

Special Assistance Subsidy

January 2009



Fact Sheet



It is illegal for an officer of Housing NSW to ask for money or favours or other benefits of any kind in exchange for helping you with your housing needs.

It is also illegal for you or anyone else to offer money or favours or other benefits of any kind to an officer of Housing NSW in exchange for helping you. If you have any information regarding this, please contact Business Assurance on 1300 468 746. Housing NSW may refuse the provision of further housing services to anyone who has engaged or sought to engage in corrupt or illegal conduct.

What is the Special Assistance Subsidy (SAS)?

The Special Assistance Subsidy (SAS) is a rental subsidy paid to people with a disability or HIV/AIDS to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged while they wait for suitable public housing.

People with HIV/AIDS may decide not to wait for an offer of public housing and choose to receive a rental subsidy as their long term housing option. This assistance was previously known as the Special Rental Subsidy (SRS) and the Disability Rental Subsidy (DRS).

How do I apply for Special Assistance Subsidy?

Generally you cannot request Special Assistance Subsidy and there is no separate application form for this assistance.

If you are applying for housing assistance for the first time you must complete the Housing Register form and the Priority Housing form. You will also need to have your doctor complete the Medical Assessment form. All forms are available on the Housing NSW website.

The Special Assistance Subsidy – Disability may then be offered to you as short-term assistance while you wait to be housed. The Special Assistance Subsidy – Special may be offered as a long-term option for people with HIV/AIDS who choose not to wait for public housing.

If you are granted a Special Assistance Subsidy and you are renting a property through a real estate agent, please obtain the real estate agent's ABN (where possible) to include with your application for Special Assistance Subsidy.

What are the eligibility criteria for Special Assistance Subsidy?

To be eligible to receive the Special Assistance Subsidy you must:

- meet public housing eligibility criteria
- be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and meet the priority housing eligibility criteria or

- have a disability and be approved for priority housing.

Can I receive Special Assistance Subsidy and still wait for Priority Housing?

If you are approved for Special Assistance Subsidy and diagnosed with HIV/AIDS you can either wait for public housing or remain in the private sector and have your rent subsidised by Housing NSW as a long-term option.

If you decide to receive the Special Assistance Subsidy – as a long-term option, your name will be suspended on the Priority Housing register. You may decide at a later date that you require priority housing. In this case, you should contact your local Client Service Officer who will be able to reactivate your priority application. You will continue to receive the Special Assistance Subsidy while you wait for priority housing.

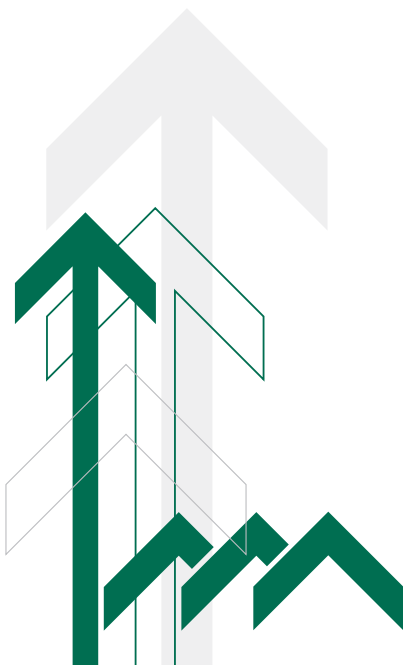
How is the benchmark rent determined?

Housing NSW has a benchmark rent which is based on the median (or average) rent provided by the NSW Office of Fair Trading, for that size and type of accommodation in an area. These rents are based on bonds lodged with the NSW Office of Fair Trading over the previous 12 months. These rents are used as a guide to determine if the market rent you are paying in the private sector is reasonable.

What happens if the rent being paid is more than the Housing NSW "benchmark" rent?

If the rent you are paying is more than the "benchmark" rent, Housing NSW will determine if your market rent is reasonable (taking into account the current market rents in the area and whether your accommodation meets your special housing needs).

A decision will be made whether the Special Assistance Subsidy is to be based on your market rent or the Housing NSW "benchmark" rent.



