



Backyard Units Policy

POLICY FOR SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS

Purpose

This Policy provides the principles for using backyard units to achieve good social housing outcomes for tenants of social housing providers in Tasmania.

Policy Context

Backyard units are a type of social housing that is available to large tenant households with young household members aged between 15 to 26 years.

Young people can be at risk of homelessness if they leave their family home into insecure or unaffordable private rentals. Family stresses and large households can cause young people to move out of the family home. The provision of backyard units is a way of helping young people to transition to a more independent living arrangement that is secure, comfortable and affordable and enables them to stay connected with their family.

Backyard units are demountable dwellings that are placed in the backyards of existing social housing properties owned by the Director of Housing. They increase the size of a social housing property by adding an additional one or two-bedroom unit for young people to enjoy their own space while maintaining a strong connection with their family or support network as they build their independent living skills.

Four types of units are available from the Director of Housing: studio, one-bedroom unit, two-bedroom unit, and fully accessible unit for young people with disabilities. The units range in size between 4.5 metres wide by 8 metres long, and 4.5 metres wide by 13 metres long.

They are portable units that can be moved on to site in one day and can be dismantled and moved from their foundation for relocation when they are no longer required to meet the needs of the household.

Backyard units have the added advantage of their rapid construction that predominately occurs off site and indoors and have little impact on the household during installation.



Eligibility for Backyard Units

To be eligible for a backyard unit, a tenant household must:

- be an existing tenant of a property that is owned by the Director of Housing
- may be managed by any social housing provider
- need the backyard unit for an existing household member aged between 15 to 26 years
- be considered a large household defined as at least four or more household members
- have space in the backyard of their social housing property for a backyard unit.

Applying for a Backyard Unit

Backyard units are applied for via social housing providers.

A social housing provider as tenancy manager determines if a tenant is suitable for a backyard unit.

The decision to approve a backyard unit is determined by the Department of Communities Tasmania, subject to availability or committed funds and assessed need.

Social housing providers may apply for a backyard unit by contacting 1800 995 653 or emailing HousingProjects@communities.tas.gov.au

Approval for a Backyard Unit

Social housing tenants will be approved a backyard unit by the Department of Communities Tasmania based on:

- eligibility
- recommendation by the social housing provider
- the availability of a backyard unit
- suitability of site (see below)
- local council approval if appropriate (see below)

On approval, the Department of Communities Tasmania will determine the period of time that a backyard unit is permitted. The use of a backyard unit must not exceed the age limit of 25 years old for the occupant.

The social housing provider will be responsible for working closely with the tenant household to plan for the exit of the young person, and removal of the backyard unit, at least six months prior to the term of permitted use.

Suitability and Approval of Site

The Department of Communities Tasmania will conduct the following site suitability process:

- a preliminary site assessment including infrastructure and planning regulations will be undertaken to determine if placing a backyard unit at the proposed address is feasible



- once confirmed, the next stage is to seek approval from the relevant local council
- if council approval is obtained, confirmation of the backyard unit will be sought from the social housing provider and the tenant, and timeframes for delivery agreed
- the unit will be identified or commissioned
- infrastructure works, including plumbing and electricity, are completed at the address prior to delivery
- the unit is delivered and installed (by crane) at the property then connected to services
- a building surveyor then assesses the unit to ensure it is compliant with statutory requirements
- once the required certificates are issued, the unit is able to be occupied.

The relevant local council is the planning authority that will determine the correct planning assessment pathway for the backyard unit. A council may determine that no planning permit is needed.

Tenancy and Property Management

Under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*, a backyard unit is treated as an additional bedroom (not an additional dwelling) to a social housing property. A single tenancy agreement applies to the household. A property with a backyard unit is valued as having an additional bedroom.

Change of Household Circumstances

The approval process will provide the approved term for the permitted use of a backyard unit.

During this term, the social housing provider will monitor ongoing need which will be informed by a change in household circumstances notification and/or rent reviews.

Social housing providers will notify the Department of Communities Tasmania when they confirm that the unit is no longer required to meet the household's needs.

The program management, works and costs associated with the removal and relocation of the units is the responsibility of Department of Communities Tasmania.

The social housing provider can refer another household to apply for a backyard unit, noting that the decision to reallocate a unit sits with the Department of Communities Tasmania.

Our contact details



Housing Programs – (03) 6166 3607



housing.programs@communities.tas.gov.au



www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing