

POLICY

TITLE:	TENNANT CREEK STAFF HOUSING POLICY		
DIVISION:	CORPORATE SERVICES- PEOPLE AND CULTURE		
ADOPTED BY:	COUNCIL		
DATE OF ADOPTION:	FEBRUARY 2022	DATE OF REVIEW:	FEBRUARY 2026
MOTION NUMBER:	OC 37/22		
POLICY NUMBER:	HR 06		
LEGISLATIVE REF:	Section 174(3)(iii) of the Local Government Act 2019		

PURPOSE:

To set out the provisions and guidelines for the allocation of staff housing in Tennant Creek by Barkly Regional Council to its eligible staff, recognising the role that housing provision plays in facilitating the attraction and retention of council employees.

1. OBJECTIVE

1. This policy applies only to housing in Tennant Creek.
2. To work towards the goal of being the Barkly’s employer of choice by providing housing to employees, in order to attract qualified personnel to work for council, and to promote the retention of council employees,
3. To provide a transparent and consistent approach to the occupation and management of residential properties controlled by council,
4. To outline responsibilities of both council and council employees over staff housing provided by Council including types of housing, payment of utilities, rent, inspections, cleanliness and maintenance
5. To provide a reasonable standard of housing to staff, while also acknowledging :
 - i. the standard of housing varies depending on the age of the house,
 - ii. the location of housing can have an impact on the standard of housing provided.
 - iii. the limitations of Council’s ability to procure new and additional housing and to upgrade existing housing.
6. Barkly Regional Council will endeavour, where possible, to provide accommodation that is suited for the employee’s family needs subject to availability

2. SCOPE



This policy applies to all Barkly Regional Council employees residing or seeking to reside in housing provided by Barkly Regional Council.

4. APPLICATION OF POLICY

a) 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.

Employees who are eligible for housing, and subsequently acquire (either by purchasing or renting) a house in the area in which they work, will cease to be eligible for staff housing.

Housing is not provided for Elected Members.

b) Residential Tenancy Agreements

All housing rental requires a residential tenancy or sub-tenancy agreement to be signed by both Barkly Regional Council and the employee/tenant.

Except where exempted in the tenancy agreement, a bond amounting to four weeks rent is required to be paid by the tenant.

The bond is four weeks of the market rental price. The bond is to be paid in full or committed to be paid via salary deductions before the employee commences work.

c) Council Housing

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

1. Council Owned Housing
 - Council owned houses located in Tennant Creek supplied as part of a contract.

2. Council Leased Housing
 - Housing leased by Council to meet its employee pool requirements with full or partial cost recovery sought from employees.
3. 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.
4. 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:
 - a) Priority 1: Area Managers
 - b) Priority 2: Essential Service Officer
 - c) Priority 3: Municipal Works Supervisor
 - d) Priority 4: Agency Coordinators
 - e) 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.

d) Responsibilities

The Barkly Regional Council Housing Officer responsibilities:

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

The employee/tenant responsibilities:

1. Paying the required bond under the Tenancy Agreement.
2. Using housing for residential purposes only.
3. Employees/tenants renting Council houses cannot sublet.
4. Promptly give written notice of any damages done to the property during the tenancy period.
5. 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.
6. Ensuring that the accommodation is left in a clean, safe and tidy state at the end of its use.
7. 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.
8. Meet utility charges in accordance with this policy.

e) Utilities

Electricity

- Unless provided in the tenancy agreement, 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 tenancy agreement, all telecommunication, i.e. phone and internet, is the responsibility of the employee.

Gas

- Unless otherwise written in the tenancy agreement, the employee is responsible for all gas replenishments.

Water

- Unless otherwise provided in the tenancy agreement, the employee is 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.

f) Rent

Unless otherwise provided in the tenancy agreement, an employee residing in all categories of council housing listed under part (c) 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 Tenancy Agreement or the Residential Sub-Tenancy Agreement and a Payroll Deduction Form.

g) 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 within 5 business days of moving in.

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, appropriate further action may be taken against the employee at the discretion of the employee's manager. This may include:

- A formal warning
- Commencement of eviction process

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 bond payment, or if the employee is exempt from paying bond, then funds will be recouped from 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.
- Employee's bond payment
- Recoupment out of the employee's final pay.
- Invoiced to the employee, or former employee as applicable, to repay Council for repairs

h) 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

i) 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 hours 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.

5. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, STANDARDS, POLICIES AND FORMS

Local Government Act NT 2019

Northern Territory Residential Tenancies Act

Barkly Regional Council Payroll Deduction Form

6. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Every four (4) years, and may be reviewed at the other times at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

7. RESPONSIBILITY AND DELEGATION

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