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Where Housing NSW determines that the subsidy should be based on the "benchmark" - and the rent you pay is higher - you will be responsible to pay the difference between your rent and the "benchmark" rent.

What happens if the rent being paid is less than the Housing NSW "benchmark" rent?

If the rent you are paying is less than the Housing NSW "benchmark" rent then the Special Assistance Subsidy will be based on the rent you are paying.

Do I have to provide proof of the rent I am paying?

You must provide a copy of your lease agreement for the property you are renting and also a current rent receipt.

How much rent is paid?

On or after 5 June 2006 household income other than Commonwealth Rent Assistance is assessed at 25%. If you are a new applicant receiving the subsidy, your Commonwealth Rent Assistance will be assessed at 100%. If you are an existing applicant who has been receiving the previous Disability Rental Subsidy, or the Special Rental Subsidy prior to 24 August 1998, your Commonwealth Rent Assistance will continue to be assessed at 20%.

Example 1 – Assessment of Commonwealth Rent Assistance

The following example shows the rent paid by someone on a disability pension of \$241.00 per week (pw) and Commonwealth Rent Assistance of \$50.00 pw.

Approved Rent	\$230.00pw	
Income		
Rent Assistance	20% of \$50.00	= \$10.00
Pension	25% of \$241	= \$60.25
Total Client Contribution	= \$70.25	
Total SAS paid to Client	\$230 - \$70.25	= \$159.75

The approved rent is \$230 pw
The tenant pays \$70.25 pw
Housing NSW pays the remainder ie \$159.75

If you are an existing applicant receiving the subsidy and relocate to alternative accommodation your Commonwealth Rent Assistance will be assessed at 100%, unless you are relocating through no fault of your own, such as the sale of the property or a no-cause termination. In these cases your Rent Assistance will continue to be assessed at 20%.



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Interpreter Services

If you have difficulty understanding English, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

The Translating and Interpreting Service will telephone Housing NSW for you at no cost.

If you are hearing impaired, please contact the TTY Service on 1800 628 310.

Arabic

خدمة الترجمة الخطية والشفوية المجانية
اتصل على الرقم 131 450

Chinese

免費的翻譯傳譯服務
致電 131 450

Russian

Служба бесплатного письменного и устного перевода
Позвоните по номеру 131 450

Spanish

Servicio Gratuito de Traducción e Interpretación
Llame al 131 450

Vietnamese

Dịch vụ Phiên dịch và Thông dịch Miễn phí
Điện thoại 131 450

Example 2 – Assessment of Commonwealth Rent Assistance

This example shows the same incomes. The difference is that Commonwealth Rent Assistance is assessed at 100% as the client applied for assistance after August 1998.

Approved Rent	\$230.00pw	
Income		
Rent Assistance	100% of \$50.00	= \$50.00
Pension	25% of \$241	= \$60.25
Total Client Contribution	= \$110.25	
Total SAS paid to Client	\$230.00 - \$110.25	= \$119.75

The approved rent is \$230 pw
The tenant pays \$110.25 pw
Housing NSW pays the remainder ie \$119.75

Note: approved rent is the rent approved by Housing NSW. This may be the actual dwelling rent (under/over benchmark), or, if the dwelling rent is above the benchmark, it may be an amount approved up to the benchmark.

How is Special Assistance Subsidy paid?

Payments are made by two methods:

- Electronic Funds Transfer - paid directly into your real estate agent's or landlord's bank account; or
- Cheque - made payable and sent directly to your real estate agent or landlord.

How frequently are the payments made?

Payments are based on a four week period and the payments are made in advance.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the information in this fact sheet or any other housing related matter, please contact your local Housing NSW office.

More information

For more information you can:

- visit your local office, Monday to Friday, 8.30am - 4.30pm (closed public holidays and 8.30am - 1pm on Wednesdays)
Office hours may vary in some locations
- phone Housing NSW on **1300 HOUSING 1300 468 746**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- go to the Housing NSW website www.housing.nsw.gov.au

