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# Staff Residential Accommodation Policy

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## 1. Purpose

The WA Country Health Service (WACHS) is committed to attracting and retaining a skilled workforce for the delivery of healthcare services in rural and remote Western Australian (WA) communities.

WACHS recognises the availability and affordability of suitable and safe residential accommodation in rural and remote WA communities is important for potential staff and their families – often fundamental in decisions on whether to accept a position or remain in country WA.

This policy provides the framework for WACHS to determine the allocation of a limited supply of suitable and safe residential accommodation to eligible staff at a subsidised cost in rural and remote locations across WA. It outlines the subsidised residential accommodation arrangements provided by WACHS, details the processes for accessing such arrangements, the factors influencing availability, as well as those taken into consideration by the authorised decision-maker.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the [Subsidised Residential Accommodation Package for WACHS Staff](#), [Rental Subsidy Scheme Package for WACHS Staff](#) or [Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme Package for WACHS Employees](#).

Staff access to accommodation is subject to eligibility criteria set by the Department of Communities under the *Government Employees' Housing Act 1964 (WA)* in conjunction with WACHS own internal Policies.

## 2. Policy

### 2.1 Scope

This policy applies to all eligible staff, including eligible apprentice or trainees, or students (on clinical placement or gaining work experience) seeking to access subsidised accommodation in rural and remote locations.

This policy applies to the Subsidised Residential Accommodation (SRA) and Rental Subsidy Scheme (RSS).

The Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme (HOSS) is outside the scope of this policy – refer to the [HOSS Package for WACHS Employees](#) for further information or to make an application.

### 2.2 Principles

- Unless provided in the applicable industrial agreement, access to accommodation (subsidised or not subsidised) is not a staff entitlement.
- An offer of subsidised accommodation does not constitute an ongoing right to subsidised accommodation. Access to subsidised accommodation may be withdrawn

at any time with the giving of the required notice period stipulated in the applicable SRA Package for WACHS Staff or RSS Package for WACHS Staff, or Residential Tenancy Agreement (which is generally, at least 60 days' notice).

- Decisions on access to subsidised accommodation will be fair, transparent and capable of review.
- Access to subsidised accommodation will be equitable, wherever feasible, acknowledging instances where demand for residential accommodation outweighs the supply or availability of suitable and safe residential accommodation.
- All decisions will be clearly documented with an explanation to support the decision.
- Growing the capacity to deliver culturally safe services in rural and remote areas to meet community needs is a WACHS priority.

### 2.3 Types of subsidised accommodation

Certain rural and remote areas of WA experience different accommodation demand and rental rates. Accordingly, the types of residential accommodation arrangements offered by WACHS at a subsidised cost is dependent on location. Accommodation is primarily located within Kimberley, Pilbara, Midwest and Goldfields, and to a lesser extent in the rural and remote areas of Wheatbelt, South West and Great Southern.

Under this policy, the types of residential accommodation arrangements offered by WACHS at a subsidised cost are:

- **Subsidised Residential Accommodation (SRA)** – an agreement in which the staff member enters into a Residential Tenancy Agreement with WACHS to lease a GROH dwelling, WACHS owned dwelling, or leased (from the rental market) dwelling. SRA may be sole occupancy or shared.
- **Rental Subsidy Scheme (RSS)** – an agreement in which the staff member enters into a Residential Tenancy Agreement with a private lessor or leasing agent, and WACHS makes a payment of the rental subsidy directly to the private lessor or leasing agent, or staff member.
- **Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme (HOSS)** – an agreement in which WACHS subsidises an employee's home loan repayment for a dwelling the employee is purchasing.

The types of residential accommodation arrangements offered by WACHS at a subsidised cost is dependent on location, due to variations in local accommodation supply and demand.

### 2.4 Access to subsidised accommodation

#### Eligibility

Eligibility criteria against the SRA and the RSS schemes is in their respective packages:

- [SRA Package for WACHS Staff](#)
- [RSS Package for WACHS Staff](#)

### 2.5 Application for subsidised accommodation

Eligible staff seeking to access subsidised accommodation are to submit an application using the relevant [SRA Package for WACHS Staff](#) or [RSS Package for WACHS Staff](#).

### 2.6 Application review

On receipt of an application for subsidised accommodation, the authorised officer delegated by WACHS will review the application and decide whether access to subsidised accommodation will be granted.

