

CS.01 Housing Policy

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CEO Chief Executive Officer
MCCS Manager Corporate & Community Services
MES Manager Engineering Services
MFS Manager Financial Services

1 OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to coordinate the tenancy and property management of Quilpie Shire Council owned housing utilised as employee housing, aged persons housing and community housing. The objectives of this policy are to:

- Support the attraction and retention of staff with the required skills and qualifications as necessitated by service delivery and organisational needs;
- Ensure planning for the provision of housing in Quilpie shire in areas where there is a recognised shortfall of private rental accommodation;
- Provide a standard of accommodation that is commensurate with local community standards and established policy guidelines;
- Manage Quilpie Shire Council's housing assets so that it can operate on a financially viable basis and attain a level of self-sufficiency; and
- Ensure the provision of equitable conditions for Council employees across the region.

2 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all tenants residing or seeking to reside in Quilpie Shire Council owned housing.

This policy encompasses the entire portfolio of Council owned residential accommodation. Due to the extremely limited private rental market, Quilpie Shire Council is primarily responsible for the provision of housing in support of their delivery of Council services.

3 STATEMENT

3.1 CATEGORIES OF HOUSING

Accommodation is divided into a number of categories.

3.1.1 Employee Housing

To be eligible for Council housing the applicant must meet one of the following criteria:

- be an employee of Quilpie Shire Council;
- the special duties to be performed require the employee to live on site or close to the work site; or
- where a short-term contractor to Council cannot obtain private accommodation which is of a reasonable standard and a reasonable rent. In this instance, the provision of private accommodation will be of a short-term duration being a maximum of three (3) months. The time limit may be extended at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or Manager of Corporate and Community Services.

3.1.2 Family Housing

Generally described as being three (3) or four (4) bedroom housing and having the necessary living and bedroom accommodation for family living.

3.1.3 Without Dependant Housing

Generally includes flats, units and smaller houses suitable in size to meet the living requirements of employees without dependants or partners.

3.1.4 Reserve Housing (Aged and Consultants Unit)

Housing that is targeted at a specific housing need. This housing can only be allocated to an applicant that meets the target requirements unless otherwise approved by the CEO.

3.2 ALLOCATION PROCEDURE

All employees applying for Council housing will be required to complete the appropriate Housing Accommodation Application form, unless housing forms part of their employment conditions.

Upon receipt of the Housing Application form, the Housing Officer will consider the application, apply the allocation policy (if required), check references (applicable to community housing) and make a recommendation to the CEO or Manager of Corporate and Community Services.

The Manager of Corporate and Community Services or Housing Officer will communicate an offer to the applicant, including rent charges and conditions. An entry interview will be arranged with the tenant and all necessary Residential Tenancy Authority (RTA) forms will be completed and the relevant keys issued to the tenant.

3.3 ALLOCATION PRIORITY

3.3.1 Employee Housing

Housing will be retained for employees at the discretion of the CEO.

Where a property is required to be retained for future development or a similar reason, and there is no Council employee requiring housing, consideration may be given to renting the property within the community, provided the applicant meets the required criteria.

3.3.2 Family Housing

Priorities for allocation of accommodation to this group will be determined by the following factors in the priority order listed:

1. Number, age and gender distribution of dependants. Consideration will be given to only those dependants residing permanently with the applicant;
2. Specific location and employment requirements associated with Council's operations;
3. Local knowledge of specific house design, location, childproof fencing etc. may assist in determining location;
4. Custody arrangements of children will be considered and may be taken into account when making allocations.

3.3.3 Without Dependent Housing

Priority for this housing will be given to employees without dependents. Priority will be determined by:

1. Specific location and employment requirements associated with the Council's operations;
2. Specific physical requirements of applicants eg disability access;
3. Specific individual requests, for example pets, hobbies etc. which, depending on circumstances, may or may not be considered.

3.3.4 Reserve Housing

Aged – priority for this housing will be given to applicants that meet the required criteria, unless otherwise approved by the CEO.

Consultants Unit – priority for this housing will be given to individuals or businesses contracting to Council for specialised works unless otherwise approved by the CEO.

3.4 ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER OF HOUSING

Employees and applicants are expected to accept the offer of housing at the time it is available. A refusal of a reasonable offer in the view of the Council will place the applicant at the bottom of the waiting list. The employee has the right to appeal any decision by applying in writing to the CEO.

3.5 GENERAL TENANCY AGREEMENT

All employees and tenants occupying Council housing are required to sign a General Tenancy Agreement and abide by the standard terms of the General Tenancy Agreement within the guidelines of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 and Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009. Any special terms written into the General Tenancy Agreement must be adhered to. The following standard “special terms” will be included in all Tenancy Agreements:

Quilpie Shire Council, as Landlords of this property and as part of this Tenancy Agreement, expect the property to be kept clean, neat and tidy and the lawns/grounds of the property maintained to an acceptable standard as required by the Council. Further, it is expected tenants within close proximity of each other will not cause nuisance by the use of the property and not interfere with the reasonable peace, comfort and privacy of neighbours.

ON VACATING: It is the tenant’s responsibility to have the carpets professionally cleaned and evidence by way of copy of paid invoice provided. Tenants with pets must also have the premises fumigated by a licensed pest control firm for fleas and evidence by way of copy of paid invoice provided. Due to remoteness and availability of the abovementioned services at the time of vacation of the property, Council may invoice the tenant.

Tenant is to ensure the premises are left in the same standard as the Entry Condition Report - Form 1a.

