



Aboriginal Housing Office Finding Your Way Transitional Housing Guidelines



Document Approval

The AHO Finding Your Way Transitional Housing Guidelines have been endorsed and approved by the;

Chief Executive: Famey Williams

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Finding Your Way Transitional Housing Guidelines

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Terms and Definitions

The table below lists key terms and/or abbreviations used throughout this document.

Term	Abbreviation	Definition
Aboriginal person		A person who: • Is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia, and • Identifies as an Aboriginal person, and • Is accepted by the Aboriginal community as an Aboriginal person.
Aboriginal Housing Office	AHO	NSW Aboriginal Housing Office is a statutory authority of the NSW Government that is responsible for the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of programs and services to support Aboriginal people in meeting their housing needs in the state of New South Wales
Aboriginal Community Housing Provider	ACHP	Aboriginal community housing providers are registered organisations that provide housing wholly or predominantly to Aboriginal people under Aboriginal community control. ACHPs may own their own properties and may also manage properties on behalf of the AHO or other organisations.
Community Housing Provider	CHP	Community housing providers offer secure, affordable rental housing for people on very low to moderate incomes who have a housing need. CHPs manage properties they own and/or that are owned by the government and may also manage properties on behalf of various entities.
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	CRA	CRA is a non-taxable income supplement payable to eligible people who have a tenancy agreement with a community housing provider.
Residential Tenancy Agreement	RTA	<i>The Residential Tenancies Act 2010</i> (the Act) and the regulations set out a standard residential tenancy agreement that gives rights and obligations to landlords and tenants. The Act gives the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) power to hear and settle disputes about residential tenancies, including bond disputes.

Finding Your Way Transitional Housing Program	FYW THP	The Finding Your Way Transitional Housing Program seeks to better utilise AHO assets by establishing transitional housing solutions that are flexible, sustainable, and tailored to meet the needs of local Aboriginal communities. The transitional house and support program is designed, driven, and led by local Aboriginal people.
Torres Strait Islander person		A person who: • Is a descendant of an Indigenous inhabitant of the Torres Strait area within the meaning of the Commonwealth Act and • Identifies as a Torres Strait Islander person, and • Is accepted by the Torres Strait Islander community as a Torres Strait Islander person.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the guidelines

The AHO Finding Your Way Guidelines outlines the standards and requirements in which the Finding Your Program is to be delivered to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

1.2 How to use the guidelines.

These guidelines are to be used by Aboriginal Community Housing Providers (ACHPs) and Service Providers to ensure the delivery of and the services provided under the Finding Your Way Program is in line and in accordance with the intended purposes of the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO).

1.3 Scope and application

These guidelines apply to all AHO owned properties that are governed by a Finding Your Way contractual arrangement between the AHO and an approved managing ACHP.

1.4 Program Purpose

The AHO Finding Your Way program provides short-term housing accommodation and services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people that is culturally appropriate and that meets the needs of the community.

The program aims to:

- reduce the number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness and/or who are at risk of homelessness.
- support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people escaping domestic and family violence and/or exiting custody or leaving Out-of-Home care.
- provide individualised solutions that identifies, and addresses the applicants needs through a dedicated support plan.
- support tenants to transition into longer-term stable housing through an agreed and personalised support plan, including building a rental history and independent living skills that would be necessary to sustain a longer-term tenancy.

1.5 Policy Links and Legislation

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with any relevant AHO and ACHP policies, including but not limited to:

- AHO Eligibility for Services Policy
- AHO Asset Management Framework
- Water Usage Charging: Ministerial Guidelines for Aboriginal Community Housing Providers.

The legislation that informs these guidelines include:

- *Aboriginal Housing Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 (NSW)*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW)*

2. Tenancy Management

2.1 Eligibility

To be eligible to access the Finding Your Way Transitional Housing applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Meet the eligibility criteria under the AHO Eligibility for Services Policy
- Be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.
- Meet the specific target program cohort e.g. be at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness, escaping domestic or family violence, exiting custody or leaving Out-Of-Home care.
- Be a resident of NSW.
- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Be able to provide proof of identity documentation.
- Meet the income eligibility requirements for Social Housing
- Be willing and able to reside in shared accommodation if applicable.
- Engage and actively participate in individual support plans.

2.2 Allocation

ACHPs are required to allocate Finding Your Way accommodation to eligible applicants from their own waitlist. ACHPs must maintain a fair and transparent waitlist.

Properties are to be allocated to applicants based on wait time, priority needs and any applicable Memorandum of Understanding or Operating Agreement.

ACHPs are required to clearly document the rational of allocations.

