



Government of Western Australia  
Housing Authority

OPENING DOORS  
To Affordable Housing



# GROH Allocations and Returns: Policy and Practice

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## Contents

<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Delegation</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Definitions</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Policy Statements</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1. Allocations .....	5
2. Planned requests, offers and acceptances.....	6
3. Unplanned housing requests.....	7
4. Allocated dwellings that are vacant .....	8
5. Temporary return of allocated dwellings.....	8
6. Temporary allocation of dwellings .....	9
7. Permanent return of allocated dwellings.....	10
<b>Document History</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## Purpose

This Policy prescribes the requirements for requesting, allocating and returning Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH) dwellings.

## Delegation

This Policy is for use by Housing employees and GROH clients and applies to all GROH dwellings.

Housing's Director Housing Programs has the discretion to vary or waive any provision of this Policy.

## Definitions

**Agency** means either:

- an Employing Agency, which is a Department under the administration of a Minister of the Crown in the Government of the State, or any Crown instrumentality, hospital, board, body corporate or other body of whatever description, proclaimed as a Department under s.7 of the *Government Employees' Housing Act 1964*; or
- a Responsible Agency, which is the agency responsible for arranging the salary and other entitlements (including accommodation) of the tenant when this tenant is not an employee of an Agency.

**Allocation** means the provision of a GROH dwelling that satisfies a GROH client's requirements.

**Commitment** means an Agency has accepted that Housing will allocate to it a particular GROH dwelling that has been leased, spot purchased, refurbished or will be constructed by Housing. In addition, 'Commitment' may also refer to an Agency accepting an existing GROH dwelling which has been refurbished.

**Commitment Form** means the form an Agency signs indicating acceptance of the terms and conditions associated with renting an allocated GROH dwelling.

**Dependent** means a person who is in a significant relationship with the tenant or in the tenant's custody, care and control; ordinarily resident with this tenant in their GROH dwelling; and either wholly or mainly dependent on the tenant for economic support. This includes:

- a spouse (married or de-facto);
- a partner;
- a student under 25 who is a full-time student at school, college or university;

- a child;
- an invalid relative; or
- a parent or parents or a spouse's parent or parents.

**GROH** means the Government Regional Officers' Housing program administered by Housing.

**GROH client** means either:

- an Agency; or
- any other client serviced by GROH (other GROH client).

**GROH dwelling** means a house as defined in s.5 of the *Government Employees' Housing Act 1964*, which is owned, leased or constructed by Housing and allocated for use by GROH.

**Head Lease** means the lease by which Housing leases a GROH dwelling to a GROH client. The lease outlines both parties' obligations and responsibilities.

**Officer** means an employee of Housing.

**PATH** means 'Portal for Access to Housing' which is a web-based interface enabling Client Agencies to submit written requests for housing online.

**Planned Request** means a written request by an Agency for a GROH dwelling for one of its employees for the upcoming financial year. This request is made by 31 May prior to the start of the financial year for which the GROH dwelling has been requested.

**Private tenant** means a person who will reside in a GROH dwelling but is secured from the private rental market.

**RTA** means the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)*.

**Temporary Allocation** means an allocation subject to a condition that the dwelling may need to be vacated at the request of Housing.

**Temporary Return** means when Housing approves a client agency temporarily returning a dwelling, which would otherwise be vacant, to Housing for re-allocation.

**Tenant** means a GROH client's employee who will reside in an allocated GROH dwelling.

**Unplanned Request** means any written request by an Agency for a GROH dwelling that is not a planned request.

**Withdraw** means to rescind the allocation of a dwelling to one GROH client in order to allocate this dwelling.

## Policy Statements

### 1. Allocations

#### 1.1. Policy

1.1.1. Housing will respond to requests for GROH dwellings from Agencies in priority to requests from other GROH clients.

1.1.2. If Housing owns suitable GROH dwellings in its portfolio it will allocate these dwellings to the Agencies making the requests. Otherwise, Housing will seek to satisfy Agencies' demand by:

- leasing dwelling(s) from private owners;
- spot purchasing dwelling(s), if funds permit; or
- constructing new dwelling(s), if funds permit.

1.1.3. When determining the allocation of GROH dwellings to Agencies, Housing takes into account factors such as:

- Whether an Agency has returned a GROH dwelling that is no longer suitable or considers the currently allocated GROH dwelling, or the GROH dwellings available for reallocation, to be unsuitable for the employee and justification is provided;
- How soon the GROH dwelling is required;
- If the requested GROH dwelling is for newly appointed employees;
- The number of dependants of the employee (if any); and
- Any special circumstances which make a particular type of GROH dwelling necessary.

