

DATE OF REVIEW	AUTHORISED SIGNATURE
See Version Tracking Table	

TITLE: **04.07 Housing Services Rent Setting and Rent Review Policy**

SCOPE: RQ Housing Portfolio, RQ Housing Staff

POLICY: RQ implements the RQ Rent Policy in line with the requirements of relevant legislation and regulations, and the Community Housing Rent Policy. Rent charged to RQ tenants is affordable and able to be paid, and is applied fairly and consistently across all program areas.

PURPOSE: To provide guidelines on how to calculate rent and providing choice of rent payment methods to all RQ tenants.

DEFINITION/S: RQ - Roseberry Qld
 General Manager also refers to Acting General Manager
 Staff refers to all paid and unpaid workers
 DHPW - Department of Housing and Public Works
 LTCH – Long Term Community Housing
 CMSU – Community Managed Studio Units
 CAP – Crisis Accommodation Program
 EEH – Employment and Education Housing
 RTA – Residential Tenancies Authority
 RTRAA – Residential Tenancy and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008
 RPM – Rental Property Management software

PROCEDURES: **04.07.01 Rent and Contribution Calculations (LTCH, CMSU, CAP, EEH)**

1. The relevant State or Federal Government agency/ies Community Housing Rent Policy sets out the information needed to calculate the amount of rent based on the tenant's assessable income.
2. Rent is calculated at 25 % of the tenant's assessable income plus rent assistance for all community housing properties in the organisations property portfolio with exception of the CMSU and EEH properties.
3. CAP contribution is accepted where possible. CAP contribution is calculated on accessible income.
4. CMSU is calculated at 28% of the tenant's assessable income. The 28 % includes a 3% furniture levy to cover the costs of replacement furniture and items in the

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units. EEH rent is calculated based on the household income and current median rents.

5. RQ will maintain records of the rent calculations it uses for tenants while the Tenancy Agreement is in force and will maintain the records for at least 6 months after the tenancy ends.
6. When a tenancy commences, RQ Housing Officers ensure that a verbal explanation of how the rent is calculated is provided to the tenant and a copy of the Rent Report is provided to the tenant once it has been generated from the Electronic Rent Calculator.
7. RQ Tenants are encouraged to ask questions and seek clarification wherever needed, particularly regarding rent calculations.

04.07.02 Proof of Income

1. Proof of income is required to ensure that accurate rent calculations are made. Proof of income may be in the form of:
 - a) Income Statement from Services Australia or Department of Veteran Affairs,
 - b) A tax assessment notice or audited statement or other suitable proof of income if self employed,
 - c) Most recent payslip or written declaration from the employer,
 - d) Where a tenant has an irregular income the last 6 payslips are required to determine affordable rent for that household,
 - e) If proof of income is not provided for all eligible household members, RQ will charge the household market rent, until such time as the income information is supplied. The tenant's responsibilities regarding rent are set out in this policy, the RQ 04.08 Housing Rent Management Policy, the Tenant Information Kit and the Tenancy Agreement.

04.07.03 Income Assessment

For the purposes of income assessment for calculating rent, household members includes all persons living in the accommodation, regardless of their age. The income for all household members is considered for rent assessment. Permanent part time household members may reside in the dwelling for up to 3 days in any one week before their income is included for rent assessment purposes.

04.07.04 Electronic Rent Calculator

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1. RQ Housing Officers use the Electronic Rent Calculator provided by the relevant State and/or Federal Government agency/ies to calculate the rent amounts.
2. Tenants are to provide RQ Housing Officers with relevant and up to date income information to be used to calculate rent at the commencement of the tenancy and when rent reviews are due.
3. Once the data has been entered into the Electronic Rent Calculator, RQ Housing Officers will print the Rent Report that advises on how much rent the tenant is expected to pay, including the expected amount of Rent Assistance. A copy of this report is provided to the tenant and a copy is maintained on the Tenant's file.

04.07.05 Determining Market Rent

RQ utilises the RTA website to obtain median rent prices to ascertain what the current market rent is. This information is required by the Electronic Rent Calculator when in the process of calculating rent for RQ tenants.

04.07.06 Rent Payment Options

1. RQ provides tenants a number of options to pay rent as follows:
 - a) **Cash payments:** Rent can be paid in cash each week/fortnight at 21 Dawson Road, Gladstone. This method is not a preferred method of payment; however RQ recognises that at times it is the most suitable for the tenants. If cash rent is received, RQ ensures that the cash is banked as soon as possible but definitely within 3 working days. Rent receipts are provided to the tenant immediately the cash payment is made.
 - b) **Direct Deposit:** Tenants can choose to pay their rent by direct deposit into the nominated RQ bank account. Each tenant is allocated a reference code to be used to identify rent when checking bank accounts on a regular basis and for when bank accounts are reconciled. RQ covers the cost of any direct deposits and this charge (if applicable) is not passed on to the tenant. The reference code is developed using:
 - 1st three letters of tenant surname
 - 1st letter of tenant first name
 - Unit/House number
 - 1st letter of street name (e.g. BATK5P)

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- c) **Centrepay:** Tenants can nominate to pay their rent using the Centrepay through Services Australia. RQ Housing Officers provide tenants the required Centrepay documentation with completed section including information regarding the organisation. The tenant can take the information direct to Services Australia to have it processed or RQ Housing Staff will fax through to the required officer in Services Australia. This is the preferred option to ensure that the paperwork is lodged on time ensuring that rent payments are made in line with the tenancy agreement.

