

6. Temporary Absence

6.1 Temporary Absence Policy

6.1.1 Introduction

The Temporary Absence category of early housing targets previous sole tenants of the Office of Housing (OOH) who have voluntarily relinquished their tenancy within six months of entering:

- a nursing home and was required to pay accommodation costs,
- drug or alcohol rehabilitation necessitating living away from home for a period of time and was required to pay accommodation costs,
- respite care and was required to pay accommodation costs, or
- prison.

Applicants applying under this category are treated as early housing transfer applicants, provided that they reapply within two years of the date they relinquished their tenancy.

Approved Temporary Absence applicants are housed after Recurring Homelessness applicants and before Supported Housing applicants.

Note: This policy came into effect on 20th December 2004. This policy also applies to any sole tenants who were approved to be absent under one of the listed special circumstances prior to this date and agree to relinquish their tenancy after 20th December 2004.

6.1.2 Overview of Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to apply for early housing under the Temporary Absence category, applicants must:

- have been a sole tenant and voluntarily relinquished their previous tenancy within six months of entering one of the facilities outlined above,
- have reapplied for early housing within two years of voluntarily relinquishing their previous tenancy,
- meet wait-turn eligibility criteria, and
- enter into an agreement for the repayment of any outstanding charges, where applicable.

A sole tenant who has been issued with a Notice to Vacate because they will be absent under special circumstances for more than six months can be considered for an early housing transfer if they voluntarily relinquish their tenancy before the expiry of the Notice to Vacate, and have previously been given approval to be absent.

Applicants in Prison

In addition to the criteria listed above, applicants in prison are able to apply for early housing under the Temporary Absence category a maximum of six months prior to their expected release date provided the application is made within two years of their relinquishing their tenancy.

If the applicant has not submitted an early housing application under the Temporary Absence category and their release date is extended, they can apply for early housing a maximum of six months prior to their new expected release date.

If an early housing application has already been submitted when the release date is extended, the application is removed from the waiting list. It is revived and returned to the waiting list if the client contacts the OOH within two years of voluntarily relinquishing their previous tenancy. They can make their request to be reinstated to early housing a maximum of six months prior to their new expected release date.

6.1.3 Income and Asset Eligibility Criteria



[Applications and Eligibility chapter in this manual](#)

The wait-turn income and asset criteria apply to all Temporary Absence applicants. For detailed information on the incomes and assets criteria, refer to the Applications and Eligibility chapter in this manual.

6.1.4 Outstanding Charges



[OOH Bond Loan manual](#)



[Debt Management manuals](#)

[Appendix 16.1.7 Vacated Arrears](#)

The OOH accepts applications for the Temporary Absence category from households who have outstanding charges.

Outstanding charges require a pre-allocation repayment agreement comprising regular repayments at a minimum amount of \$10.00 per fortnight until an offer of housing is made.

There is no minimum payment period required before an offer of housing can be made.

Tenants who are currently in prison are not required to sign a repayment agreement until they have been released.

The household's total outstanding charges are calculated by adding together the total of any outstanding charges from a previous tenancy, outstanding bond loans, MCAT charges that have been substantiated, water charges, car parking and service charges.

Note: The minimum three-month repayment period and the \$200 lump sum payment that is applicable to the Supported Housing and Special Housing Needs categories does not apply to this category.

Temporary Absence Policy

[Agreement](#)

6.1.5 Effective date of Eligible Applications

The Temporary Absence effective date is the date the tenancy was terminated. Therefore, if this date is earlier than the Wait-turn application effective date, then both the Early Housing and Wait-turn application dates are the same.

Note: This policy came in to effect on 20th December 2004. However, this policy also applies to any sole tenants who were approved to be absent under one of the listed special circumstances prior to this date and agree to relinquish their tenancy after the 20th December 2004.

6.1.6 Housing Size Guidelines

Approved applications are placed on waiting lists that match the OOH's housing size guidelines at the time they reapply.



