

APPLICATIONS for HOUSING ASSISTANCE

WHAT IS PUBLIC HOUSING AND HOW DO I GET IT?

Public Housing is government-owned housing rented to eligible low income earners. Housing ACT is responsible for managing public housing in the ACT. If you would like Housing ACT to offer you a place to live, then you need to lodge an application for housing assistance with the Applicant Services Centre ('ASC') of Housing ACT. There is one form for all applications. The form can be obtained from your nearest Housing shop-front or the Applicant Services Centre or by telephoning (02) 6207 1500.

ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

You will be eligible for public housing if you can satisfy all the eligibility criteria in Public Rental Housing Assistance Program (this is the piece of legislation that governs how public housing works in the ACT).

To be eligible you must:

- ▶ Be at least 16 years of age;
- ▶ Be living or working in the ACT;
- ▶ Meet an income and assets test;
- ▶ Be an Australian citizen, or Australian permanent resident, or hold a special category visa (issued to eligible New Zealanders upon entry into Australia), or hold a Temporary Protection Visa; and
- ▶ Have no interest in residential real property anywhere in Australia (subject to certain exceptions).

In circumstances where you are suffering severe hardship, which cannot be alleviated in any other way, Housing ACT has the power to waive any and all of these eligibility criteria (except for the age limit).

HOW TO APPLY

It is important that you take care to ensure that all the sections of the application are properly completed and that all the necessary supporting documentation is attached to avoid any delays in the processing of the application. (The necessary documents are listed at the end of the form). You can post your application to the ASC. The ASC will then process your form and send you a letter telling you whether or not your application has been approved.

Alternatively, you can apply by making an appointment for an interview with an assessing officer. This gives you the opportunity to talk about your application and your circumstances. Also, if there is any missing information that Housing ACT needs in order to consider your application (for example, documents that establish your identity or your income), then the assessing officer will be able to tell you on the spot what is needed.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY APPLICATION?

If your application is approved you will receive a letter from Housing ACT stating the area, number of bedrooms, and waiting list category of your application.

There are four priority categories that have been determined under the Public Rental Housing Assistance Program:

- ▶ **Priority 1** (Applicants in urgent need of housing)
- ▶ **Priority 2** (Applicants for whom the private rental market is not suitable or accessible as a long term option or for Housing ACT tenants whose current housing is seriously overcrowded, or is no longer suitable because of serious medical or other reasons)
- ▶ **Priority 3** (Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria but do not qualify for Priority 1 or 2)
- ▶ **Priority 4** (Housing ACT tenants who wish to transfer for reasons of personal preference; including tenants whose need for transfer is less urgent than that of tenants who would qualify under Priority 2).

Housing ACT refers to Priority 1 and 2, as Early Allocation

Welfare Rights & Legal Centre

Advice line
6247 2177



Category (EAC) 1 and 2, and Priority 3 and 4 as Standard Allocation Category (SAC) 3 and 4.

How long you will have to wait before Housing ACT offers you a property will depend on the areas you have nominated to be housed in, the number of bedrooms you are eligible for, and your allocation category. For example, in the first half of 2003, the highest number of allocations was made in the Belconnen area (28%) and the lowest in the Tuggeranong area (22%). Only 4% of allocations were four or five bedroom houses, and 73% of allocations during this period were made to people in EAC1.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

To be placed in EAC1 or EAC2 you will need to provide evidence of your circumstances. One way to do this is by providing Housing ACT with a letter (or letters) of support.