04.07.07 Guaranteed Rent Periods

1. RQ encourages tenants receiving a Services Australia or DVA income support payments to enter the workforce by providing a guaranteed rent period of six months following the commencement of employment. This means that for a period of six months the tenant's rent remains at the same level it was on the day before the tenant entered the workforce for a guaranteed minimum of six months.
2. The rent guaranteed period will apply to all tenants who advise RQ that a household member is entering the workforce.

04.07.08 Rent Reviews

1. RQ Housing Officers conduct annual rent reviews of all tenants in the community housing portfolio. The rent review is scheduled for the 12 month anniversary of their tenancy commencing with RQ
2. When a tenant advises of a change in income or household composition, this may trigger a rent review process and result in a change in rent.
3. A Notice of Rent Review and Request for Documentation will be sent to tenants at the time of rent review. This notice will contain:
 - The date the information is required by (usually a 4 week period is provided),
 - What documentation and information is required to be provided,
 - The process for rent review and dealing with the outcomes of the rent review.
4. Tenants are provided the opportunity to make an appointment with RQ Housing Officers to complete the rent review in the Housing Services Office. If tenants chose this method, they are advised to bring income information and any other relevant documentation with

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them to the schedule meeting. The results of the rent review are provided to the tenant immediately and a formal letter of renewed rent assessment and outcomes is also sent to the tenant and a copy maintained on the tenant's file.

5. RQ Housing Officers will complete the rent review process upon receipt of the income information. Income will be assessed and rent re-calculated based on the new income information and current circumstances of the tenant. The tenants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the rent review including what the new amount of rent will be expected and what date the new rent amount should be paid from.

04.07.09 Rent Increases

Where the rent review process indicates that there will be an increase in the tenant's rent, the increased rent amount shall not be charged for two months after the tenant has been advised in writing, as per. relevant State and/or Federal Government agency/ies

04.07.10 Rent Decreases

Where the rent is decreased, RQ Housing Services will immediately decrease the amount of rent charged and notify the tenant in writing of such a decrease and the date the change is made.

04.07.11 Services Australia/Centrelink Forms

1. Once the rent review process has been completed, RQ tenants will receive a copy of the updated Rent Certificate produced by the Department's Electronic Rent Calculator and updated Centrelink Forms which are to be completed, signed and dated. The tenants are able to take this information directly to Services Australia or RQ Housing Officer's will fax documentation to the local Services Australia office.
2. If tenant's request RQ Housing Officer's to fax documentation to Services Australia on their behalf, the officers will check documentation for the tenant to ensure that it has been completed accurately and completely.

04.07.12 Notification of Changes in Income

1. Outside of the annual rent review process, it is the tenant's responsibility to advise RQ Housing Services of any changes to their assessable income.

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2. As per the requirements of the Department's Community Housing Rent Policy, tenants should have their rents recalculated and decreased accordingly, immediately upon reporting a decrease in income to RQ Housing Services.
3. Increases in household income will be captured in the next annual rent review process.

04.07.13 Appealing and Reviewing Decisions

RQ tenants may appeal a rent increase or any other decision made in line with this policy at any time. Tenants are able to request that the RQ Housing Officer reconsider the decision and where necessary to redo the rent calculation. If the tenant remains unhappy with the decision, the RQ 02.17 Complaints, Disputes and Appeals Policy and the RQ Housing Services Information Sheet on How to Make a Complaint or Appeal a Decision is provided to the tenant.

ACCOUNTABILITY: RQ Housing Officers
RQ Housing Manager

EVALUATION METHOD: Annual Tenant Survey
Annual External Stakeholder Survey

OTHER RELATED POLICIES / DOCUMENTS: Community Housing Rent Policy
Housing Act 2003
Housing Regulation 2017
02.17 Complaints, Appeals and Disputes Policy
Housing Services Information Sheet – How to Make a Complaint or Appeal a Decision.

Policy Review and Version Tracking				
Review	Reviewed Date	Policy Amended: Yes/No	Approved By	Date Approved
1	-	-	Management Committee	July 2012
2	March 2014	Yes	RQ Board	16/04/2014
3	April 2015	No	N/A	N/A
4	May 2018	Yes	RQ Board	05/06/2018
5	16/03/2020	Yes	RQ Board	27/06/2020
6	December 2020	No	N/A	N/A

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