

## POLICY

### COMMUNITY SERVICES – Service Provision – Housing - Low Income Units, Merriwa and Emergency House, Scone.

Date adopted by Council	29 April 2024
Minute number	24/076
Endorsed by	Senior Management Group - 22 April 2024
CM Ref	CD-62/23
Due for review	29 April 2028
Related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOU with UHHS (CM Ref - INT-40536/21)</li> <li>• Original MOU with UHHS (CM Ref - INT-23849/16)</li> <li>• Acknowledgment of MOU with Department Family and Community Services (CM Ref - IN-11906/15)</li> <li>• Original Housing Deed with Department of Housing (CM Ref - INT-5934/15 &amp; INT-22198/17)</li> </ul>
Responsible officer	Manager Community Services
Department/Section	Environmental & Community Services
Category	Community
Community Strategic Plan goal	<p><b>Goal 1 A</b> supported Community</p> <p><b>CS2</b> Form partnerships and participate in networks which address the needs and interests of disadvantaged and disability group sin the Community.</p> <p><b>CS4</b> Facilitate partnerships which create and support a safe, inclusive and caring Community.</p>



## Policy Statement

Council is committed to ensuring that housing provisions are available to vulnerable people and those in need by:

- a. Forming partnerships and participating in networks which address the needs and interests of disadvantaged and disability groups in the community (G1 CS2)
- b. Facilitating partnerships which create and support a safe, inclusive and caring community (G1 CS4)

This Policy relates to the provision of two low cost accommodation units administered by Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) at Merriwa and the emergency house property at Scone, which deliver safe and comfortable accommodation for people of low income and those in need of emergency accommodation.

## Objective

The purpose of this policy is to provide suitable temporary accommodation, which supports vulnerable and disadvantaged people from the Upper Hunter Shire, including those at risk of or experiencing homelessness, whilst they transition to permanent accommodation.

## Scope

This policy applies to Council staff, contractors, partner agencies, tenants and all other service providers involved with the provision of support.

## Definitions

<b>Networks</b>	Refers to existing interagency meetings and connections between local services.
<b>Low cost</b>	Affordable rent as per the NSW Community Housing Rent Policy.
<b>Client</b>	The tenant and their family members nominated on the tenancy lease.

## Policy Details

Upper Hunter Shire Council will engage with relevant partner agencies to provide low cost housing as per the NSW Residential Tenancies Act, to support the needs of vulnerable people.

## Background

In 1988, the then Merriwa Shire and NSW Department of Housing, entered into an agreement where two units would be provided in Merriwa as low cost accommodation. A grant was provided by the Department for construction of one two bedroom unit and one three bedroom unit. The units are managed by UHSC under a contract (lease) with NSW Land and Housing Corporation under the Local Government Community Housing Program (LGCHP) to



provide general housing for clients eligible for social housing. These houses have been managed by Council's community services section in regard to both tenancy and also support.

In 2020 Council undertook refurbishment of a three bedroom house in Scone, for the provision of safe and affordable emergency housing for vulnerable families in Upper Hunter Shire.

In 2021 Council entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Upper Hunter Homeless Support (UHHS) to improve the support offered to tenants in the units and emergency house, and to provide tenancy on a transitional basis of 3 to 12 months.

### **Procedures/Practice**

1. Upper Hunter Shire Council currently has a Memorandum of Understanding with Upper Hunter Homeless Support (UHHS) in regard to the management of the two low income units located in Merriwa and the emergency house property at Scone. UHHS provides an approved social housing support service with funding through the Department of Communities and Justice.
2. Upper Hunter Homeless Support (UHHS) is responsible for the following
  - a. Tenant case management
  - b. Calculating rent according to the NSW Community Housing Rent Policy
  - c. Provision of white goods and other basic provisions for the property
  - d. Preparing and signing the lease in consultation with UHSC
  - e. Preparing Rent Start Bond Loan applications
  - f. All correspondence to the tenants in regard to the tenancy including requests from tenants for repairs and maintenance
  - g. Initiating and following through with NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) if required.
3. Upper Hunter Shire Council is responsible for the following
  - a. UHSC will be on the lease with the client, prepared under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010
  - b. Insurance for building and public liability on the property
  - c. Building repairs and maintenance
  - d. Payment of a service fee to UHHS as nominated in the MOU.
4. Selection of tenants
  - a. Priority will be given to suitable UHHS clients from Upper Hunter LGA.
  - b. Clients must be eligible for tenancy and casework under the UHHS Constitution and Policy.
  - c. Tenants must agree to supported case management and weekly visits from UHHS staff.
  - d. UHSC will refer potential clients seeking accommodation to the UHHS for suitability assessment and placement on any waiting list.
  - e. Tenants will be offered short term tenancy only as a transitional opportunity to more permanent accommodation.



5. Review of Memorandum of Understanding
  - a. The MOU will be reviewed annually with representatives of UHHS and UHSC and extended for a further 12 months where satisfactory to both parties.
  - b. UHSC and UHHS will act in the best interest of the community and will work together on this project to uphold the sound reputations of both organisations, at all times.
6. Dissolution of the MOU
  - a. The MOU between UHSC and UHHS may be dissolved following an annual review.
  - b. Notification of the dissolution of the MOU will be made to Department of Communities and Justice.
  - c. UHSC may choose to enter into a new MOU with a suitable organization, manage and maintain the low income housing and emergency house (meeting the requirements of social housing provision and tenancy laws), or discuss other actions in conjunction with the Department of Communities and Justice.

## Responsibilities

### Manager Community Services

The Manager Community Services will be responsible for the implementation and review of the MOU with UHHS.

### All Staff

All staff will have responsibility for understanding this policy, in particular frontline staff that are responsible for engaging with vulnerable people in the community.

## References and Related Legislation

- MOU with UHHS (CM Ref - INT-23849/16)
- Acknowledgment of MOU with Department Family and Community Services (CM Ref - IN-11906/15)
- Original Housing Deed with Department of Housing (CM Ref - INT-5934/15)

## Version History

Version No..	Date	CM Ref	Reason for Review
1	23/06/2008	INT-20595/08	
2	28/05/2013	INT-4330/13	
3	30/01/2018	INT-2448/18	Timed Review
4	14/12/2020	CD-196/20	Timed Review
5	29/04/2024	CD-62/23	Timed Review