A letter of support is a letter written by someone who is aware of your circumstances

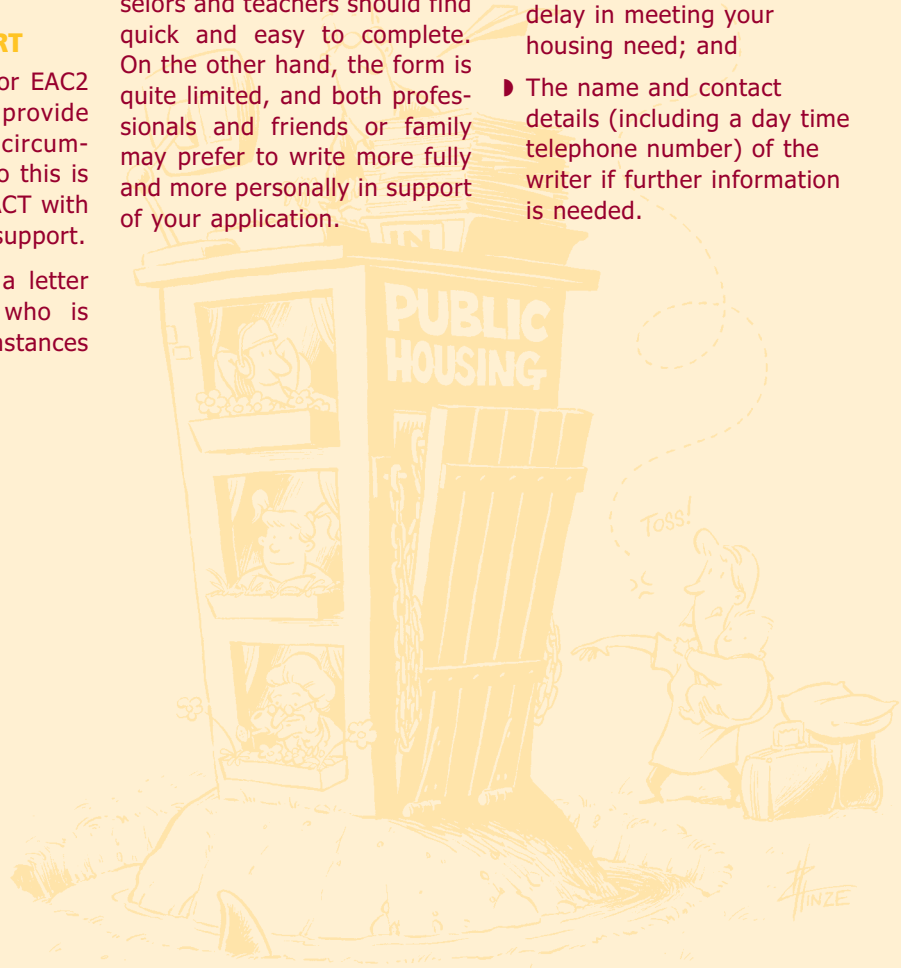
and can write something in support of your application. Housing ACT may ask for letters written by particular professionals, for example a doctor or social worker.

You can never be required to approach someone for a letter of support — it is always your choice to do so or not. However, if you are seeking an early allocation category, Housing ACT will require strong evidence of your need, and letters of support are an excellent way for you to provide this.

Housing ACT has a standard Letter of Support form which busy people like doctors, counselors and teachers should find quick and easy to complete. On the other hand, the form is quite limited, and both professionals and friends or family may prefer to write more fully and more personally in support of your application.

A letter of support that doesn't use the standard form should include:

- ▶ How long the writer has known you and in what capacity (e.g. professional / friend / family etc);
- ▶ The writer's knowledge of your circumstances (e.g. a doctor might describe a medical condition that makes it very difficult for you to climb stairs);
- ▶ The writer's opinion as to your housing needs, given your circumstances;
- ▶ The writer's opinion as to the likely consequences if your housing needs are not met, or if there is a long delay in meeting your housing need; and
- ▶ The name and contact details (including a day time telephone number) of the writer if further information is needed.



Disclaimer

This fact sheet contains general information available at the time of printing. It does not constitute legal advice. If you have a specific legal problem, please contact the Welfare Rights and Legal Centre's advice line on 6247 2177. The Welfare Rights and Legal Centre is entirely independent of Housing ACT. All assistance is free.

June 2004