

# Social housing changes

DECEMBER 2013

The Government is reforming social housing services. From 14 April 2014, the Ministry of Social Development will handle applications and assessment for social housing. Currently this is done by Housing New Zealand.

## What are the changes?

The main changes are to:

- extend the availability of the income-related rent subsidy to registered non-government and community housing providers (to date the income-related rent\* subsidy has only been available to Housing New Zealand)
- transfer the responsibility for assessing people's social housing need from Housing New Zealand to the Ministry of Social Development (including Work and Income, Senior Services and StudyLink)
- introduce tenancy reviews to help prioritise social housing for people with the greatest need, for as long as they need it.

## What roles will the Ministry of Social Development, Housing New Zealand and community housing providers have?

From 14 April 2014, the Ministry of Social Development, Housing New Zealand and registered community housing providers will be responsible for the following functions:

Ministry of Social Development	Housing New Zealand and community housing providers
<p>Managing all social housing applications, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• screening eligibility</li><li>• assessing a person's need for a house</li><li>• managing the housing waitlist</li><li>• supporting people with a serious housing need who can't be referred immediately to a housing provider</li><li>• helping people find the right housing option for their situation</li><li>• calculating and reviewing income-related rent</li><li>• referring people to approved social housing providers</li><li>• paying income-related rent subsidies to housing providers</li><li>• fraud investigations and legal actions</li><li>• income-related rent debt recovery</li><li>• reviewing decisions on eligibility, needs assessments and income-related rent.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tenancy management including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– matching prospective tenants to houses</li><li>– starting and ending tenancies</li><li>– preparing and managing tenant agreements</li><li>– tenant liaison and landlord duties</li><li>– charging rent (based on income-related rent or market rent as appropriate)</li><li>– tenant transfer</li><li>– collecting rents, debt for overdue rents and damage charges.</li></ul></li><li>• buying, selling and developing properties</li><li>• management and maintenance of houses to an agreed standard.</li></ul>

\* Income-related rent is a subsidised rent payable by a tenant. It's based on a percentage of a tenant's income and is less than the market rent of the property. The income-related rent subsidy paid to the housing provider by government is the difference between the income-related rent and the market rent.

The individual roles of the registered community housing providers will vary. Many community housing providers also offer other wraparound social services.

Until 14 April 2014, all existing Housing New Zealand tenants and new applicants will continue to deal with Housing New Zealand as they do now. After 14 April 2014, Housing New Zealand continues to be the landlord for state tenants, but applicants will be assessed by the Ministry of Social Development.

### **Why is the Government making these changes?**

These changes are part of a wider programme of reform to improve the diversity of social housing in New Zealand, making it more accessible for people in most need.

Over time, this will see a greater choice of housing and landlord for people eligible for income-related rent.

Adding the housing assessment functions to other financial and employment support currently provided through Work and Income, Senior Services, Child, Youth and Family and StudyLink will make it easier for clients and give the Ministry of Social Development a single, more comprehensive view of people's needs.

Moving the assessment to the Ministry of Social Development also means decisions on a person's eligibility for social housing are made independently of any housing provider.

### **When will the changes happen?**

The first of the changes will happen on 14 April 2014 when the Ministry of Social Development takes over responsibility for screening eligibility and assessing people's housing needs, and calculating income-related rents.

### **How will existing tenants and people on the waitlist be informed about the changes?**

There is information available now on the Housing New Zealand and the Ministry of Social Development websites. Existing Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants on the waitlist will get a letter early in 2014 about the changes and how these will affect them.

### **For more information**

More information about the changes can be found at:

- Ministry of Social Development – [www.msd.govt.nz](http://www.msd.govt.nz)
- Housing New Zealand – [www.hnzc.co.nz](http://www.hnzc.co.nz) or email [enquiries1@hnzc.co.nz](mailto:enquiries1@hnzc.co.nz)
- Housing New Zealand tenants can also call Housing New Zealand any time on **0800 801 601**.