



Employee Residential Accommodation Policy

1. Background

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) delivers a comprehensive range of safe, high quality health services to rural and remote communities across Western Australia. WACHS recognises the availability and affordability of suitable accommodation in rural and remote communities can be a concern for employees and their families.

2. Policy Statement

This policy outlines the circumstances in which WACHS will provide access to subsidised accommodation. This may be as a result of:

- A shortage of employees in a particular occupational or professional grouping.
- The need to attain employees with specialist skills.
- Workforce variations resulting from service redesign.
- The inability to attract suitably skilled and qualified employees to the location.

2.1 Scope

This policy applies to any employee of the WACHS whose usual place of work is outside the Perth metropolitan area. For the purposes of this policy, an employee is as defined within the definitions and does not include contractors, agency staff or students on placement.

Where a decision has been made by the Regional Director to provide subsidised residential accommodation in advance of a vacancy being advertised, in order to attract a strong field, this is to be clearly stated in the job advertisement.

Allocation of subsidised residential accommodation is based on availability of accommodation. Accommodation is primarily located within the Kimberley, Pilbara, Midwest and Goldfields regions and to a lesser extent in the regions of Wheatbelt, South West, and Great Southern. This is on the basis that the northern areas of the State experience different accommodation demands and rental rates.

2.2 Eligibility

Specific eligibility criteria apply to the allocation of accommodation under this policy, with any exceptions considered on their merits and on a case by case basis. Allocation decisions are to involve consideration of the employee's circumstances as advised by the employee, and the organisational requirements of WACHS prevailing at the time of application. The eligibility for property sizes for singles, couples and family situations (e.g. number of bedrooms) are contingent on the employee and their dependent numbers.

To be eligible for the allocation of accommodation in accordance with this policy, an employee is to:

- be engaged on a permanent or ongoing basis or on a contract that is valid for at least six months after the date of appointment;
- be engaged on an ongoing basis at a fraction that is equal or greater than 0.8 FTE;
- not hold title for a residential property within a 50km straight line radius of the locality of the employee's usual place of work;
- not reside with a spouse who holds title for a residential property within a 50km straight line radius of the usual place of work;
- not reside with a spouse who is in receipt of subsidised or free housing by their employer or payment in lieu of housing;
- maintain any professional registration that is required to perform the work for which they are engaged; and
- not already be residing in the locality where subsidised accommodation is being sought, unless the employee is located within existing Government Regional Officers Housing (GROH) or Government subsidised residential accommodation.

2.3 Application for Subsidised Residential Accommodation

An application for subsidised residential accommodation is to be made using the WACHS [Application for Subsidised Residential Accommodation Form](#). On receipt of an application for subsidised residential accommodation, the Regional Director will make a decision about whether the employee is to be allocated subsidised residential accommodation.

The decision will have regard for:

- the financial capacity for the region to subsidise the accommodation;
- the importance of the position or occupation to delivering essential WACHS services;
- the availability of the required skills within the locality / region and or the identification of alternative sources of skills;
- the availability of suitable residential accommodation within the locality;
- any caps applied by WACHS to the granting of residential staff accommodation; and
- whether the vacancy to which the person is to be appointed was advertised with subsidised residential accommodation offered as part of the remuneration package.

An offer of subsidised residential accommodation does not constitute an ongoing right to subsidised residential accommodation.

Where WACHS or GROH accommodation is not available and alternative housing cannot be secured from within the local private rental market, the application will be placed on a waitlist until subsidised residential accommodation may be offered. Alternatively, employees eligible under this policy may be granted access to the Residential Subsidy Scheme or the [Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme](#) where this is available.

2.4 Doctors in Training

Doctors in Training who are provided with subsidised residential accommodation in accordance with this policy will be required to pay a standard rate of rental as approved by the Chief Executive.

Subject to written agreement a Doctor in Training may be seconded to a facility controlled by WACHS. Secondment arrangements will be consistent with the provisions of the WA Health System – Medical Practitioners – AMA Industrial Agreement 2016 or its replacement.

2.5 Waitlist

Where an employee makes application for residential accommodation and the application is endorsed in principle but suitable accommodation is not available, the application will be registered and kept on a 'waitlist'.

The waitlist will be maintained in order of applications received, however, the Regional Director may prioritise the allocation of WACHS accommodation outside the order applications were received to give priority to senior employees or to meet specific areas of workforce demand.

Where accommodation is offered that does not meet the needs of the employee and their dependents, the employee may accept the offer of accommodation but request that their application be retained on the waitlist in order to be considered for other properties as they become available.

An employee who declines an offer of housing that is considered by the Regional Director to be suitable accommodation may be removed from the waitlist. An employee who refuses an offer of suitable accommodation three times will be removed from the waitlist. They will be considered ineligible for subsidised accommodation under this policy.

2.6 Fairness and Equity

Decisions will be fair and equitable, transparent and capable of review. It is accepted that equitable allocation of residential housing may not be achieved where the demand for regional residential accommodation outweighs availability.

Decisions to withdraw access to subsidised residential accommodation will not be made unreasonably.

As with all decision making, decision makers must ensure compliance with relevant State legislation governing the public sector, the Public Sector Code of Ethics and the WA Health Code of Conduct Policy.

2.7 Change to Eligibility

If a person who has been deemed eligible and is allocated subsidised residential accommodation and subsequently becomes ineligible for accommodation in accordance with this policy, they may apply in writing to the Regional Director for approval to continue their tenancy. This includes where an employee:

- accepts a fixed term appointment with WACHS that will result in that employee not being engaged for a period of six months;
- is employed at a fraction that is less than 0.8 FTE;
- becomes the title holder for a residential property within a 50km straight line radius of the locality of the employee's usual place of work;
- takes up residence with a spouse who holds title for a residential property within a 50km straight line radius of the usual place of work;
- resides with a spouse who is in receipt of subsidised or free housing by their employer or payment in lieu of housing; or
- has a change to their professional registration status that renders them unable to fulfil their employment obligations to WACHS.

This provision does not apply to employees who become ineligible due to resignation or termination of employment.

An application to continue tenancy is to be made within two weeks of the employee becoming ineligible for accommodation in accordance with this policy. Decisions about continued access to accommodation will be made by the relevant Regional Director. Should such an application not be approved, notice periods listed in the Residential Tenancy Agreement will apply. WACHS reserves the right to charge full market rental rates for any employee who is residing in subsidised residential accommodation and subsequently becomes ineligible for that accommodation under this policy.

The onus is on the employee to notify WACHS of any change in circumstances which may affect their eligibility. A false or misleading statement made by an employee which has a material effect on a decision to grant subsidised residential accommodation may result in disciplinary action and/or a requirement to repay WACHS the full market rental rates less any rent paid for all or part of the rental period for which subsidised residential accommodation was provided.

2.8 Change to Allocated Accommodation

An employee, whose personal circumstances change such that their allocated accommodation is no longer suitable, may apply for a change to their accommodation. A change of accommodation cannot be guaranteed, and is only to occur if suitable alternative accommodation is available. An employee who relocates from one property to another at their own request is responsible for relocation costs including those associated with utilities.

WACHS reserves the right to review the allocation of subsidised residential accommodation and to make changes as required to maximise occupancy, and ensure cost effectiveness of available accommodation. Where required, an employee may be required to vacate subsidised residential accommodation and/or to relocate to alternative accommodation. Where an employee is required to relocate to alternative premises within the same locality, the costs associated with the relocation will be met by WACHS.

Such decisions will only be taken where there is a genuine need. This need will be weighed against the disruption to the employee and the cost of relocation that will need to be met by WACHS. WACHS recognises that it is in the interests of WACHS and employees to maximise stability in residential accommodation arrangements for the benefit of WACHS staff and to reduce administration.

2.9 Withdrawal of Subsidised Rental Accommodation

The subsidisation of residential accommodation is a privilege, not a right. Access to subsidised residential accommodation may be withdrawn at any time with the giving of the required notice if an employee:

- permanently vacates the position held and for which the accommodation was allocated;
- proceeds on secondment to another organisation, whether within the private or public sectors;
- has an allegation of misconduct made against them which is substantiated;
- is in breach of the terms of the Residential Tenancy Agreement;
- is absent without leave beyond a period of one calendar month; or
- is on a period of approved leave (other than parental leave) that extends beyond a period of three calendar months.

Allocation of housing is to be reviewed at the discretion of the Regional Director. This may result in a reallocation of available housing and may also result in access to residential accommodation being withdrawn. Where this occurs, notice periods will be as stipulated within the Residential Tenancy Agreement.

Accommodation will generally **not** be withdrawn if the job advertisement to which the employee responded specifically offered subsidised accommodation as part of the terms and where the employee has based a decision to relocate to the rural or remote locality on the understanding that suitable accommodation would be available.

2.10 Impact of Leave Arrangements on Subsidised Rental Accommodation

Employees in subsidised residential accommodation who are on paid parental leave are eligible to retain this for the period of their paid leave. An employee seeking access to a further period of parental leave without pay may apply to continue their tenancy in accordance with this policy (see 2.6 Change to Eligibility).

Nothing in this clause precludes a line manager from approving a period of such leave as is within their delegation as provided for by the WACHS Authorisations Schedule and in accordance with the relevant industrial instrument.

