148  Eligibility for a $5 minimum rent

1. Policy

In exceptional circumstances Link Housing may assess a tenant or household member’s contribution to the rent payable as $5 per week for a limited time.

2. Scope

This policy relates to all Link Housing tenants and household members living in social housing properties. This policy does not include Affordable Housing tenants.

3. Eligibility

In general terms, a tenant or household member’s contribution may be reduced to $5 per week for a limited time when the tenant or household member has to live in other accommodation for which they have to pay or they have no income.

The following will be considered as exceptional circumstances:

4. Residential Aged Care Facility / Other Temporary Accommodation – 3 month review

The tenant or adult household member’s living expenses are increased because they are required to pay a fee for their accommodation while in a residential aged care facility, rehabilitation centre, respite care, or in a refuge (or other safe place) after leaving domestic violence.

Where there are other adult household members remaining in the dwelling, their income is still included in the calculation of the rent subsidy.

Every three months, Link Housing will review the $5 rent assessment. After review, Link Housing will either extend or cancel the $5 minimum rent. Tenants who move into a residential aged care facility, rehabilitation centre, respite or refuge for a period of more than six months will generally be expected to relinquish their tenancy. Where there are other household members, Link Housing will review the circumstances of the household in accordance with the Succession Policy and consider whether another household member is able to take over the tenancy.

5. Prison

A tenant who is in prison for six months or less is eligible for the $5 minimum rent.

Where there are other adult household members remaining in the dwelling, their income is still included in the calculation of the rent subsidy.

Tenants who remain in custody for a period of more than six months must relinquish their tenancy. Where there are other household members, Link Housing will review the circumstances of the household and consider whether another household member is able to succeed to the tenancy.

Where a tenant who is incarcerated is unable to contact Link Housing, their social worker or parole officer can contact Link Housing on the tenant’s behalf, subject to tenant consent.

6. Centrelink Means Test
A tenant or household member who does not receive Centrelink income as their partner earns too much can be considered for $5 rent.

7. Youth Allowance/Abstudy and the Parental Means Test

Eligibility for $5 rent subsidy will be considered for an adult household member (not the head tenant) who is:

- not eligible to receive Youth Allowance or Abstudy due to Centrelink’s family / parental means test, and
- is not considered to be economically independent by Centrelink, and
- has no other income.

8. Immigration Status

An adult household member (not the head tenant), who is sponsored, within a two-year waiting period or holding a temporary visa, excluding a New Zealand non-protected Special Category Visa, awaiting for a Department of Immigration and Border Protection decision may be eligible for $5 rent subsidy if they receive no other income (or receives only Family Tax Benefits) and is not eligible for Centrelink benefits due to their immigration status.

9. Christmas/New Year

An applicant who receives and signs up for an offer of accommodation during the Christmas/New Year period will be charged a $5 minimum rent per adult household member for the first two weeks of their tenancy.

The Christmas/New Year period is defined as being from 3 working days before Christmas Day to the 1st January inclusive.

10. Death

Upon the death of a tenant, Link Housing will approve a zero rent charge if the family is experiencing financial difficulty whilst finalising the tenancy. The zero rent charge will be applied for a maximum of two weeks.

11. Reviews and Extensions

Apart from 3.1 where the situation will be reviewed after three months, Link Housing will undertake a review the $5 rent assessment after six month. After review, Link will either extend or cancel the $5 minimum rent.

12. Evidence

The tenant or adult household member must substantiate all claims for the $5 minimum rent subsidy or zero rent charge.

13. Review

Link Housing will review the $5 rent assessment every six months and every three months for tenant’s paying for accommodation for a residential aged care facility, rehabilitation centre, respite or temporary accommodation. The Head of Housing Services has the discretion to approve $5 rent for longer than six months in exceptional circumstances.
14. Legislative Framework and Related Policies
- Community Housing Rent Policy
- Rental Subsidy Policy
- Death of a Tenant Policy
- Succession Policy

15. Privacy and Confidentiality
Link Housing will keep applicants', tenants' and residents' information and feedback confidential, in line with privacy laws and standards.

16. Complaints and Appeals
A tenant who is not happy with a decision made by Link Housing or who believes that Link Housing has not followed this policy can complain or appeal using the complaints and appeals policies that are available on the Link Housing website www.linkhousing.org.au or by phoning Link Housing on 9412 5111.

17. Quality Assurance
The Eligibility for a $5 Minimum Rent Policy will be formally reviewed every two (2) years, or when necessitated through a sufficient change in circumstances, eg due to legislative change.