

Social Housing Application Policy

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent and transparent framework for assessing applications for social housing managed by Torres Strait Island Regional Council (Council).

The policy ensures that housing is allocated fairly and equitably to eligible individuals and families based on demonstrated need, in accordance with relevant legislation, cultural context and Council priorities. It also supports the responsible use of rental subsidies by ensuring housing is provided to those most in need, for the duration of their need.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council social housing tenants, including employees. Councillors, contractors, agents and assigns of Council.

3. LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN 2025-2030

TSIRC [Corporate Plan 2025-2030](#)

Outcome 1: Strengthening Our Communities

1.1 Provide Suitable Public Housing

- Work with the State and Federal Governments and community to ensure that all Torres Strait Island communities have access to safe, secure and culturally appropriate housing.

Outcome 3: A Proactive and Responsible Council

3.1 Provide Good Governance and Leadership

- Ensure responsible financial management and sustainability.
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements and regulations, uphold the Council's legal obligations, and make ethical decisions in the best interest of the community.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for long term social housing, applicants must meet all eligibility criteria. Applicants must have:

- (a) Australian citizenship or permanent residency.
- (b) Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal descent – descent is understood as:

“Membership of the Indigenous people depends on biological descent from the Indigenous people and on mutual recognition of a particular person’s membership

by that person and by the elders or other persons enjoying traditional authority among those people”.

Source: Leading Judgment in Mabo v Queensland No2

Exception: where a non-Indigenous applicant is the registered primary care giver of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children, that person may be eligible for social housing, to ensure that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children are not disadvantaged through homelessness.

(c) Queensland residency.

Exception: the Queensland residency requirement may be waived on a case-by-case basis where interstate applicants can provide evidence of a definite need to move to the Torres Strait.

(d) Evidence of Independent income.

Social housing will not be provided to applicants who cannot demonstrate income. This is to ensure that applicants are able to meet rent payments once they become tenants.

(e) Current and valid proof of identity;

(f) Not own or be in the process of purchasing property; and

Exception: The Housing Manager and Head of Community Services has discretion in allocating where there is a home ownership interest, to facilitate home ownership in the Torres Strait.

(g) Applicants with current or ex-tenancy debts will only be eligible once they have entered into and sustained, and unbroken Arrears Payment Plan for a minimum of three months.

4.2 Eligibility Criteria for non-Indigenous applicants

To be eligible for long term social housing or alternative funded housing, applicants must meet all eligibility criteria.

Existing non-Indigenous tenants

If the tenant had been provided with a general tenancy agreement, that tenancy is valid and the principles of all tenancy management policies and procedures will apply until such time as the application ceases.

Non-Indigenous applicants are NOT eligible for social housing within the TSIRC local government area. However, applications are accepted and registered separately on Council's Housing Waitlist and prioritised in accordance with relevant policies and procedures, until such time as alternative funding becomes available.

Non-Indigenous residents with Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal children

When it is proven that a non-Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal person applying for housing is the primary carer of Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal children, whether by birth or traditional adoption, the applicant is eligible to apply for social housing if sufficient evidence is provided as per the guidelines.

4.3 Other Provisions

When employees are applicants, Councillors and employees will follow Council processes for managing conflict of interest situations.

Eligible applicants shall be prioritised in order of their level of need and placed on Council's Register of Need.

All matters related to applications and other tenancy-related decisions can be reviewed and appealed through Council appeal processes.

5. REPORTING

Nil.

6. DEFINITIONS

- **Applicant:** An individual or household who applies for social housing through Council's application process.
- **Arrears payment plan:** A formal agreement between Council and a tenant or former tenant to repay outstanding rental debt in scheduled instalments.
- **Conflict of Interest:** A situation in which a Council officer, employee, or Councillor involved in housing matters has a personal interest that could improperly influence their professional duties or decisions.
- **Council:** Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), the local government authority responsible for managing social housing across its communities.
- **Eligibility criteria:** The minimum requirements that an applicant must meet to be considered for social housing. These may include residency, income, citizenship, and housing need.
- **General Tenancy Agreement:** A legally binding agreement under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (Qld) that outlines the terms and conditions of a social housing tenancy.
- **Implied tenancy:** A tenancy arrangement where an individual resides in a property and assumes tenant responsibilities without having signed a formal tenancy agreement, as determined by Council.
- **Level of need:** An assessment category used to prioritise housing applications, based on the applicant's living conditions, vulnerabilities, and urgency of housing support.
- **Primary caregiver:** An individual who is the main provider of care for a child or children, including biological parents and those recognised under traditional or cultural

arrangements.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Housing Act 2003*
- *Housing Regulation 2003*
- *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008*

8. REVIEW

Policy type:	☒ Council ☐ Administrative
Directorate:	Community Services
Responsible Officer:	Manager, Housing
Authorised on:	18 February 2026
Next review date:	February 2028 (This policy will be reviewed every two years or as required by changes in legislation).
Review history:	2018,2021,2023,2026
Version:	1