



Keeping the Territory affordable for people like you and me

## Frequently Asked Questions for Real Estate Agents and approved NRAS registered Community Housing Providers

### What is Rent Choice?

The Rent Choice Rental Subsidy Scheme initially commenced in 2021 and was designed to deliver maximum impact and flexibility, offering housing solutions that can respond to individual circumstances of key workers, and that can operate effectively in the different housing market conditions experienced across the Northern Territory.

Funded by the Northern Territory Government and developed and administered by Venture Housing, Rent Choice provides access to safe, secure and affordable housing in the private rental market by providing a subsidy towards the rent.

### What are the benefits?

Rent Choice aims to address the housing affordability barriers preventing Key Workers from joining the NT workforce or having an affordable place to live and settle to access or retain a job. By accepting the Rent Choice Regional vouchers, you will;

- support local businesses to increase workforce capacity and access the required skills and labour
- continue to stimulate the Northern Territory economy and essential service system by supporting local businesses to increase productivity and lower business operating costs.
- ensure our communities remain places where people want to live with the infrastructure, services, leisure and lifestyle activities they need to thrive



# Rent Choice FAQs for Real Estate & CHPs

## What has changed this year?

We are pleased to announce that the scope for the 2024 release of Rent Choice subsidies has been expanded as follows:

- Rent Choice is now accessible to households in existing leases with a minimum six-month term remaining
- Income eligibility thresholds have increased for couples and families.
- Previous Rent Choice participants can apply
- Provisions have been made for people to apply where they are located outside the regional centres listed.
- Subsidies will be granted for a maximum of twelve months capped at \$12,000 with no eligibility review requirement.

## Why have these changes taken place?

These amendments have been made to increase accessibility and impact for Territorians experiencing rental stress, and to enable households currently renting under the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) to access Rent Choice when the NRAS incentives cease, reducing the risk of financial hardship and homelessness that can result when this occurs.

## Who is eligible for Rent Choice?

To be apply for the scheme, applicants must meet the following circumstances:

- They are living in the NT or moving to the NT
- At least one household member (main applicant) is working in a Key Service Industry occupation.
- They are a citizen of Australia or New Zealand, a permanent resident of Australia or have a current visa with work rights in Australia.

In addition to meeting eligibility requirements, prospective households must not

- own property in the Northern Territory
- receive a rental subsidy from their employer
- be directly employed in the resources sector.
- exceed the income limits for the scheme

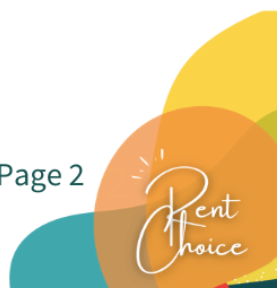
## What is the definition of a Key Worker?

For Rent Choice, a key worker is defined as someone who works in a role within a key service industry. A [key service industry](#) is an area identified as having hard to fill jobs in the NT.

## How much can applicants earn to be eligible?

Applicants' gross household income must fall under certain income limits to be considered for the scheme, these limits are as follows:

- Single: \$100,000
- Couple: \$123,464
- Families: \$172,849



# Rent Choice FAQs for Real Estate & CHPs

## Which locations will participate in Rent Choice?

Rent Choice is available to people who are working and renting or wish to rent in the following locations

- Darwin
- Palmerston
- Katherine
- Tennant Creek
- Alice Springs

## What if applicants live outside these locations?

Engagement with Real Estate Agents and Community Housing Providers has only occurred in the locations listed above, until now. Applications received for locations outside those listed above will be assessed and if eligible, a voucher will be issued for the location provided by the applicant. Venture Housing is keen to work with Real Estate Agents and NRAS approved registered Community Housing Providers in regional and remote areas to access the scheme where rental properties that meet the requirements of the scheme are available to lease.

## Do we need to assess applicants' eligibility?

No, Venture Housing take care of all the administration. If a Rent Choice approved participant provides you with one of our vouchers, they have been assessed as eligible to receive subsidy payments for 12 months.

## Can tenants in existing leases apply?

Yes, as long as there is a minimum of 6 months lease term remaining and there are no other subsidies in place.

## Can tenants in subsidised housing apply for Rent Choice?

Rent Choice subsidy payments cannot be paid when existing subsidies are in place.