1.1.4. If there are GROH dwellings that are surplus to the requirements of Agencies, Housing may consider allocating these GROH dwellings to other GROH clients, in the following order of priority:

- Other worker housing programs, e.g. a non-government organisation;
- Non-proclaimed state government Agencies;
- Other housing programs or private tenants.

## **1.2. Practice notes**

1.2.1. Indicative timeframes for the various methods of satisfying an Agency's housing request are:

- Housing owned GROH dwelling – generally one – two months;
- Private lease – generally one – two months;
- Spot purchase – six months; and
- Construction – eighteen months.

1.2.2. Other GROH clients listed in section 1.1.4 will be provided with a periodic lease while the GROH dwelling is not required by an Agency. These leases will be subject to the provisions of the RTA.

## **2. Planned requests, offers and acceptances**

### **2.1. Policy**

2.1.1. Planned requests submitted by Agencies will be given priority over unplanned requests.

2.1.2. Where possible, Housing will meet Agencies' planned requests by offering existing Housing owned GROH dwellings.

2.1.3. Where required, Agencies need to make a Commitment and submit a GROH Commitment Form to Housing before the tender for construction, or any contract relating to the purchase, refurbishment or lease is awarded.

2.1.4. Once an Agency has committed to the allocation, Housing and the Agency will enter into a head lease for the allocated GROH dwelling.

2.1.5. The Agency will pay rent and any other fees associated with the GROH dwelling for the period specified in the Head Lease – unless the GROH dwelling is temporarily allocated to another Agency or other GROH client.

### **2.2. Practice notes**

2.2.1. Planned requests are to be submitted online through PATH.

2.2.2. GROH will notify Agencies annually of the need to submit the Agency's planned requests for GROH dwellings for the following financial year by 31 May.

2.2.3. When required, Agencies are to sign and return a GROH Commitment Form to Housing within seven working days of receiving it.

- 2.2.4. Housing will make all offers of GROH dwellings in writing, via email. Agencies are to respond to the offer via email within seven working days of receiving it.
- 2.2.5. Once an Agency has accepted a GROH dwelling, Housing will allocate this GROH dwelling to the Agency and notify the Agency in writing via email / PATH.
- 2.2.6. Agencies are to sign and return the head lease to Housing within five working days of receiving it.

### **3. Unplanned housing requests**

#### **3.1. Policy**

3.1.1. Unplanned requests may be made for reasons such as:

- an additional requirement due to a new employee; or
- the existing allocated GROH dwelling no longer being suitable for an employee due to changes in the employee's circumstances and justification is provided.

3.1.2. An unplanned request for an alternative GROH dwelling in the same town will not necessarily be granted and requires the approval of Housing.

3.1.3. If an Agency has signed a GROH Commitment Form for an allocated GROH dwelling and then, having deemed this GROH dwelling unsuitable, requests an alternative GROH dwelling, the Agency will continue to pay rent and all other costs associated with the GROH dwelling to which it had committed. The Agency will continue to pay these costs until the GROH dwelling has been reallocated to another GROH client.

#### **3.2. Practice notes**

3.2.1. All unplanned requests need to be submitted online through PATH.

3.2.2. The Housing Property & Services Officer will verify any instances where an existing GROH dwelling is considered unsuitable for an employee.

3.2.3. Where Housing deems the existing GROH dwelling unsuitable, Housing will endeavour to locate a more suitable GROH dwelling for the employee. Housing will offer the existing dwelling to a different GROH client.

3.2.4. Housing will attempt to use other GROH dwellings it owns to meet unplanned requests. Should no GROH dwellings be available, or should

an Agency refuse the GROH dwelling offered for a valid reason, Housing may seek a lease from the private market.

#### **4. Allocated dwellings that are vacant**

##### **4.1. Policy**

4.1.1. Housing permits Agencies to hold allocated GROH dwellings vacant for up to six months.

4.1.2. An Agency may request that the GROH dwelling vacancy period be extended for up to twelve months.

4.1.3. The decision to grant or deny an extension to the vacancy period is at the discretion of Housing.

##### **4.2. Practice notes**

4.2.1. An Agency must report to Housing every six weeks on vacant dwellings.

4.2.2. Housing will contact the Agency after six months to confirm whether the Agency continues to intend using the vacant GROH dwelling.