## 2.7 Access to subsidised accommodation considerations

The granting of access to subsidised accommodation for SRA or RSS requires the authorised officer to consider the following factors, including but not limited to:

- the staff member's eligibility and/or circumstances at the time of making the application such as:
  - the type of residential accommodation arrangement requested;
  - number of bedrooms appropriate to household size and composition;
  - length of subsidised accommodation requested; and/or
  - other relevant factors such as pets, disability.
- supply of suitable and safe residential accommodation available for allocation within the locality.
- the financial capacity for the rural and remote area to subsidise the accommodation.
- the critical nature of the position or occupation to delivering essential WACHS services.
- the availability of the required skills within the locality (rural and remote area) and/or the identification of alternative sources of skills.
- the capacity of the rural and remote area to provide culturally safe service delivery to its Aboriginal patient base, with particular reference to the proportion of Aboriginal people in the catchment population
- whether the vacancy to which the person is to be appointed was advertised with subsidised accommodation offered as part of the remuneration package
- whether the subsidised accommodation type, specifically RSS has been approved by the Chief Executive for operation and access by staff in the rural and remote area (approved locations for RSS is Goldfields, Kimberley, and other rural and remote areas where a facility is controlled by WACHS and the eligible staff member is a Doctor in Training). Other locations require Chief Executive approval.

There is a limited supply of available dwellings. Accordingly, the authorised officer may apply discretion to their decision and must clearly document with an explanation to support the decision. The authorised officer must weigh up the staff member's eligibility and/or circumstances against the operational requirements of WACHS.

## 2.8 Eligibility exemptions for exceptional circumstances

This policy recognises that there may be complexities in recruiting and retaining rural and remote staff. When staff do not meet eligibility criteria, but unique or exceptional circumstances exist, an exemption from the policy may be considered appropriate.

Exemption applications are considered and determined by the authorised officer on relevant facts that reflect a specific staff member's circumstances, distinct rural and remote needs and WACHS strategic priorities at the time. Exemptions do not carry over to subsequent or new tenancies.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

Staff are required to meet all the requirements as outlined in this Policy, applicable SRA Package for WACHS Staff or RSS Package for WACHS Staff, Residential Tenancy

Agreement and any other relevant documents used to apply for the access for subsidised accommodation.

The **I&SS Directorates** (central and rural and remote) is a key stakeholder in the management and administration of staff residential accommodation. I&SS are obligated to:

- provide staff with residential accommodation information:
  - types of subsidised accommodation arrangements;
  - application process and outcome; and
  - details about the dwelling being allocated, Residential Tenancy Agreement obligations, charges, and inspections, if applicable.
- record, manage and maintain on the WACHS Accommodation System (WAM) property information used for residential accommodation by staff, including tenancies, and conflicts of interest documents or declarations regarding properties leased from a WACHS staff member or their family.
- record, manage and maintain records in compliance with the WACHS 2023 Record Keeping Plan.
- ensure the grant of access to subsidised accommodation is approved by the authorised officer delegated by WACHS.
- accurate application of subsidy values, and payment of subsidies, including utilities etc, includes consultation with relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- properties and/or facilities are compliant with Work, Health and Safety, and housing standards, and kept in a clean and reasonable state having regard to its age, character and location.
- prepare a report of all applications for subsidised accommodation for the authorised officer's review and/or WACHS Executive or WACHS Board.
- management of any breaches of the terms and conditions of the Residential Tenancy Agreement by the staff member, if applicable.
- Comply with WA Health and other applicable Government policies and legislative requirements around subsidised accommodation.

**Line managers** are responsible for:

- familiarising themselves with the Policy and applicable SRA Package for WACHS Staff or RSS Package for WACHS Staff to inform and guide eligible staff on subsidised accommodation, including referring eligible staff to relevant directorates.
- If line managers are made aware of relevant changes to staff circumstances that may impact the staff member's eligibility, the line manager is to inform Infrastructure and Support Services accordingly.
- Where a decision has been made by the authorised officer to provide subsidised accommodation in advance of a vacancy being advertised, in order to attract a strong field, the line manager is to ensure this is clearly stated in the job advertisement.

The **authorised officer** is responsible for the application of this policy and determining access to subsidised accommodation at an operational or rural and remote level. The authorised officer may establish a Subsidised Accommodation Advisory Committee (SAAC) within the rural and remote area to review applications for subsidised accommodation, provide advice regarding eligibility, and provide other relevant information (e.g. supply or availability of dwellings, financial capacity for the rural and remote area to subsidise the accommodation). The SAAC is to act in an advisor capacity only, with all decisions regarding access to subsidised accommodation being made by the authorised officer.

**Business Services** (central and rural and remote) are responsible for:

- providing advice to internal stakeholders such as I&SS and/or People, Capability and Culture on financial matters such as fringe benefits tax etc.
- assisting and processing subsidised accommodation recouping and/or payments.

This statement has been approved and endorsed by WACHS CE **Staff** are obligated to:

- submit an application for subsidised accommodation;
- notify their line manager and Infrastructure and Support Services team of any relevant changes in their circumstances that may impact their eligibility;
- lodge the necessary documentation to meet rental and utility charges or for payment of the rental subsidy; and
- provide requested documentation to WACHS for the Finance directorate to make any relevant deductions for tax purposes.