3.6 BOND

All employees and tenants will be required to pay a four (4) week bond at the commencement of a tenancy, unless otherwise stated in employment conditions. Employees may arrange with the Payroll Officer for the bond to be deducted from their wages.

3.7 INSPECTIONS

Inspections of all Council housing will occur twice per year, normally February / March and September / October. A Notice of Inspection will be forwarded to all residents in accordance with the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 and Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009.

Results of the inspections will be collated and included in upgrade / maintenance schedules. If required, Council will forward the tenant a letter following inspection outlining issues that require attention. Further, a follow up inspection may also be undertaken by Council to ensure issues are resolved.

3.8 RENT

Council employees who reside in a Council residence will be charged the full market rental value of the property, unless otherwise stated in their employment conditions.

All other tenants will be charged the full market rental value of the property. Centrelink rental assistance may be applicable to individual tenancies, depending on their circumstances.

Market rent will be determined by consultation with the private real estate companies and information from the Residential Tenancy Authority on medium rentals, taking into consideration the variation in rental prices throughout the region.

Rent amounts will also be influenced by the need to promote a sustainable house and rental market, in particular in the towns of Quilpie and Eromanga, to encourage private sector investment.

Market rent figures will be reviewed and, if required, adjusted annually as part of Council's budget process.

Council employees who reside in a Council residence will be eligible to salary sacrifice the rental value.

3.9 PAYMENT OF RENT

Rent is to be paid fortnightly in advance by one of the following methods:

- Deduction from wage / salary of employee;
- Direct debit / bank deposit; or
- Cash / EFT at the Quilpie Shire Council Office.

3.10 UTILITIES

Tenants are required to meet the full costs of electricity, telephone, gas and all yard maintenance services, unless otherwise stated in their employment conditions.

3.11 WATER SERVICE CHARGES

Whilst Council does not have water meters installed at Council properties, all efforts must be made to promote responsible usage of water.

3.12 CO-TENANCIES

When two or more employees share occupancy of any residence, a co-tenancy agreement under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 and Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009 will apply.

In the case of a co-tenancy all parties will be responsible for the tenancy agreement. Co-tenants are considered jointly and severally liable for the tenancy. Any money owed to the lessor is recoverable by a claim against all the tenants or one tenant for the whole amount.

3.13 VACANCY PROCEDURE

In the event that an employee or tenant vacates the premises under the terms of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009, the employee or tenant must:

- As soon as the tenant is aware of the pending vacancy, notify Quilpie Shire Council of their intention to leave by completing the appropriate RTA form, or by way of written notice; and

- Promptly hand over vacant possession, including return of keys to the Housing Officer. Failure to return keys will result in rent being charged until such time as the keys are returned;
- Clean the premises (the premises should be in the same condition as when the tenant moved in – fair wear and tear excepted); and
- Notify the Council of the tenant's forwarding address.

A house is defined as vacant when:

- The tenant has physically moved out of the house, including removal of furniture and personal property; and
- The residence has been cleaned satisfactorily; and
- An exit inspection has been successfully completed; and
- The keys for the property have been returned to Council.

3.14 TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT BY QUILPIE SHIRE COUNCIL OR TENANT

Under the terms of the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 and Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009, notice must be given to terminate the Tenancy Agreement if:

- The tenant has not paid rent for fourteen (14) days; or
- Quilpie Shire Council or the tenant breaks the agreement; or
- Quilpie Shire Council or the tenant wish to give vacant possession at the end of the fixed term set out in the agreement; or
- An employee voluntarily resigns from their position with Council or abandons their employment or, under Council's Counselling and Disciplinary Policy, the employee's employment relationship with Council is terminated.

3.15 CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

A person undergoing a change of circumstances which influences the type of housing appropriate to that person's new circumstance may be required to move to accommodation in keeping with these new circumstances. A change involving the number of occupants will only be considered if the change involves full time occupants.

3.16 TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Employees will be required to vacate a Council residence within four (4) weeks where employment ceases either by resignation, retirement or termination.

3.17 PETS

Quilpie Shire Council recognises the role of pets in providing companionship and security and in contributing to the health and well-being of Council staff and tenants. The Council supports tenants keeping pets where the style of housing is suitable for that type of pet. The keeping of any pets in any Council property must comply with Local Government Local Laws.

You are allowed to keep a pet if:

- The property you are allocated is suitable for keeping a pet eg. appropriate fencing, suitable area or style of housing; and

- The pet does not interfere with the reasonable peace, comfort and privacy of neighbours; and
- You comply with the Local Government Local Laws.

3.18 RENTAL REFERENCES

The Council may, upon request, require an employee or applicant to supply tenancy related information from previous rentals.

4 DEFINITIONS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Council	Quilpie Shire Council
Spouse	Means the current married partner or de facto partner, including partner the same sex as the tenant
Residence	Means house, cottage, town house, home, unit, flat or the like owned, leased or otherwise controlled by the Quilpie Shire Council
Residential Tenancy Authority	Self-funding statutory authority that administers the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 and the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009

5 RELATED POLICIES | LEGISLATION | OTHER DOCUMENTS

Local Government Act 2009;

Local Government Regulation 2012;

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008;

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Regulation 2009;

Industrial Relations Act 1999;

Privacy Act 1988;

This policy compliments existing Certified Agreements and where it is silent on matters referred to the Certified Agreements such matters must be followed in accordance with current Certified Agreements or future Certified Agreements.

IX #	Details
90858	CS01-A Housing Application Form
90860	CS.01-B Housing Reference Questions
90861	CS.01-C Housing Transfer Application Form
91085	G.109 Anti-discrimination & Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
94362	Quilpie Shire Council Code of Conduct