

TITLE:	Staff Housing Policy		
DIVISION:	Human Resources		
ADOPTED BY:	Barkly Regional Council		
DATE OF ADOPTION:	23 February 2017	DATE OF REVIEW:	23 February 2019
MOTION NUMBER:	OC 10/17		
POLICY NUMBER:	HR00001		
AUTHORISED:	Chief Executive Officer		

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO:

All employees occupying a Council house and employees involved in the management of Council housing.

SUMMARY

To support the effective and efficient delivery of public services to people within the Barkly region, the Barkly Regional Council provides housing to facilitate the attraction and retention of Council staff.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Policy is to provide a transparent and consistent approach to the occupation and management of residential properties controlled by the Council. While consistency is the aim, it is acknowledged that the availability and standard of housing for staff varies according to the age of the house, the various locations and that Council is severely limited in its ability to procure new and additional housing and to upgrade existing housing.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Staff Housing Policy is to provide a transparency for all employees residing in Council housing in relation to types of housing, responsibilities, payment of utilities and rent, inspections, cleanliness and maintenance,

POLICY**Provision of Housing and Availability**

Accommodation assistance may be provided at the Council's discretion as a result of one of the following:

- Remote incentive
- Attraction incentive to meet operational requirements

If accommodation is provided it may be included as part of the salary package or offered on a full or partial cost recovery basis.

Employees are not required to accept an offer of accommodation. If an offer is made and accepted, the agreement forms part of the contracted conditions of employment. If an offer is made and rejected, the Council will not reserve other accommodation options in the event an employee subsequently seeks accommodation.

Housing will only be supplied to full time employees who are on active duty or an arrangement approved by the organisation. Employees recruited into a community-based role who already reside in that community are not eligible for staff housing. Housing is not provided for Elected Members.

Council Housing

There are four categories of housing within the Council. They are:

- Council Owned Housing
 - Council owned houses located in Tennant Creek supplied as part of a contract.
- Council Leased Housing
 - Housing leased by Council to meet its employee pool requirements with full or partial cost recovery sought from employees.
- Council Leased – Share Accommodation Housing
 - Housing leased by Council to meet its employee pool requirements with full or partial cost recovery sought from employees who have entered into a shared leasing arrangement with Council.
 - Shared accommodation may be offered to employees seeking accommodation without partners/families. Where employees are sharing accommodation on a permanent basis with other employees, costs will be allocated on a proportional basis.
- Community Based Housing
 - Council owned housing is normally provided for staff relocating to remote communities where available. This is usually reserved for management and hard to fill positions to ensure consistent delivery of local government services.
 - Where there are housing shortages, the following hierarchy of house allocation may be used subject to variation by the Chief Executive Officer:
 - Priority 1: Area Managers
 - Priority 2: Essential Service Officer
 - Priority 3: Municipal Works Supervisor
 - Priority 4: Agency Coordinators
 - Priority 5: All other eligible staff.
 - At the Chief Executive Officer's discretion, Council owned community based housing may be leased to another agency where the Chief Executive Officer considers this to be in the best interest of the community.

Responsibilities

The Barkly Regional Council Housing Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring that houses available for employees are at a liveable and safe standard.
- Endeavouring to provide the best quality housing available for staff within the resourcing constraints available.
- Ensuring that any necessary maintenance attributable to normal wear and tear, and not misuse by the occupant, is carried out expeditiously.
- Ensuring that a Residential Sub Tenancy Agreement is completed between the Council and Employee to document the address of the house being sub-let and the amount of rent to be paid by the employee.

The employee/tenant shall be responsible for:

- Using housing for residential purposes only.
- Employees/tenants renting Council houses cannot sublet.
- Promptly give written notice of any damages done to the property during the tenancy period.
- Ensuring that the accommodation and those areas used by the occupant are kept in a clean, safe and tidy state during the period of occupation.
- Ensuring that the accommodation is left in a clean, safe and tidy state at the end of its use.
- Undertaking the general maintenance of the grounds, i.e. lawns and gardens, as per normal tenancy arrangements unless otherwise stated and in compliance with any relevant legislation and by-law.
- Meet utility charges in accordance with this policy.

Utilities

- Electricity
 - Unless written into the employee's contract, the employee is responsible for all electricity costs of the property.
 - If the property does not have a metered power box requiring the purchase of power cards, the employee is responsible for transferring the electricity into their name.
 - Employees residing in Council Leased Shared Accommodation Housing shall be responsible for equal portions of the electricity expense
 - Employees under contract at the time of implementation of this policy shall be grandfathered under their current electricity arrangements until such time their contract is renegotiated.
- Telecommunications
 - Unless written into the employee contracts, all telecommunication, i.e. phone and internet, is the responsibility of the employee.
- Gas
 - Council shall be responsible for all gas accounts in all categories of housing as identified in this policy. Employees requiring gas replenishment shall advise either the Housing Officer or the Area Manager for their action.
- Water
 - Council shall be responsible for all water accounts in all categories of housing as identified in this policy.
 - Employees residing in either Council Leased or Council Leased – Shared Accommodation housing may have restricted annual water usage as prescribed in the tenancy agreement between Council and landlord. Employees exceeding their annual water usage shall be responsible for excess costs.