It is the responsibility of the ACHP and the allocated Service Provider (if applicable) to develop a standardised application form and process.

2.3 Tenure

AHO Finding Your Way properties provide short term housing accommodation subject to tenants complying with the Residential Tenancy Act and program guidelines.

Tenures are for an initial period of 3 months with a maximum period of 12 months.

In extenuating circumstance ACHPs can extend a lease agreement up to a maximum period of 18 months.

2.4 Rent

Tenants residing in Finding Your Way accommodation are required to pay rent in accordance with the Residential Tenancy Act 2010. Tenants who fail to pay rent may be subject to tribunal action.

Shared Accommodation

Tenants residing in share accommodation are charged rent based on 25% of their gross income plus 100% Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). CRA can only be given to tenants who are eligible to receive CRA.

Non-Share Accommodation (single occupancy)

Tenants residing in non-share accommodation are to be charged rent in accordance with the AHO Aboriginal Community Housing Rent Policy.

2.5 Water

ACHPs are required to charge water usage in accordance with the Water Usage Charging Ministerial Guidelines for Aboriginal Community Housing Providers.

In situation where a tenant is required to pay water usage the ACHP must provide the tenant with a copy of the invoice issued from the relevant water authority.

Shared Accommodation

Tenants residing in shared accommodation are not required to pay water usage. It is the responsibility of the ACHP cover all water charges associated with the property.

2.6 Bond

ACHPs are required to charge tenants residing in Finding Your Way Transitional Housing a bond in accordance with the Residential Tenancy Act 2010.

The bond is to be charge at no more than 4 weeks of the rental amount charged for the property.

ACHPs must have in place arrangements that allow tenants to pay their bond in full within 3 months of their tenancy commencing.

Bond monies are to be lodged with the NSW Rental Bonds Board for the term of the tenancy and returned to the tenant at the conclusion, provided no damage has been caused to the property and the tenant is not in arrears.

2.7 Utilities

ACHPs are responsible to cover the cost of utility charges and connection fees for share accommodation. ACHPs can recoup the cost of utility charges from each tenant residing in the share accommodation at a rate of no more than \$10.00 per week per utility. The cost is to be added to the tenants weekly rent charge.

Tenants residing in non-shared accommodation are required to pay utility charges and connection fees.

3 Service Delivery

It is essential that ACHPs have in place effective referral pathways and partnership with local service providers to ensure applicants/tenants have appropriate support in place to successfully sustain a tenancy.

3.1 Assessment

Applications are to be assessed in collaboration with the ACHP and the allocated Service Provider. A thorough assessment must be undertaken that considers the following.

- applicant's current situation

- service needs e.g., mental health, drug, and alcohol support or disability.
- potential barriers that may impact the applicant's ability to meet their goals and/or commitments.

Information gathered throughout the application process is to be used to develop a tailored support plan that identifies the applicant's needs, goals, support services, and exit plan into long-term stable housing. It is important when developing a support plan that the ACHP and Service Provider considers a holistic approach that will support the applicant to sustain a tenancy.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The AHO is responsible for the following.

- Monitoring and ensuring the appropriate use of Finding Your Way properties.
- Ensure properties allocated to ACHPs are fit for program purpose.

ACHPs are responsible for the following.

- Working in partnership with key stakeholders.
- Manage tenancies in accordance the Residential Tenancy Act and comply with any relevant legislation.
- Adhering to AHO policies, guidelines and frameworks.
- Adhering to the AHO contractual agreement.
- Adhering to any applicable Memorandum of Understanding and/or Operating Agreements.

Service Provider (if applicable) are responsible for the following.

- Working in partnership with key stakeholders.
- Provide support and case management to applicant and tenants.
- Adhering to any applicable Memorandum of Understanding and/or Operating Agreements.

5. Monitoring, evaluation and review

These guidelines will be reviewed and updated to reflect any significant:

- changes in legislative and/or
- organisational change.

6. Appeals

ACHPs must have in place an appropriate appeals and complaints policy and process that is accessible to all applicants and tenants.

7. Reporting

ACHPs and Service Providers (if applicable) must comply with their reporting requirements to the AHO as stipulated in their contractual agreements, Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Agreement.

8. Support and Advice

If you would like further information or to discuss this policy, please contact:

- AHO – Client Outcomes
 - Email: ClientOutcomes@aho.nsw.gov.au
- AHO Regional Offices and Regional Relationship Managers
 - Sydney South East:
 - Email: SSE@aho.nsw.gov.au
 - Northern:
 - Email: Northern@aho.nsw.gov.au
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