[Matching Clients with Housing chapter in this manual](#)

Example 1

A sole tenant who relinquished their tenancy for a three-bedroom property while they were in prison is only offered a one-bedroom property when they reapply if they reapply as a sole applicant. They will not be offered a three-bedroom property if they are no longer eligible for it.

Example 2

A sole tenant who relinquished their tenancy for a one-bedroom property while undergoing rehabilitation, reapplies for housing and includes a friend on the application. The household would be entitled to receive an offer of a two-bedroom property.

6.1.7 Special Accommodation Requirements



[Matching Clients with Housing chapter in this manual](#)

[Appendix 16.1.1 Application for Special Accommodation Requirements](#)

Where an applicant requires access to a particular location or housing type within a waiting list area, an application for Special Accommodation Requirements form must be completed by a health/care professional confirming that an applicant requires:

- access to a particular location to access specialist health/care and support services, which are not available elsewhere, and/or
- larger-sized or modified accommodation which meets their health/disability requirements and/or
- a particular type of property, for example, one without stairs due to a mobility problem.

6.1.8 Offers of Housing



[Offers of Housing](#)

Applicants approved for the Temporary Absence category are made offers of housing according to the OOH Allocations Policy.

An applicant is made only one offer of early housing under the Temporary Absence category. If they refuse this offer, the early

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housing status is cancelled.

Refused Offer

If an applicant:

- refuses a valid offer of housing,
- does not make contact after receiving an offer letter, or
- is unable to accept an offer within the acceptance time frame.

Their early housing status is removed and they cannot apply again under the Temporary Absence category. The total number of offers to date will determine whether they are still eligible for a further wait-turn offer.

Unable to Accept Offer

If an applicant has received a formal offer of housing but is unable to accept an offer because of one of the following circumstances:

- in hospital, or
- temporarily in a nursing home, or
- undergoing drug or alcohol rehabilitation, or
- in prison.

The offer, with HSM/HM approval, is cancelled and their application removed from the waiting list. If the application is revived within three months and the applicant is still OOH eligible for early housing allocation, they retain their early housing status.

Note: Where an offer is made to an applicant in prison prior to their release and they are unable to accept it at the time, their application may be deferred for up to three months. They have to make contact with the OOH within three months of the removal of the application so that their application can be returned to the early housing waiting list. An applicant cannot retain their early housing status beyond three months because of the likelihood of changes in the applicant's circumstances and eligibility.



[Introduction and Overview chapter in this manual](#)

6.1.9 Applicant Status



[Introduction and Overview chapter in this manual](#)

Applicants are considered 'transfer' applicants when submitting an application for early housing under the Temporary Absence category. Therefore, when signing the Residential Tenancies Agreement they will retain whatever tenancy conditions they had when they vacated their OOH property.

For example, if the applicant had a non-reviewable tenancy before relinquishing their tenancy, they will have a non-reviewable tenancy in the new property they get allocated.

6.2 Temporary Absence Procedures

6.2.1 An applicant makes contact

To assess whether an applicant is eligible to apply for Early Housing under the Temporary Absence category, check ISIP to determine the following:

- whether the applicant held a previous tenancy,
- the reason the tenancy was terminated,
- the date the tenancy was terminated, and
- whether a wait-turn application exists.

If the applicant requires immediate housing assistance and or support, refer them to either a THM, or other service agency.

If it is determined that the applicant is not eligible to apply under the Temporary Absence category, for example they relinquished their tenancy more than two years ago, inform them of alternative housing options provided by the OOH. Examples of alternative housing assistance include Bond Loan Scheme and/or other early housing categories such as the Supported and Special Housing Needs categories.

Applicants applying under the Temporary Absence category are not required to demonstrate an urgent need for housing because:

- they were temporarily absent from their previous property; and
- they voluntarily rescinded their previous tenancy on the basis they would be entitled to an allocation under Temporary Absence Policy if they reapplied for public housing within a two year period.

