

Policy

Stellar Living will allocate accommodation/housing taking into consideration the applicants:

- length of time on the Department of Housing's (DoH) joint waiting list;
- size of household (and size of house when a house is available);
- ability to relocate to the location of the available house;
- current accommodation circumstances.

The key principle underlying Stellar Living's allocation policies is "priority based on need".

Stellar Living ensures that the allocation and provision of a service is made fairly, dependent on need and according to eligibility and the assessment of the applicant.

Stellar Living will not discriminate when allocating the accommodation/housing available, on the basis of race, religion, sexual preference or disability. Stellar Living will ensure it is open and accountable in its decision making processes surrounding allocation of properties including advising all applicants the outcome of decisions where requested.

Housing Allocation Process

Stellar Living will select tenants openly and fairly. Stellar Living's decisions will be transparent basing the selection on an assessment process which considers individual housing needs, and meets Stellar Living's stated aims. All Stellar Living staff will declare any conflicts of interest

Housing Allocation Decision

Once a property is identified as vacant or is to become vacant, the joint waiting list known as CHAMS will be accessed to access eligible applicants.

The Property Officer will select applicants either from the priority or the non-priority waiting list on a ratio of two waitlist applicants to one priority applicant as per DoH policy and/or contractual arrangements with identified support programs.

The Property Officer will draw up a short list of prospective tenants from the waiting list. The short list will take into account the length of time a potential tenant has spent on the waiting list and the following factors:

- Size of family;
- Personal factors (health, disability, etc.);
- Tenant's rental history (including current arrears, etc.);
- Financial/employment status;
- Tenant liability;
- Rental arrears;
- Location of the property.
- Area characteristics
- The number of bedrooms available is suitable for the applicants;
- Current debt to Stellar Living or other agencies
- Cultural considerations
- Suitability based on medical/paramedical advice supplied by applicant

Allocation Policy

Housing Allocation Report

The Property Officer will prepare a brief report on the allocation of each property. The report will include:

- Names of potential applicants considered
- Any declaration of conflict of interest and the action taken
- The successful applicant
- Any conditions attached to the offer of housing
- An alternate applicant, should the first applicant selected not take up the offer of housing.

All allocations are to be endorsed by Management.

Conflict of Interest

All Stellar Living staff will declare on 'Conflict of Interest' when making decisions regarding housing allocations. It should be ensured that decisions are not made by people who have a conflict of interest. This does not mean that the relatives of the Stellar Living's staff must be automatically denied housing. It does mean that these staff should not participate in that decision. The application should be determined on its merit.

Stellar Living has strict policies to prevent conflict of interest from affecting the operations of the company and the third parties the company deals with. Paramount in this policy is the determination by Stellar Living to ensure:

- The organisation's dealings with all its customers are undertaken without favour or prejudice.
- No Director or officer of the company or relative, friend, associate or family member of any Director or officer of the company may financially or otherwise advantage themselves to the disadvantage of Stellar Living;
- It is the responsibility of the individual members/staff of the company to judge whether any conflict of interest exists, and to inform Management. If in doubt, the matter must be referred to management for consideration.
- Management's decision on the matter will be final; and
- If a related party or staff member is an applicant for housing, an independent member must join the selection panel and the officer related to the applicant will have no say in selecting the successful applicant.

Offer of Housing Notification

Applicants will be notified in writing of an offer and given the opportunity to make an informed choice of whether to accept it or not. If there is no response from the applicant within a reasonable time, efforts will be made to contact the applicant in writing again.

In all situations where telephone contact details have been provided the applicant should be also contacted by phone.

Applicants have 24 hours to respond to an offer of accommodation. Consideration for additional time will be given for remote locations. If applicants decline the offer or if no response is received within the above period, the offer will lapse and the property will be offered to the next eligible applicant.

Grounds for Declining an Offer of Housing

An applicant may decline an offer of housing if there is a valid reason that justifies the decline. Stellar Living is responsible for determining whether the reason for decline of an offer is valid.

The following provide valid grounds for declining an offer, which may include but is not limited to:

- Housing that falls outside the applicant's basic housing needs; or housing that does not meet the applicant's location requirements; or the applicant is committed by private leasing arrangements; or
- Other grounds as determined by Stellar Living.

Where a reason for decline is determined as invalid, Stellar Living will advise the applicant that this may impact on their application listing on the Department of Housing's Joint Waiting List which could result in them being removed from this list and possibly not reinstated for a period of six (6) months.

Acceptance / Refusal of Offer

To make an informed decision, the applicant will be given the opportunity to:

- Meet with Stellar Living;
- Ask any questions;
- Visit the residence;
- Refuse the offer

Applicants **MUST** take up tenancy within three working days of the date of the original Housing Offer.

Upon accepting the offer of a property, the applicant is required to sign the following:

- Residential Tenancy Agreement Appendix);
- Lodgement of Security Bond Money Form (where applicable);
- Direct Deduction Authority or Centrepay documents authorising routine payments of the rent to the Stellar Living's bank account when it is due;
- Property Condition Report (Appendix);

All of the above documents will placed on the tenants file.

Documents and Information Stellar Living Must Give to the Tenant

In addition to a copy of the *Residential Tenancy Agreement*, signed by Stellar Living and the tenant, Stellar Living will give the tenant the form titled *Information for Tenants (A Statement of your Rights and Responsibilities) Schedule 2*. This form is also available from the Department of Commerce website or ring the Advice Line on 1300 304054 to arrange a copy to be posted.

Before handover of the keys to the property, Stellar Living must receive from the applicant:

- two weeks rent in advance; and
- Bond payment amounting to a maximum of four weeks rent (where applicable).

Allocation Policy

No applicant shall be given keys or allowed to move into a property until the *Residential Tenancy Agreement* form is signed by all parties, a receipt is provided to show ingoing fees are deposited unless the new tenant is applying for DoH Bond Assistance.

If the above payments are not provided at signed up of the tenancy agreement, or an arrangement is not made with Stellar Living to do so within a reasonable period of time, then the offer will be withdrawn and the alternative applicant is offered the residence.

When all the appropriate documents have been signed and received, the tenant will be given the keys for the property. A 'hand-over keys receipt' (Appendix) will be processed and held on the tenants file.

Monitoring Allocations

Stellar Living will regularly monitor allocations to ensure that they are made as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise the length of time the properties are vacant and that the documented procedures have been followed.

All effort will be made to ensure that no property remains un-tenanted for longer than 21 days and all steps will be taken to ensure efficient allocation processes, and that turnaround times are a minimum.

Where there are any problems in meeting the above re-let times the matter should be brought to the attention of Management and recorded appropriately including in the property file (e.g. major repairs are required).

Reports on Allocation to Management

Regular reports on allocations will include:

- frequency and length of vacancy periods;
- numbers of allocations by household type;

Monitoring

Monitoring of allocations is to be done on a regular basis by senior Stellar Living's management.