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| 14. Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over |
| Operational Guidelines |

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# When do these operational guidelines apply?

These operational guidelines should be followed by designated service providers and social housing organisations when making decisions related to the Victorian Housing Register (the register).

These operational guidelines form part of a set of guidelines that together sit under the [Eligibility Policy Framework](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-policy-framework) <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-policy-framework>.

# Purpose statement

The operational guidelines outline the criteria an applicant must meet to be eligible for the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category, and the pathways through which they can apply.

The intent of these operational guidelines is to support eligible older persons who are unable to sustain other housing options on the basis of affordability, through the allocation of a suitable property to improve their wellbeing.

# Human rights considerations

In deciding what action to take, staff must give proper consideration to the relevant human rights in accordance with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* s38(1) (the Charter). This consideration should include the potential impact the proposed action they are undertaking through these operational guidelines may have on the person’s (and their household’s) rights under the Charter*.*

For more information see [*Making Client Focused Decisions o*perational guidelines](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-client-focused-decisions) <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/making-client-focused-decisions>.

# Eligibility for Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over

The Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category is only available for new applicants.

Individuals and households eligible for this category are people who:

* meet the eligibility criteria including the Priority Access income and asset eligibility criteria
* are single and aged 55 years and over, or are a couple where both members are aged 55 years and over
  + are not eligible for another priority access category.

## Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for social housing, in general primary applicants should live in Victoria and:

* be an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia
* meet the income and asset eligibility limits for their household
* have an independent income
  + not own a property in which they could live.

Up-to-date documentation to confirm the above criteria must be provided. Income and asset documentation should be less than 28 days old.

For further information see the [*Eligibility Criteria* operational guidelines](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria)<https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-criteria>.

### Income eligibility

The income eligibility limit for the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category is the Priority Access income limit, which is set out in the [social housing eligibility](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility>.

The Priority Access income eligibility limits are the income limits gazetted by the Director of Housing and published on the department’s housing [website](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/>.

To determine total household income, the assessable incomes of the household are added together to determine whether the household meets the Priority Access income limit. If the total household income is less than or equal to the maximum income limit, the household is considered eligible.

### Asset eligibility

The asset eligibility limit for the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category is the Priority Access asset limit­, which is set out in the [social housing eligibility](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/social-housing-eligibility>.

The Priority Access asset eligibility limits are the asset limits gazetted by the Director of Housing and published on the department’s housing [website](http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/) <http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/>.

To determine total household assets, the assessable assets of the household are added together to determine whether the household meets the Priority Access asset limit. If the dollar value of the total household assets is less than or equal to the maximum asset limit, the household is considered eligible.

Where a household member requires full or major modifications, the disability modification asset limit is applied.

# Applying for Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over

Applications for Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over is typically submitted by the applicant. Applicants in receipt of support through a designated service provider may be eligible for a higher priority category.

For more information about how to apply to the register, including submitting applications online, refer to the [Eligibility Policy Framework](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-policy-framework) <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/eligibility-policy-framework>.

Regular reviews will be conducted by the department to identify applicants on the Register of Interest who may be eligible for the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category. Where an applicant with an existing Register of Interest application turns 55 years of age, the application will be reassessed to determine eligibility for the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category.

## Application effective date

The effective date is the date the individual or household demonstrates that they are eligible under the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category. That is, the date that all documentation was received that confirms their eligibility for the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and category.

For Register of Interest applicants turning 55 years of age, and where their application is reviewed by the department, the effective date is the Register of Interest effective date.

## Application Approval

If an application for Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over is submitted by a designated service provider, where the designated service provider has assessed the applicant as ineligible for another priority category, the lodging organisation should make a recommendation as to whether the application should be approved.

If an application for Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over is submitted and approved by a participating registered agency, the department will accept that the application meets the eligibility criteria for the Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over category.

The department will only find the application ineligible if the household does not meet the eligibility criteria for social housing.

If the application is approved, the number of bedrooms and any special accommodation requirements will be assessed according to the [*Clients with Special Accommodation Requirements o*perational guidelines](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/clients-special-accommodation-requirements)<https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/clients-special-accommodation-requirements>.

# Decision Review

Applicants who are not recommended or have been assessed as ineligible for Special Housing Needs aged 55 years and over may request to have the decision reviewed. For more information see the [*Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Processes o*perational guidelines](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/complaints-appeals-and-feedback-processes) <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/complaints-appeals-and-feedback-processes>.

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