Applicants in Prison

For applicants in prison, check that the application date is not more than six months from their expected release date. If this is the case, approve the application and advise the applicant to notify the OOH if their release date is extended.

If the release date is extended, their application is removed from the waiting list. Advise the client that they must contact the OOH within six months of their new expected release date, and within two years of their relinquishing their tenancy, for their application to be revived and returned to the waiting list.

6.2.2 Receiving the application

Application Forms

Applicants applying under the Temporary Absence category are required to complete a Temporary Absence application form.

Ensure that the application has been correctly completed and that:

- the application has been signed by the applicant,
- the proper authorisation for release of information has been given to the support agency by the applicant, and
- the signature has been witnessed.

Check ISIP to confirm whether the applicant has previously lodged a wait-turn application and locate the wait-turn application. If the file is being held at another office, contact that office to have the file sent to your office.



[Applications and Eligibility chapter in this manual](#)

If the applicant already has an approved Wait-turn application for rental housing enter the application number and effective date in the *Office Use Only* section of the Temporary Absence application form.

Where an applicant does not have an approved wait-turn application, request that they complete a *General Housing – Application for Public Housing* form and advise of the necessary documentation in order to assess eligibility.

6.2.3 Outstanding charges

Check ISIP for any outstanding charges from any previous tenancies, bond loans, rental arrears, substantiated MCAT charges, car parking and utility charges.

Combine all outstanding charges from any previous tenancies and bond loans and organise to sign a repayment agreement of \$10.00 (minimum) per fortnight with the applicant.

Applicants applying under this category are not required to pay any lump sum payment and there are no minimum repayment periods before being allocated housing.

Applicants who are currently in prison who have outstanding charges are not required to sign a repayment agreement whilst incarcerated because they would not have the financial means to meet their repayment obligations. In these situations they are advised to contact the housing office responsible for their application after they have been released to negotiate a repayment agreement.

6.2.4 Effective Date

The Temporary Absence effective date is the date the applicant terminated their previous tenancy. Enter this date in ISIP. Where the early housing approval date is earlier than the Wait-turn effective date, update ISIP to ensure that both dates are the same earlier date.

6.2.5 Assessing Applications

Check ISIP to confirm the applicant's previous tenancy details. Prepare a file note for the application that confirms:

- the applicant's tenancy was terminated within six months of entering one of the facilities as outlined in this chapter, and
- the applicant terminated their OOH tenancy no more than two years prior to submitting their early housing application, and
- they meet all other wait turn eligibility criteria.

For applicants in prison, also ensure that the application date is not more than six months from their expected release date.

Preparing the Recommendation

On the basis of information provided and obtained from ISIP, write a recommendation for approval or non-approval on a Summary and Recommendation form.

Attach the application for Temporary Absence, income and asset documentation and the recommendations to the application file and forward to the Team Manager (TM) or Assessment Panel within two working days from the date the application was received.

6.2.6 Approved Applications



[Introduction & chapter in this manual](#)

If the application is approved, enter the decision detail on ISIP, including the Temporary Absence code 'TMPAB' and any special housing requirements approved.

Approved applications under the Temporary Absence category are placed on the waiting list after the Recurring Homelessness category and before the Supported Housing category in effective date order.

Send the applicant an ISIP-generated letter, within one working day of the approval date. The letter advises the applicant that:

- their application for Early Housing under the Temporary Absence category has been approved,
- the waiting lists on which the Early Housing application has been placed,
- the locality of the Housing Office where their application will be held,
- one offer of appropriately-sized housing will be made from one of their nominated waiting lists, taking into account any approved special accommodation requirements, and
- the application would be reassessed prior to an offer housing being made.

Place a copy of the letter on the application file. If applicable, forward the application file to the Housing Office controlling the applicant's first preference.

