

Housing Allowance – Fact Sheet

Financial support for your living arrangements from 18-21 years of age.

What is the Housing Allowance?

Funding that helps you afford to pay your rent (or other housing costs) while you are connected to Home Stretch WA.

The money doesn't affect your Centrelink payment or Tax, and you can still access a full rent assistance payment too.



How does it work?

You need to complete an application process, and have it approved by your Home Stretch WA provider.

The money is then paid by the Department of Communities directly to your landlord every fortnight for up to a 12-month period.

You can re-apply at the end of the period, or if you leave earlier or change housing, you can apply to have it stopped and changed.



How much is the Housing Allowance?

It is as much or as little as you need to make your housing option affordable, remembering that it is about helping you to afford housing options and not paying for them entirely.

The maximum payment amount you can claim depends on how long you have been accessing support through Home Stretch around housing (including Staying On)

Year 1	\$450
Year 2	\$337.50
Year 3	\$225

Your coach will help you work out your income and other benefits you can access like rent assistance or ABSTUDY. Together you would then work out how much allowance you might need so that you end up paying less than 30% of your income on housing costs.

What kind of living arrangements can be supported?

Any arrangement that is **SAFE, STABLE & AFFORDABLE**. From private rentals, shared houses, student housing, to bedsits, boarding and lodging arrangements. There **MUST** be a lease, contract or housing agreement in place between you and the landlord.

The landlord **MUST** agree to the conditions of the Housing Allowance. The landlord or person receiving the payment cannot be the family member or guardian that was part of your child protection case.

What do I have to do to keep getting the payment?

There are a few conditions to maintaining the payment:

- You live in the arrangement most of the time – it's your main place of residence
- You meet with your Transition Coach regularly in person or by phone
- You agree to a check-in meeting at the living arrangement at least every 3 months to make sure everything is going well.
- You pay your rent and meet your tenancy or housing responsibilities
- Your landlord meets their tenancy or housing responsibilities
- You agree to letting your landlord and Home Stretch provider to talk to each other if necessary



What if I don't know where I'm going to live yet?

You can complete the Housing Application in parts, which helps if you are looking for a place and want to know how much of a Housing Allowance you might expect for different options.

The first part [Part A] is working out your Housing Pathway Plan and your budget, and then identifying how much Housing Allowance Payment you would need to afford the options you are looking for in your plan.

The Home Stretch WA Transition Coach can then get this amount approved, and together you can find a living arrangement.

Once you have the option, you take the rest of the application to the landlord and get them to complete their section along with the lease agreement or other contract. Finally, you can submit the full application for final approval and payment.



Who decides whether the living arrangement is:

Safe?



- You are living somewhere that isn't going to cause you harm, either from the people you live with or the environment you are living in.
- You have a plan to manage and respond to any risks or concerns.
- You can lock your door, and all of your property is still going to be there when you get home.

Stable?

- There is a lease agreement, a boarding agreement, or a Home Stretch WA Living Arrangement Agreement in place.
- It's somewhere you can stay for more than 3 months
- You have your own space and free access to where you are living.
- The people living there aren't constantly changing and the risk of you losing your housing because of someone else is low or you can manage it well.
- You can meet your responsibilities and won't be setting yourself up to fail.

Affordable?



- The property doesn't cost more than you can afford based on your income, and you will manage if there are some small increases to rent or you reduce your income temporarily.
- Other people aren't relying on you to pay their rent or housing costs too.
- You will be ready for when the Housing Allowance reduces after the first 12 months.

What if I think their decision is unfair or wrong?



Like any decision in Home Stretch WA services, you can question it. The first step would be to tell your coach you think they got it wrong, and then ask to speak to the coordinator or manager of the Home Stretch WA program you are supported by.

Each agency will also have its own complaints or appeals process which you can follow. If this doesn't work out, or you want to speak to someone outside your Home Stretch WA provider, you can also contact the Advocate for Children in Care

Telephone:
1800 460 696
0429 086 508 (phone or text)

Email:
advocate@communities.wa.gov.au