



Tasman District Council

POLICY ON PENSIONER HOUSING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the Council's practice in regard to the provision, management and tenancy of pensioner housing in the Tasman District.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide clear guidelines on tenant eligibility for persons wanting to live in Council-owned pensioner cottages.
- To provide clear guidelines for the level of rental, funding of the facilities and the treatment of surpluses.
- To provide opportunities for the Council to investigate alternative options for the management, divestment or development of pensioner cottages in the District.

3.0 PRINCIPLES

- There is a genuine need for long-term affordable accommodation for the elderly in Richmond, Brightwater, Wakefield, Motueka, Takaka and Murchison and that the Tasman District Council has a role in meeting this need.
- That the Council's investment in pensioner housing will continue to be self-funding without rates input. Relevant corporate overhead will be applied to the activity. Depreciation is recognised as an operating expense.
- That the Council's pensioner cottages shall continue to be available for rental at below private market rentals.
- Surpluses (or proceeds from divestment) will be applied to retire debt, support improvements to disabled facilities or retained in the Pensioner Cottages Sundry account for future maintenance, upgrades or development of pensioner cottages or considered for any other use which the Council at the time deem appropriate.

In developing this policy, the Council recognises that it is not the sole provider of accommodation for the District's elderly residents, and points out that it has been financially supportive towards the establishment of both the Motueka and Golden Bay Abbeyfield Houses.

Whilst Council's core housing function is housing for the elderly, it is aware that there is a wide range of housing needs in the district, and would consider supporting other community housing initiatives. Any financial support requested would need to go through the LTCCP process, and is outside this Policy on Pensioner Housing.

Council staff and elected members will continue to be actively involved in the quarterly meetings of the Nelson/Tasman Housing Forum.

4.0 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.

“Elderly” are those people aged 65 or over, but may include younger persons 55 years and older if they have some medical condition and they are on an invalids benefit or similar.

5.0 BACKGROUND

The Council owns a total of 97 pensioner cottages, of which 30 are located in Richmond, 45 in Motueka, 4 in Takaka, 4 in Murchison, 7 in Wakefield and 7 in Brightwater. All cottages, with the exception of 4 bedsits in Motueka (which will be progressively upgraded to one-bedroom cottages), are one bedroom cottages with a lounge/kitchen area, a storage space and a shower/toilet/laundry room.

The cottages were mainly constructed when the government provided loans at low concessionary interest rates to encourage council involvement in pensioner housing

Several cottages also have carports, and most have off-street tenant parking.

There are 5 cottages adapted for tenants with physical disabilities, however handrails at entrances and wet area showers are provided in many of the cottages. Facilities for the disabled are incorporated in any upgrading.

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

6.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The Community Services Manager has responsibility for implementation and review of this policy.

7.0 POLICY STATEMENT

7.1 Eligibility Criteria

Applicants qualify for a pensioner cottage if:

They are New Zealand residents.

They are 65 years of age or over and are receiving National Superannuation;

OR

are in receipt of an invalid's benefit or special age benefit (subject to confirmation from the Ministry of Social Development);

OR

are disabled – and a doctor supports the need;

AND

their total assets, including cash, investments, house and other property (but not including car and furniture) do not exceed \$50,000.

7.2 Eligibility Criteria for Existing Applicants

Those applicants on the waiting list at the date this policy is adopted are not required to meet the age requirement in 7.1 above.

7.3 Priority

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

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

7.4 Location Options

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

7.5 Changes in Circumstances

A tenant's eligibility to occupy a pensioner cottage will be re-assessed if there exists reasonable grounds to indicate a change in eligibility status.

Where it is suspected that there are existing or impending eligibility issues for medical reasons, the Council will in the first instance seek to facilitate the provision of the appropriate social service support. Subsequently, if the tenant is clearly unable to meet the eligibility on an ongoing basis, the 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 well being of other tenants.

7.6 Smoking

As at the adoption date of this policy tenants, or their visitors, will not be permitted to smoke within the cottages. This will not apply to tenants who were occupying cottages prior to the adoption of this policy. However, for these existing tenants, planned refurbishments will be undertaken (approximately every seven years) only if the tenant agrees there will be no smoking within the cottage.

7.7 Animals

Pets such as a bird or cat are permitted (with the 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.

7.8 Rental

Rentals are to be set at up to 80% of market rentals.

7.9 Level of Service

Through its Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016 the Council has reviewed levels of service associated with pensioner housing.

For the 2006/2007 – 2008/2009 years Council will provide a service that helps to meet the needs of elderly and people with disabilities who require housing. Council will ensure re-tenanting of houses within four weeks.

For the 2009/2010 – 2015-2016 years Council will continue to manage this activity in a sustainable manner giving regards to the demands of growth.

7.10 Marketing and Usage

The 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 pensioner housing to ensure maximum usage.

7.11 Welfare

The 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.

The 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.

7.12 Disposal/Divestment

Where any complex has a less than 50% occupancy rate for a continuous six-month period and there is no known interest in tenanting the vacant cottages by suitable tenants, the complex may be considered for disposal. The Council shall consider disposal of the complex after consultation with the local community and other elderly housing providers in the District.

7.13 New Pensioner Housing

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

7.14 Management of Pensioner Cottages

The Tasman District Council currently administers and manages the pensioner cottages in-house. The Council may consider alternative arrangements or partnerships for the future administration and management of pensioner cottages if it is in the best interests of tenants and is cost-effective.

7.15 References and Relevant Legislation

Residential Tenancies Act 1986.

8.0 DATE OF REVIEW

Council will review this policy every 5 years, with the next review being in 2013.

Any review will take into consideration, amongst other things, the current housing needs of the district, criteria for eligibility, rent levels, demographics and current waiting lists.