Rent

Unless housing is written into an employee's contract, an employee residing in Council Leased Housing or Council Leased – Share Accommodation Housing will be required to pay rent. Rent payments shall not exceed the amount of rent Council pays to the owner. Rent payments shall be made as a pre-tax (salary sacrificed) payroll deduction.

Employees residing in Council Leased – Share Accommodation Housing shall pay a proportional rent payment.

Agreed rent payment deductions shall be recorded on the Residential Sub-Tenancy Agreement and a Payroll Deduction Form.

Inspections

Upon moving into a Council house, the employee shall be given a housing condition statement and an equipment/inventory list. The employee must complete this initial inspection and return the signed statement and list to either the Housing Officer or Area Manager.

A property manager or landlord may require an inspection of Council-leased housing. Upon notification from a property manager or landlord, either the Housing Officer or the Area Manager will advise the employee that a periodic inspection has been scheduled. The employee is responsible for ensuring that the house is inspection-ready. The employee may take time off work to attend the housing inspection. If the employee does not elect to attend the housing inspection, the property manager or landlord may enter the house to complete the periodic inspection.

An inspection of Council-owned housing shall be performed by the Housing Officer or Area Manager with the employee receiving, at a minimum, one week's notice. Inspections shall not occur if the employee is on leave or away from their community. No less than 6 months and no more than 12 months shall elapse between periodic inspections. If the employee does not desire to attend the periodic inspection, the Housing Officer or Area Manager shall find another employee, preferably a manager, to accompany them on the periodic inspection.

If the Housing Officer or Area Manager notes discrepancies where the house fails an inspection, a follow-up inspection shall be scheduled to occur between 5 and 10 calendar days following the failed inspection provided the employee will not be on leave or away from their community. If the house fails the follow-up inspection, disciplinary action may be taken against the employee and an additional follow-up inspection will be scheduled.

The Housing Officer, Area Manager, or the employee's manager is required to perform a final housing inspection one work day prior to the house being vacated. If discrepancies are noted on either the condition of the house or missing inventory, the employee shall be allowed to make any corrective actions to resolve the discrepancies and a follow-up inspection will be performed before the employee vacates the house. Any discrepancies not corrected by the employee shall be costed and recouped out of the employee's final pay.

If through any inspection it is discovered that the house has been damaged by the actions of the employee, Council may serve notice to the employee to repair, clean and make safe and/or tidy the accommodation within a defined period. If the employee elects to not make repairs, Council shall undertake the repairs with all costs, to include labour, being charged to the employee in one of the following ways:

- Payroll deduction.
- Recoupment out of the employee's final pay.
- Invoiced to the employee, or former employee as applicable, to repay Council for repairs.

Cleanliness

All employees residing in Council housing either owned or leased, shall keep the house clean, neat and tidy. At a minimum, this includes the following:

- House free of dust

- Rubbish disposed in collections bins
- Floors swept, vacuumed and mopped
- Bathrooms, to include toilet, basin and shower/bath clean
- Refrigerators, stoves, ovens and washing machines clean
- Dishes, utensils and cookware clean
- Lawn mowed

Maintenance

For all housing categories with the exception of Council-owned houses, requests for maintenance should go through either the Housing Officer or the Area Manager to coordinate service. The Housing Officer or Area Manager will liaise with property managers and/or service providers to schedule requested works. For Council-owned houses, maintenance requests go through the local Council Depot/Workshop or Facilities Coordinator for action.

After hour emergency maintenance requirements can be acted upon by the employee making necessary contact with a service provider. If possible, the employee should see if they can be invoiced for the necessary works with the invoice being turned into the Housing Officer or Area Manager for processing. If the employee has to pay out-of-pocket for after hour emergency maintenance, the employee may file for reimbursement.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Barkly Regional Council when developing policies and procedures is aware that there may be risks that Barkly Regional Council employees, Elected Members, communities and stakeholders may be exposed to in its management and review of policies and procedures. In the implementation of the Barkly Regional Council policy development, all Elected Members, employees, communities and stakeholders are encouraged to communicate any risks they perceive to the Chief Executive Officer.

TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

Nil

REFERENCES

Nil

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

Local Government Act
Northern Territory Residential Tenancies Act 2010

LINKS

Nil

RESPONSIBILITY & DELEGATION

The Chief Executive Officer has delegated authority to implement this policy and to make decisions inconsistent with the policy if, in the Chief Executive Officer's opinion, this is appropriate to meet the Council's operational requirements.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This Policy is to be reviewed every two (2) years, and may be reviewed at other times at the discretion of Chief Executive Officer.

Review date 23 February 2019