4.2.3. Requests for extensions to vacancies must specify the dates and reasons for which an Agency wishes the GROH dwelling to remain vacant and should be submitted to [groh.housingrequests@housing.wa.gov.au](mailto:groh.housingrequests@housing.wa.gov.au).

4.2.4. Housing will notify an Agency of its decision to grant or deny an extended vacancy in writing; in most instances by email.

#### **5. Temporary return of allocated dwellings**

##### **5.1. Policy**

5.1.1. An Agency may request that an allocated GROH dwelling be temporarily returned to Housing for a specified period.

5.1.2. An Agency may request that the temporary return period be extended for up to twelve months.

5.1.3. The decision to grant or deny a temporary return, or an extension to the temporary return period, is at the discretion of Housing.

- 5.1.4. If an allocated GROH dwelling remains vacant during the period it is temporarily returned to Housing, the requesting Agency will be responsible for maintaining the GROH dwelling, and its surrounds, and all rental and other costs associated with it. These responsibilities will remain in place during the temporary return period unless the GROH dwelling is temporarily allocated to another GROH client.
- 5.1.5. Housing may withdraw a GROH dwelling from an Agency to satisfy other urgent housing needs.

## **5.2. Practice notes**

- 5.2.1. Requests for temporary returns should be submitted online through PATH. The request must specify the dates and reasons for which the Agency wishes the GROH dwelling to be returned to Housing.
- 5.2.2. Before Housing withdraws a GROH dwelling from an Agency to satisfy urgent needs, it will consult with the Agency to ensure withdrawing the GROH dwelling will not affect the Agency's ability to provide services in the location.

## **6. Temporary allocation of dwellings**

### **6.1. Policy**

- 6.1.1. Housing may reallocate a temporarily returned GROH dwelling to another GROH client. The allocation may be for the same period as the temporary return or a lesser period.
- 6.1.2. If a GROH client, other than a private tenant, accepts the temporary allocation, it must pay the full rental amount. In some circumstances, at Housing's discretion, this rental amount may be negotiated.
- 6.1.3. Where Housing temporarily allocates the GROH dwelling to a private tenant, eighty-five per cent of the rental payment will be forwarded to the Agency that temporarily returned the GROH dwelling to offset the rent still being paid by the Agency.
- 6.1.4. Where the temporary allocation of a GROH dwelling to an Agency is due to expire, and this Agency still requires a GROH dwelling, Housing will make every effort to secure a suitable alternative GROH dwelling for the Agency before its temporary allocation expires.
- 6.1.5. Under some circumstances, GROH dwellings that have been temporarily allocated to another Agency for more than twelve months may be permanently allocated to this Agency. The decision to permanently allocate is at the discretion of Housing.

## **6.2. Practice notes**

- 6.2.1. Housing's offer of the temporary allocation will be in writing and this offer must be accepted in writing.
- 6.2.2. Sixty days before the temporary allocation expires, Housing will contact the Agency that temporarily returned the GROH dwelling and determine its future needs for the GROH dwelling.
- 6.2.3. Before permanently allocating a temporarily allocated GROH dwelling, Housing will consult with the Agencies involved.

## **7. Permanent return of allocated dwellings**

### **7.1. Policy**

- 7.1.1. Agencies may request that a GROH dwelling allocated to them be returned permanently to Housing.
- 7.1.2. Such requests must be accompanied by valid reasons. For example, the dwelling is:
  - surplus to the Agency's requirements due to organisation restructure or a change in employee;
  - in poor condition;
  - unsuitable for the household composition of the Agency's current or prospective employee; or
  - in a location that makes it difficult for the tenant to fulfil their professional role in the community.
- 7.1.3. If an Agency permanently returns a GROH dwelling for which it has made a Commitment, this Agency will continue to pay rent, and all other fees associated with the GROH dwelling, for the full term of the Commitment unless the GROH dwelling is allocated to another GROH client in accordance with clause 7.1.4 below.
- 7.1.4. If there is suitable demand, Housing will seek to reallocate the GROH dwelling to another GROH client. Any GROH client being reallocated a GROH dwelling subject to a Commitment will be expected to pay the same rent and all other fees associated with the GROH dwelling, for the full term of the Commitment.

## 7.2. Practices notes

7.2.1. Requests for permanent returns should be submitted online through PATH.

7.2.2. The Housing Property & Services Officer will verify any reasons for returning a GROH dwelling.

## Document History

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Approval date	Date in effect	Senior delegated officer	Superseded documents
12 Aug 2016	1 Nov 2016	Director Housing Programs	GROH Reversion of Properties Policy clause 11, Private Tenants Rental Procedures
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