6.2.7 Unapproved Applications

If the application is not approved, enter the decision details on ISIP and send the applicant an ISIP-generated letter within one working day advising them:

- that their application was not approved,
- the reason it was not approved,
- that they may appeal the decision,
- the waiting lists on which the Wait-turn application has been placed on, and
- details of the Housing Office where the application is held.

Note: If the effective date of the wait-turn application was backdated to the date the applicant terminated their tenancy, and their early housing application was not approved, ensure that the effective date is amended on ISIP to the date the wait-turn application was first received.

6.2.8 Offers of Housing

Repayment Agreement

If the applicant has outstanding charges, check that the applicant has made regular repayments according to the repayment agreement prior to making an offer. If the applicant has made regular payments, proceed with the offer.

Note: There is no minimum payment period for applicants approved under the Temporary Absence category.

Offer the Vacant Property

Ensure that the property to be offered meets any special accommodation requirements approved on the application.

Contact the applicant (or if the form of authority on the application has been signed their advocate, carer or support worker) by telephone and letter to advise them that a property is available. Before advising the applicant of the property address, ask them to complete a 'Property Offer Sheet'. If the contact is made by telephone, ask them to answer the questions listed in the 'Pre-Offer Sheet'. For further information, refer to the 'Offers of Housing' chapter in this manual.



[Offers of Housing
chapter in this manual](#)

[Appendix 16.1.5
Pre-Offer Sheet](#)

Arrange an appointment to inspect the property and to confirm their eligibility.

Advise the applicant and if indicated, their advocate, carer or support worker, that:

- they will only be made one offer of housing and if they refuse the offer, the Temporary Absence status will be removed from their application,
- if they refuse this offer, the application will be returned to the waiting list on a wait-turn basis unless the offer is their final offer,
- their effective date will be returned to the date that they submitted their original wait-turn application,
- the offer will count as one of their two valid offers, and
- if it is their final offer their application will be removed from the waiting list, and they will be required to reapply if they wished to be housed by the OOH.

If the applicant has a representative acting on their behalf, refer to the Represented Tenants & Applicants chapter in the Tenancy Management manual for more information.



[OOH Tenancy Management manual](#)

If the Offer is Refused

Where the offer is refused, prepare a report stating the reasons why the applicant refused the offer and recommend that the Temporary Absence status be removed. Submit the report to the TM for consideration.

If the TM endorses the recommendation, update ISIP to remove the Temporary Absence category status and, if applicable reset the effective date of the application to the date the wait-turn application was approved.

Send a letter to the applicant explaining why the Temporary Absence status was removed and that they cannot reapply for the Temporary Absence category. Advise the applicant to contact the Housing Office to discuss alternative housing options if they are still in need of urgent housing.

If the Applicant is Unable to Accept an Offer

If the applicant is unable to accept an offer due to one of the following circumstances seek approval from the HSM to cancel the offer.

- In hospital



[Offers of Housing chapter in this manual](#)

- Temporarily in a nursing home
- Undergoing drug or alcohol rehabilitation or
- In prison.

Once endorsed, cancel the offer and remove the application from the waiting list.

Advise the applicant to contact the OOH when they are able to accept public housing. Also advise the applicant that if the application is not revived within three months that the Temporary Absence status will only be reinstated following re-application and assessment by the Housing Office.

Note: Applicants in prison who are unable to accept an offer made prior to their release date must make contact with the OOH within three months of the removal of the application.

If They No Longer Meet the Eligibility Criteria

If the applicant is no longer eligible, write a brief note stating the reasons why they no longer meet the eligibility criteria and attach to the application file. Submit the file to the TM or Assessment Panel for further consideration.

If the TM or Assessment Panel agrees that the applicant no longer meets the criteria for Temporary Absence category, remove the early housing status from their application on ISIP. If applicable, update the effective date.

Send the applicant an ISIP-generated letter advising:

- they no longer meet the eligibility criteria for the Temporary Absence category, and
- the reason for the decision, and
- that the application will remain on the waiting lists on a Wait-turn basis only.

Place a copy of this letter in their application file.