



Factsheet 1: Applying for ACT Public Housing After or During Domestic Violence

1. Overview

Leaving a relationship because of domestic violence may mean that you need to apply for public housing. Public Housing is government-owned housing rented to eligible low income earners. Housing ACT is responsible for managing public housing in the ACT. If you would like Housing ACT to offer you a place to live, then you need to lodge an application.

This factsheet provides information about Housing ACT's eligibility requirements, and the special policies that apply in cases of domestic violence.

2. How do I apply for public housing?

If you would like Housing ACT to offer you a place to live, then you need to lodge an application. You can collect an Application Kit from Housing ACT or you can arrange for it to be sent to you by calling 133 427.

The Application Kit contains several fact sheets and an application form. This form is used for all applications for housing assistance including Public Housing, Community Housing, Affordable Housing and shared accommodation.

As well as completing the form, you will need to provide the supporting documentation, including:

- Proof of identity
- Proof of income (copies of bank statements)
- Proof of residency
- Support letters and evidence about your circumstances (for example, medical evidence of a health condition, support letters from a domestic violence service, or letters from a support worker).

3. Eligibility for ACT Public Housing

Under the law that governs Housing ACT, to be eligible for public housing, you must:

- Be at least 16 years of age;
- Be living in the ACT for at least the previous 6 months;
- Meet an income and assets test;
- Be an Australian citizen or Australian permanent resident, or hold a special category visa (issued to eligible New Zealanders upon entry into Australia), or hold a Temporary Protection Visa; and
- Have no interest in residential real estate property anywhere in Australia (subject to certain exceptions).

4. Eligibility requirements in cases of domestic violence

Housing ACT have a Domestic and Family Violence Policy Manual that changes some processes in cases where there is domestic violence. Some of the eligibility requirements apply differently if you are experiencing domestic violence.

Be Living in the ACT for at least the previous 6 months

If you are

- experiencing domestic violence; AND
- you can show that you have a reason to come into the ACT,

then the requirement that you have lived in the ACT for 6 months can be set aside.

Be an Australian citizen, permanent resident, Special Category visa holder, or Temporary Protection Visa holder

If you

- are experiencing domestic violence; AND
- are a sponsored migrant, but your sponsorship has broken down because of domestic violence; AND
- have been granted a Centrelink payment,

then your application can still be considered by Housing ACT.

Have no interest in residential real estate property

If you

- are experiencing domestic violence; AND
- have an interest in a residential real estate property; AND
- The property is tied up in a settlement dispute or you can't access the property because of the domestic violence,

then Housing ACT may waive the rule that you must have no interests in residential real estate.

5. What evidence do I need to show that I am experiencing domestic violence?

Under Housing ACT's Domestic and Family Violence Policy, you need to provide:

ONE of the following documents:

- A current DVO from any Australian State or Territory
- A letter from
 - The police
 - Office for Children, Youth and Family Support
 - DVCS
 - Canberra Rape Crisis Centre
 - YWCA
 - A recognised domestic violence/homelessness shelter.

OR

TWO letters from a:

- Solicitor
- Community or government support worker
- Social worker
- Doctor
- Psychologist
- GP
- Drug and alcohol service.

6. What happens to my application?

If your application is approved you will receive a letter from Housing ACT stating the area, number of bedrooms and needs category (or waiting list) of your application.

There are three needs categories:

- **Priority Housing:** People with exceptional, urgent and critical needs.
- **High Needs Housing:** People with significant needs.
- **Standard Housing:** People with significant affordability issues in paying private rent.

A Housing ACT officer will go through your application to decide whether you should go on the High Needs or Standard List. You will be advised of the decision in writing.

If you have been put on the High Needs list, you should check with your assessing officer whether you are being considered for the Priority Housing list, and whether they want you to provide any additional information.

Once the Housing ACT Officer decides that you should be considered for the Priority List, they will send your application to a panel called the Multi-Disciplinary Panel (MDP), along with a recommendation about what they think should happen to your application. The MDP will decide whether to put you on the Priority List.

How long you will have to wait before Housing ACT offers you a property will depend on what your requirements are (such as which areas you have nominated and how many bedrooms you need). The Priority Housing list generally has the shortest waiting time, but it can still take a long time to be housed.

Disclaimer

This factsheet contains general information available at the time of publication. It does not constitute legal advice. If you have a specific legal problem please contact Canberra Community Law's advice line on 02 6218 7900.

Canberra Community Law is entirely independent of Housing ACT. All assistance is free.