A line manager is not, however, to make any undertakings to an employee about their ability to retain subsidised residential accommodation during a period of leave that extends beyond a period of three calendar months, with all such decisions to be referred to the Regional Director in accordance with this policy.

2.11 Regional Accommodation Committee

A Regional Director may establish a Regional Accommodation Committee (RAC) to review applications for subsidised rental accommodation and to provide advice regarding eligibility. This is likely to be required in areas where there are a large number of applications and/or residential properties.

The RAC is to act in an advisory capacity only, with all decisions regarding allocation being made by the Regional Director.

2.12 Residential Tenancy Agreement

An agreement reached in relation to the allocation of suitable subsidised residential accommodation is to be documented through the signing of a Residential Tenancy Agreement by an authorised WACHS representative and the employee.

The Residential Tenancy Agreement will be entered into on the basis of a periodic lease. Under the lease arrangements, WACHS may provide notice of termination of the lease in accordance with the lease provisions.

An employee who is allocated subsidised residential accommodation under this policy must comply with the requirements of this policy as well as the requirements of the Government Regional Officers Housing (GROH) [Tenant's Handbook](#) and Residential Tenancy Agreement. Where subsidised residential accommodation is to be provided through a private lease arrangement, there may be additional requirements stipulated to which the employee must comply. These are to be set out in a Residential Tenancy Agreement signed by both parties. An employee is not to take up occupancy of residential accommodation subsidised by WACHS until a Residential Tenancy Agreement has been signed by both parties.

Under the Residential Tenancy Agreement, the owner of the property (WACHS, GROH or private lessor) as the landlord must:

- a) ensure the premises comply with health, safety and housing standards;
- b) provide the premises in a clean and reasonable state having regard to its age, character and location; and
- c) maintain it to an acceptable standard.

WACHS is to ensure appropriate processes are in place to undertake regular inspection of health allocated accommodation and to ensure tenants meet their obligations including at the end of tenancy so that damage and additional cleaning requirements can be assessed and liability determined.

The employee as the tenant:

- a) is subject to the requirements of the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA);
- b) keeps the premises and grounds clean, reports and/or repairs damage caused by themselves or their guests;
- c) is asked to be considerate of neighbours and attempt to develop and preserve a harmonious neighbourhood;
- d) must observe local government regulations and by-laws including those relating to pet control, backyard burning and rubbish collection; and
- e) is entitled to privacy, peace and quiet enjoyment of the premises.

An employee may not sublet subsidised residential accommodation allocated to them by WACHS, use allocated accommodation for business purposes, or relinquish control of the property to a third party. Tenants will be liable for costs associated with all internal and external maintenance and repairs to a property caused intentionally or through neglect or recklessness (whether misuse or otherwise). This includes costs of heavy cleaning and rubbish removal on vacating the property.

An employee, who provides notice of their intention to resign from WACHS, or of their intention to take up an offer of employment within another locality within WACHS, **is taken to have also given notice of their intention to terminate the lease** for the subsidised residential accommodation to which they have been granted.

An employee who breaches the conditions of the Residential Tenancy Agreement will be deemed to be ineligible for subsidised residential accommodation under this policy and may be requested to vacate the premises in accordance with the provisions of the Residential Tenancy Agreement.

2.13 Rental Charges

The maximum rental charged to eligible employees in WACHS accommodation is to be in accordance with the rates established by GROH, as amended from time to time.

The maximum applicable rental charge for an employee is determined at the time of occupancy.

Standard government rental rates are calculated in accordance with specified criteria for determining the “amenity level” of the accommodation (high, medium or low) and therefore the maximum amount of rent paid by the tenant. Guidelines for determining the amenity level are based on that set out in the [GROH Tenant Rent Setting Framework Policy](#).

A decision to charge rental at an amount that is lower than the standard government rental rates is at the discretion of the Regional Director.

Rental rates are to be reviewed annually and increased in accordance with the GROH rent setting framework.

Rental payments are to be made by payroll deduction. Tenants are responsible for the payment of charges associated with utilities (e.g. electricity, water usage and gas) relating to their accommodation. This includes the connection of fixed telephone services, cable television, internet connections and other similar charges.

A decision to charge utilities (e.g. electricity, water usage and gas) at an amount that is lower than the standard government rental rates is at the discretion of the Regional Director.

Employees occupying accommodation that does not have individual meters for utilities (power, water, gas) are required to pay a predetermined rate for utilities as set by WACHS and amended from time to time. WACHS may levy additional charges for furniture and other chattels.

Employees occupying accommodation in Shared Units, where WACHS is responsible for the upkeep of common areas, are required to pay a Service Charge in line with the rates set out in the [GROH Serviced Units Policy](#).

