

Policy on Housing for Older Adults 2017

ORGANISATIONAL POLICY

POLICY REFERENCES

• Sponsor:	Community Development Manager
• Effective date:	1 October 2017
• Internal review due:	This policy will be reviewed every five years, with the next review being in 2022.
• Legal compliance:	Residential Tenancies Act 1986 and amendments.
• Associated Documents/References	Council Cottage Application Form.
• Policy Number	CD01
• Approved by Community Development Committee	21 September 2017, Resolution CD17-09-02

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide:

- Clear guidelines on tenant eligibility for older adults wanting to live in Council-owned cottages.
- Clear guidelines of the level of rental, funding of the facilities and treatment of surpluses.
- Opportunities for the Council to investigate alternative options for the management, divestment or development of Council cottages in the District.

Definitions

“Current Market Rental” is the level of rental the cottages would attract if exposed to the open market, as determined by a registered valuer. A valuation is carried out every three years.

“Older adults” are those people aged 65 or over and are receiving New Zealand Superannuation payments, but may include younger persons 55 years and older if they have some medical condition, and are in receipt of an ongoing Supported Living Payment from the Ministry of Social Development

Application

This policy generally applies to:

- People applying to occupy Council's cottages;
- Current tenants of Council's cottages; and
- Council and Council staff as governors, managers and administrators of the Council cottages.

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Policy

Background/Introduction

There is a genuine need for long-term affordable accommodation for older adults in the Tasman District, and Council is committed to having a role in meeting this need. Council's cottages are intended for those who cannot afford a home in the private housing market.

The number of Tasman residents aged 65 and over is projected to increase over time, and it is reasonable to expect the need for this type of accommodation to increase.

Council owns a total of 101 cottages, of which 34 are located in Richmond, 45 in Motueka, four in Takaka, four in Murchison, seven in Wakefield and seven in Brightwater. All cottages, with the exception of four bedsits in Motueka, are one-bedroom units with a lounge/kitchen area, a storage space and a shower/toilet/utility room.

The cottages were mainly constructed when the government provided loans at low concessionary interest rates to encourage council involvement in providing housing for older adults.

In the cottages Council provides vinyl floor coverings in the bathroom and kitchen areas, carpet in the bedroom and lounge areas, an oven, an outdoor storage shed, working smoke detectors and clothes-lines. All other fittings, furnishings and chattels are the responsibility of the tenant. Outdoor lawn and grounds maintenance is provided by Council, although tenants may choose to be responsible for the small garden adjacent to their cottage.

All tenants are responsible for their own electricity supply and telephone charges.

1. Eligibility

Applicants meet eligibility criteria for a Council cottage if:

- They are New Zealand residents; and
- They are 65 years of age or over and are receiving National Superannuation, or they are over 55 years of age and are in receipt of a Supported Living Payment from the Ministry of Social Development; and
- Their total assets, including cash, investments, house and other property (but not including car and furniture) do not exceed \$50,000; and
- They are able to live independently; and
- They get on well with other people and will live compatibly with neighbours.

2. Priority

Demand for Council cottages is often in excess of the number of cottages available, therefore priority will be given to applicants:

- Who live in the district; and
- Whose present housing conditions are unsatisfactory; and
- Who have close relatives in the area; and
- Who have been referred by a Doctor.

Please note, cottages are allocated on a needs basis, and not in order of application date.

3. Application

Application forms are available from any Tasman District Council office, or on Council's website via the following link:

<http://www.tasman.govt.nz/services/forms/tasman-forms/?path=/EDMS/Public/Forms/TasmanForms/OlderPersons>

4. Tenancy Agreement

- (a) A tenancy agreement will be entered into. Couples will jointly sign the tenancy agreement.
- (b) At tenancy commencement the Council will require two weeks rental in advance.
- (c) No bond is required.

5. Cessation of Tenancy

When tenancy ceases, where possible, Council requires written notification, and the last day of tenancy is taken as being the day the keys are handed back to Council. At this time the unit shall be inspected to ensure compliance with tenancy conditions.

6. Dispute Resolutions

In the event that a breach of tenancy occurs, matters will be addressed in accordance with the Residential Tenancy Act (1986). In the first instance, a 14 day notice will be issued to the tenant requesting that the breach of tenancy be resolved. If the breach of tenancy is not rectified within the 14 day period, an application will be lodged with the Tenancy Tribunal to resolve the issue through mediation. Failing a successful outcome through mediation, the matter will be referred to a Tenancy Services adjudicator for resolution.

If the breach is not resolved, the tenant may be evicted from the cottage or issued with a 90-day notice to vacate the property in accordance with the Residential Tenancy Act (1986).

7. Location Options

An applicant's preference for any particular location will be considered and accommodated where possible. Tenants can transfer to another Council cottage only in extenuating or special circumstances.

8. Changes in Circumstances

A tenant's eligibility to occupy a Council cottage may be reassessed if there exists reasonable grounds to indicate a change in eligibility status.

When tenants' circumstances change and their income or assets go above the Council's eligibility criteria, they will no longer be eligible for Council housing. It is the tenants' obligation to advise the Council if their circumstances change.

Where it is suspected that there are existing or impending ineligibility issues for medical reasons, Council will in the first instance seek to facilitate the provision of appropriate social service support. Subsequently, if the tenant is clearly unable to meet the eligibility on an ongoing basis, Council will give the tenant notice to vacate. This is based on the need to protect the interest and wellbeing of the tenant and the interests and wellbeing of other tenants.

9. Smoke-free

Smoking is not permitted within the cottages.

10. Animals

Pets such as a bird or cat are permitted (with Council's consent) provided that any such animal must be well behaved, and properly cared for so they do not pose a nuisance to other tenants.

11. Rental

Rentals are to be set at 80% of market rentals. These are reviewed every three years.

12. Levels of Service

In the Long Term Plan 2015-2025, Council's level of service for Council cottages is:

"Accessible and affordable housing to eligible people within the community".

This level of service is measured through a biennial survey of tenants with their overall satisfaction with community housing. Council's benchmark is 80% of tenants are satisfied with Council housing.

13. Marketing and Usage

Council will maintain a waiting list of prospective tenants which will be regularly reviewed and updated. If a waiting list does not exist, the Council will market and promote its cottages to the general public to ensure maximum usage.

14. Welfare

Council acknowledges its role as landlord, and as such, will be accessible and diligent towards the general welfare of its tenants. This will not extend to the provision of social

services to tenants, as these services are better provided by other professional service providers.

Council will endeavour to provide its tenants with the contact information for professional services and service providers. Council staff will consult with health, social welfare and other professional service providers where tenant concerns or difficulties arise outside of the Council's expertise.

15. Disposal/Divestment

Where any complex has a less than 50% occupancy rate for a continuous 12 month period and there is no known interest in tenancing the vacant cottages by suitable tenants, the complex may be considered for upgrade or disposal. Council may consider disposal of the complex after consultation with the community and other social/community housing providers in the District.

16. New Housing for Older Adults

Council will from time to time consider building new cottages in areas where the waiting lists are consistently high and statistical information shows no projected decline in numbers of persons over 65 years of age.

17. Management

Council currently governs, administers and manages the cottages in-house and is committed to maintaining this level of service.

Council may consider alternative arrangements or partnerships for the future administration and management of its cottages.

Authorised by:

Date of approval: