Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Home Stretch WA Housing Allowance

Fact sheet for real estate agents and landlords

What is Housing Allowance?

As part of the Home Stretch WA program, the Department of Communities (Communities) offers eligible young people between the ages of 18 and 21 access to a Housing Allowance. This payment is offered alongside a range of other supports to assist young people access and maintain affordable housing.

Home Stretch WA is overseen by Communities and delivered across Western Australia by Community Service Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. The program helps young people transition to independent adulthood by providing the option of extended support and resources until the age of 21.

The Housing Allowance is a fortnightly payment made directly by Communities. The payment aims to supplement payments made directly by a young person accessing Home Stretch WA towards their rent or board. The payment does not impact a young person's entitlement to Rent Assistance or other financial support around housing.

What housing options can be supported by the Housing Allowance?

The Housing Allowance can be used to support a range of different housing options. Examples include private rentals, shared housing, student housing, boarding houses and other lodging arrangements. It can also be used to support living arrangements with relatives, friends or host homes, where the young person is supported as a part of the family.

To be eligible, the housing option must provide the young person with stability and some form of tenure. This can be evidenced by a lease, boarding or lodging agreement – or a Home Stretch WA Living Together Agreement.

Each young person negotiates the amount of Housing Allowance required, up to a maximum rate, which is paid directly to their landlord or host family.

What are the incentives for landlords and host homes?

Young people eligible for the Housing Allowance are required to engage with supports via their Home Stretch WA service provider. A Home Stretch WA Transition Coach provides individualised supports, which can include help to manage the responsibilities of a tenancy or living arrangement.

Should any concerns or issues arise, the service provider and transition coach is a designated contact available for landlords or host homes.

Service providers are required to regularly review Housing Allowance payments with the young people they are supporting. As a landlord or host, you can also initiate a review of a living arrangement with the young person and their service provider at any time if you have any concerns.

How does it work?

Housing Applications are approved on the basis that the young person can demonstrate that they can afford the living arrangement, that the option is safe and stable, and that it is within their capacity to maintain.

As part of the application process, there is a section of the form where the landlord is required to provide their payment details and the type of living arrangement that is being supported. This section also outlines the terms of the agreement between the young person and their landlord or host, and the requirement that Home Stretch WA must be notified if any changes to the young person's living situation occurs.

To receive a payment from Communities, a landlord must be able to prove their identity to the department and to the Home Stretch WA service provider.

This can be achieved in two different ways:

1. Providing a current ABN that matches the name of the individual or business who is receiving the Housing Allowance.
   OR
2. If you do not have an ABN, you should provide to the Home Stretch WA service provider an original document that verifies your identity and complete a Statement by Supplier Form.

What costs are covered by the Housing Allowance?

The Housing Allowance is intended to cover costs associated with the safe and stable housing arrangement. For rental agreements, generally the payment is used to cover the rental costs only, unless utilities are included.

For boarding or lodging arrangements, or where a young person is considered part of the family, all costs associated with the living arrangement can be covered by the subsidy.

This means if a young person is offered food, transport, recreation and other support as part of the living arrangement, these costs can be part of calculating the total amount of Housing Allowance required.

Every situation is different, and the Home Stretch WA service provider will assist to work out which costs can be included in a Housing Allowance payment.

Will accessing Housing Allowance impact other payments I am receiving or my tax status?

Housing Allowance payments are deemed taxable income and may impact other payments a landlord or host is in receipt of. As a payment recipient, it is your responsibility to check whether receiving this payment will have any impact on any other payments you receive, including your individual tax liability.

What happens if a young person leaves the living arrangement?

The landlord or payment recipient are legally required to advise their Home Stretch WA service provider if there are any changes to the young person's living arrangement.

The Department of Communities should be notified in writing as soon as possible by emailing Homestretchserviceteam@communities.wa.gov.au.

Any outstanding rental fees or costs are the responsibility of the young person who signed the lease agreement.

Can I receive multiple Housing Allowances for different young people?

Yes, however, we are unable to itemise payments back to individual young people. The total Housing Allowance for all young people will be received as one lump sum payment.

What is the Eftsure?

All Department of Communities suppliers of corporate goods and services are required to provide financial information (ABN, GST registration status and bank account details) to Eftsure for independent verification.

Communities use Eftsure to protect payments against fraud and error by ensuring payments are made to the intended recipient. Guidelines on the Eftsure process can be downloaded from the Home Stretch WA website.

How long can the Housing Allowance be paid?

A young person can receive a Housing Allowance while they are accessing Home Stretch WA, between the ages of 18 and 21.

Each year they continue with Home Stretch WA, a new Housing Allowance agreement is signed. Each new agreement indicates the rate of Housing Allowance the young person will receive.

At 12 months, a full review of the agreement is required and an application for the next year must be submitted. Payment rates reduce each year the young person is in the program.

Contact details for Home Stretch WA service provider

Home Stretch WA service provider representative	
Agency name	
Email	
Phone number	

Contact details for the Department of Communities

Home Stretch WA team contact	
Email	
Phone number	