If an allocated property has a swimming pool or spa pool, the tenant will maintain the pool at their cost (including pump, fencing and other equipment) in a properly treated and clean condition and will observe all legal requirements. Any enquiries with the installation and maintenance of swimming pools and spa pools will be dealt with in accordance the [GROH Swimming Pool Policy](#).

2.14 Notice Periods

Notice periods for eligible employees are to comply with those stipulated in the [Residential Tenancies Act 1987](#) (WA) and as outlined within the Residential Tenancy Agreement. A lesser period of notice may be agreed. WACHS may require payment of the equivalent amount of rent for any period of notice not given.

Where an employee is employed on fixed term contract, the expiry date of the tenancy agreement is to be aligned to the expiry date of the contract of employment where possible.

3. Definitions

Contractor / Agency staff	A person engaged under a contract for services on the terms and conditions (including as to remuneration) that WACHS determines e.g. working either short or medium term to support WACHS service provision (e.g. Medical, Nursing, Medical support, Allied Health, Engineering, ICT).
Dependant	A person who is in a significant relationship with the tenant or in the tenant's custody, care and control; ordinarily resident with this tenant in their GROH dwelling; and either wholly or mainly dependent on the tenant for economic support. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a spouse (married or de-facto); - a partner; - a student under 25 who is a full-time student at school, college or university; - a child; - an invalid relative; or - a parent or parents or a spouse's parent or parents.
Doctor in Training	A medical practitioner who is appointed as an intern, resident medical officer, registrar, supervised medical officer, trainee medical administrator, trainee public health physician, trainee psychiatrist or senior registrar.
Employee	An employee of WACHS engaged in accordance with the <i>Health Services Act 2016 (WA)</i> .
GROH	Government Regional Officers Housing administered by the WA State Government Department of Communities.
GROH Accommodation	A residential property owned and/or managed by Government Regional Officers Housing that may be offered to an employee(s).
GROH Tenant Rent Setting Framework Policy	The policy administered by the Department of Communities which details the methodology and applicable Maximum rates for rental of government subsidised housing, as amended from time to time.
Leased accommodation	Accommodation that is available under private lease but is leased by WACHS in order to provide subsidised residential accommodation to an employee(s).
Local area	Is defined as 'within a 50km straight line radius from the principal place of work'.

Regional Accommodation Committee	The committee established by the Regional Director of each region and whose terms of reference are to review and provide advice on applications for subsidised accommodation.
Residential accommodation	A house or dwelling that is used for the purpose of residential accommodation and may include staff quarters, apartments, studios, duplexes, and houses.
Residential Tenancy Agreement	The agreement signed by the employee and WACHS which sets out the terms of the tenancy.
Spouse	Partner or defacto partner and includes those of the same gender.
Shared Units	Any unit of accommodation owned by WACHS that may share common facilities such as the driveway, carports, washing lines and/or gardens.
Subsidised residential accommodation	Accommodation subsidised by WACHS whether owned by WACHS, GROH or accommodation obtained by WACHS under private lease.
Suitable accommodation	Accommodation that is suitable having regard for the employee's personal circumstances including immediate family and dependants, disability, or impairment or other special circumstances that require consideration.
WACHS	WA Country Health Service.
WACHS Accommodation	A residential property owned and/or managed by WACHS that may be offered by WACHS to an employee(s).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chief Executive may endorse leases in excess of 24 months.

The Regional Director is responsible for the application of this policy. Exceptions may be referred on a case by case basis. Decisions will be made based on the merits of the case in order to meet operational needs or specific circumstances.

The Employee is required to meet all the requirements as outlined in this policy and the Residential Tenancy Agreement. They are required to sign and lodge D9 Payroll Deduction Forms to reflect increases or decreases to their GROH rental and/or utilities charges.

5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy document may constitute a breach of the WA Health system Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) (WA) and is binding on all WACHS staff which for this purpose includes trainees, students, volunteers, researchers, contractors for service (including all visiting health professionals and agency staff) and persons delivering training or education within WACHS.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

6. Records Management

All WACHS corporate records must be stored in the approved Electronic Documents and Records Management System.

[Records Management Policy](#)

7. Evaluation

Evaluation of this policy is to be carried out by the Director Human Resource and is to be reviewed every five years.

8. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#) – 1.5

9. Legislation

[Residential Tenancies Act 1987](#) (WA)

10. References

[GROH Tenant Rent Setting Framework Policy](#)

[GROH Serviced Units Policy](#)

[GROH Tenant's Handbook](#)

[GROH Swimming Pool Policy](#)

[Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme](#)

[Public Sector Code of Ethics](#)

11. Related Forms

[Application for Subsidised Residential Accommodation Form.](#)

12. Related WA Health System Policies

MP0124/19 [WA Health Code of Conduct Policy](#)

13. Policy Framework

[Employment](#)

**This document can be made available in alternative formats
on request for a person with a disability**

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