**All staff** are required to work within policies and guidelines to make sure that WACHS is a safe, equitable and positive place to be.

## 4. Monitoring and Evaluation

### 4.1 Monitoring

Effective from the date of this policy, all approved subsidised accommodation will be reviewed annually to ensure the applicant's eligibility and/or subsidised accommodation is practicable and reasonable in meeting the operational requirements of the rural and remote area.

Compliance monitoring will be conducted through regular reporting (at least every 6 months) of access to subsidised accommodation within each rural and remote area to the authorised officer.

### 4.2 Evaluation

Evaluation of this policy is to be carried out by the People, Capability and Culture and Infrastructure and Support Services Directorates, and reviewed every two years.

## 5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the WA Health Code of Conduct (Code). The Code is part of the [Integrity Policy Framework](#) issued pursuant to Section 26 of the [Health Services Act 2016](#) 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 and procedures is mandatory. The policy has been developed to provide consistent principles in administering and decisions across WACHS. Adherence to the principles in this policy is mandatory, noting that there may be variances in application across locations due to the factors for consideration.

## 6. 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](#)

## 7. Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Authorised officer</b>	<p>As per section 40 of the <a href="#">Health Services Act 2016</a>, the WACHS governing body or Chief Executive may delegate any functions to a staff member.</p> <p>The <a href="#">WACHS authorisation schedule</a> outlines functions or powers authorised to be carried out by other positions within WACHS.</p> <p>Unless otherwise specified Tier 3A officers are designated authorised officers.</p>
<b>Employee</b>	<p>As per section 6 of the <a href="#">Health Services Act 2016</a>, an “employee” means a person employed in a health service provider. This includes a person employed by WACHS on a permanent, fixed term or casual contract.</p> <p>Does not include contract for service, agency personnel, and employees of external service providers delivering services under a contract with WACHS.</p>
Government Regional Officer Housing <b>dwelling</b>	<p>Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) dwelling is a house as defined in section 5 of the <i>Government Employees' Housing Act 1964</i>, which is owned, leased or constructed by Communities and allocated for use by GROH.</p>
<b>Leased dwelling</b>	<p>A dwelling that is leased from the private rental market by WACHS</p>
<b>Residential Tenancy Agreement</b>	<p>A written agreement between a staff member, and WACHS or a leasing agent which sets out the terms and conditions of tenancy regarding subsidised accommodation for SRA.</p>
<b>Staff</b>	<p>As per section 6 of the <a href="#">Health Services Act 2016</a>, a “staff member” of a health service provider, means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) an employee in the health service provider;</li> <li>(b) a person engaged under a contract for services by the health service provider.</li> </ul> <p>This includes agency personnel, and employees of external service providers delivering services under a contract with WACHS.</p>
<b>WACHS dwelling</b>	<p>A dwelling that is owned by WACHS</p>

## 8. Document Summary

<b>Coverage</b>	WACHS wide
<b>Audience</b>	All staff
<b>Records Management</b>	Non Clinical: <a href="#">Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy</a>
<b>Related Legislation</b>	<a href="#">Government Employees' Housing Act 1964</a> (WA) <a href="#">Health Services Act 2016</a> (WA) <a href="#">Industrial Relations Act 1979</a> (WA) <a href="#">Residential Tenancies Act 1987</a> (WA) <a href="#">State Records Act 2000</a> (WA)
<b>Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MP0124/19 <a href="#">WA Health Code of Conduct Policy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Employment Framework</a></li> </ul>
<b>Related WACHS Policy Documents</b>	Nil
<b>Other Related Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DoH <a href="#">Awards and Agreements</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme Package</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rental Subsidy Scheme Package</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Subsidised Residential Accommodation Package</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">WACHS Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2022–2026</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">WACHS Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2022-2025</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">WACHS Authorisation Schedule</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">WACHS Cultural Governance Framework</a></li> </ul>
<b>Related Forms</b>	Nil
<b>Related Training Packages</b>	Nil
<b>Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)</b>	ISD Record ID: 3350
<b>National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards</b>	1.1(e), 1.07, 1.10
<b>Aged Care Quality Standards</b>	Nil
<b><a href="#">Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care</a></b>	Nil

## 9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
3.00	9 September 2024	9 September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>change to title</li> <li>inclusion of Department of Community Framework</li> <li>modernisation of policy content and relationship to WACHS employees.</li> </ul>

## 10. Approval

<b>Policy Owner</b>	Executive Director People, Capability and Culture
<b>Co-approver</b>	Executive Director Infrastructure and Environment
<b>Contact</b>	Director Human Resources
<b>Business Unit</b>	People, Capability and Culture, Infrastructure and Environment
<b>EDRMS #</b>	ED-CO-13-24142
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