;

Contractors

Council pays for all utilities utilised by Council contractors.

General Manager and Directors

Excess water accounts as part of their remuneration package.

Additional internet connections and charges, Paid TV connections and charges are not included and must be paid for by the tenant.

Internet Access

Council will provide internet access to all tenants.

Contents Insurance

Tenants are responsible for their own contents' insurance.

6.4 General building maintenance.

Council is responsible for maintenance matters that occur due to wear and tear and general failures etc. Each matter should be reported to the Works Supervisor who will arrange repairs in a reasonable timeframe. WH&S issues will be addressed immediately by the WHS & Risk Officer.

6.5 Garden Maintenance Responsibility

Tenants in Grade 1,2 and 3 houses are responsible for garden maintenance and can access council equipment where necessary and available.

Garden maintenance will be provided by Council for Grade 4, 5 and 6 houses and flats. It is expected the tenant will keep the back yard in a tidy and presentable state.

6.6 Pets

Pet ownership will be at the discretion of the General Manager. It is accepted that dogs can provide some measure of security however they must be well managed and controlled.

7. Tenancy

7.1 Tenants

Tenants will be allocated housing in accordance with demand. The grade of house will be allocated in accordance with the staffing hierarchy under Council's organisational structure. Housing will be allocated by the General Manager in consultation with Management Executive Group, and in accordance with this Policy.

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7.2 Commencing a Tenancy Agreement with Council

Every tenant who rents a property from Council must enter into a tenancy agreement with Council and before being provided with keys to the property. Council must ensure a Residential Premises Condition Report is completed and recorded prior to the tenant taking up residence in the property.

7.3 Bond

Council will not require a bond, however an inspection of premise will be arranged as part of the exit interview process and reimbursement of damages may result.

7.4 Ending a Tenancy Agreement with Council

As part of the initial tenancy agreement setup, a condition report will be completed to ensure that a record of the condition of the property is agreed upon.

Before vacating the premises the tenant must restore the building to the condition it was in at the start of the tenancy, after allowing for fair wear and tear at the discretion of Director Shire Services. All areas of the property must be left clean, with rubbish removed free of any abandoned goods, including furniture and vehicles.

Before the keys are handed back, Council must carry out a final inspection of the property in the presence of the tenant and complete a final Residential Premises Condition Report.

Once the tenant has returned the keys to Council and provided vacant possession, the tenant is no longer responsible for any further damage to the property. It is the tenant's responsibility to return the keys to Council.

The tenant must give Council fourteen days' notice before vacating. This allows Council time to complete the Residential Premises Condition Report. This will establish whether there is any unrepaired damage and will enable the tenant and Council to agree on who is responsible for the damage.

It will also be the tenant's responsibility to ensure the carpets are professionally cleaned at their expense. Council will endeavour to include the option to clean carpets in staff accommodation whenever it has other carpet cleaning activity in the town to reduce the cost of carpet cleaning. The only exception to this would be if the carpet is to be removed and/or replaced.

Once employment with Council ceases, the tenant will be required to vacate the premises, unless otherwise negotiated, within the notice period as per the tenancy agreement. If suitable arrangements cannot be made to vacate the premises within the required timeframe under the tenancy agreement, Council may consider a further extension of no more than one month, which must be approved in writing by the General Manager.

In the case where a house is furnished and other items included as per the section below, those items will be laundered and cleaned as necessary at the end of a tenancy. Damage to furnishings other than normal wear and tear will be reimbursed to Council by the employee.

8. Inclusions and Furnishings

8.1 General Inclusions

Each property listed in this Policy will have the following inclusions – a gas or electric stove, a hot water system, an operating wastewater drainage system, floor coverings (either lino, carpet or tiles), reverse cycle air conditioning and clothesline.

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8.2 Furnishings

As at May 2021 there are a number of different arrangements in place which will remain. Flats 1 has furniture belonging to staff. All other housing will have Council supplied furnishings, which will include:

- Queen/Double Bed
- Lounge
- Table and Chairs for 2
- Washing Machine
- Television
- Fridge
- Microwave

Linen, cutlery, crockery, cleaning equipment, including vacuum cleaner, and other items will be provided by the employee.

Furnishings will ~~only~~ be provided in Council housing utilised by contractors and visiting tradespersons in Grade 6 Housing will be as follows.

Contractors - One double bed, bed linen, refrigerator, washing machine, two seater lounge, dining room table and chairs (four-seater), digital television, ironing board and iron, bath towels and mats, crockery, cutlery, cooking utensils, tea towels, cleaning equipment including vacuum cleaner.

Tradespersons using Grade 6 Housing – single bed/s in each room, refrigerator, washing machine, dining room table and chairs, crockery, cutlery and cooking utensils, cleaning equipment.

In the event a tenant has their own furnishings and does not require the Council provided furnishings as noted above, Council will place these items into storage.

8.3 Carpet cleaning

Tenants are responsible for their own carpet cleaning costs.

9. Conduct

Tenants are to conduct themselves in a respectful manner in line with the Code of Conduct for Employees at all times during their tenancy.

10. Environmental Sustainability

Where possible through general maintenance and upgrades, Council housing will be fitted with environmentally friendly features. These may include solar water heating, solar electricity panels and low use water fittings.

11. Remote Area Rental Salary Sacrifice

Council can offer employees who are tenants in council owned accommodation access to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) Remote Community Housing arrangement. Employees must complete a Remote Area House Rental Agreement to utilise this arrangement.

Legislation

- *Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW)*

Related Documents

- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Procedure

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the General Manager to ensure compliance. Once adopted, it remains in force until it is reviewed by Council. It is to be reviewed approximately every two (2) years to ensure that it meets requirements, or sooner if the General Manager determines appropriate.