## What if the tenant is in an NRAS property and the incentives are ceasing, can they apply?

Rent Choice welcomes applications from key worker households who are living in homes where NRAS incentives have recently ceased and they are now paying market rent, or where the NRAS incentive is due to cease within 8 weeks. Rent Choice payments can only commence once the NRAS incentive has ceased.

## Can more than one person on the lease obtain Rent Choice subsidy payments?

No, only one subsidy can be applied per Tenancy Agreement, even if there is more than one eligible key worker living in the property or planning to be a part of the household.

## How do we get notified if a tenant or applicant has applied for Rent Choice?

Approved applicants are issued with a Rent Choice voucher that is valid for 28 days. Applicants or existing tenants can show you their voucher as evidence of the subsidy amount that they have been

# Rent Choice FAQs for Real Estate & CHPs

approved for. Once they provide Venture with a valid Tenancy Agreement, we will contact the Agent directly to conform the details and payment schedule.

## What constitutes a valid Tenancy Agreement?

Venture will check the validity of Tenancy Agreement to ensure that:

- the agreement has been signed and dated by all parties
- the Rent Choice Participant is named on the lease
- the household composition on the voucher reflects the tenants/approved occupants written into the agreement (ie 2 Adults and 3 Children)
- the address of the property on the agreement is within the location named on the voucher
- the agreement is issued by a licensed Real Estate Agency or registered participating NRAS CHP
- There is a minimum of 6 months remaining on the lease term
- There are no other subsidies applied to the property, or any NRAS incentives that are due to cease do so no longer than 8 weeks after the voucher issue date (if applicable)
- for new leases, the commencement date of the Tenancy Agreement occurs no more than 8 weeks after the voucher issue date.

## Does Rent Choice cover the bond payment and rent payments to secure a lease?

No, we must have a signed copy of the Tenancy Agreement before we can commence payments. The Rent Choice participant is responsible for the payment of bond and all costs incurred to secure the lease. For new leases, the first subsidy payment will be backdated to include rent from the lease commencement date up to 28 days in advance.

## Who does the subsidy get paid to?

Rent Choice Subsidies are paid directly to the licensed Real Estate Agency or NRAS approved registered Community Housing Provider using the bank details and payment reference detailed in the Tenancy Agreement. Venture will confirm the payment schedule with the agency or CHP once the Tenancy Agreement has been provided by the participant and validated.

## How do people check if they are eligible?

Venture has developed an online eligibility calculator which can be accessed on our website. This should only be used as a guide; we have a comprehensive online application process which includes a thorough assessment of household income and proof of eligibility documentation to determine actual eligibility and subsidy allocation.

## How can my tenants apply?

We have an online application process where applicants submit evidence of their eligibility and household income. Detailed information can be found on our website.



# Rent Choice FAQs for Real Estate & CHPs

## How do you determine household income?

Applicants complete an online form and upload evidence of income for the 12-month period immediately prior to the application for each adult household member for assessment. The total calculated gross annual household income must fall below the corresponding income threshold to be eligible to receive a Rent Choice rental subsidy.

## What if applicants are relocating to commence a new role?

Rent Choice includes provisions for Key Workers who are relocating. For applicants who are relocating into a role within a key service industry, employment income for the Key Worker will be calculated using the information provided in the employment contract or letter of offer for the new location.

## What if a tenant's income or circumstances change in the future? Will the subsidy stop?

No, eligibility is assessed at the point of application. Payments will only cease if the tenancy ends, or if the participant is removed from the tenancy agreement prior to the end of the 12 month Rent Choice period.

## Can applicants access Rent Choice for a property with a private landlord who is not a licensed Real Estate Agent?

No, the subsidy can only be paid to licensed Real Estate Agents or NRAS approved registered Community Housing Providers (CHPs). This requirement ensures that funds are further protected through the strict regulatory requirements for the administration of trust accounts under the Agents Licensing Act 1979 and/or for CHPs, compliance under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing. Participants leasing through these entities are also protected under the Residential Tenancies Act 1999.

## Is there a limit on the weekly rent amount for the property applicants apply for?

No, there is no limit on the weekly rent or the size of the property they choose. The subsidy is calculated based on the median market rent in that location, their household composition and gross annual income, not the weekly rent of the property. However, the participant must be able to afford the rent once the subsidy ceases, and this is the responsibility of the Real Estate Agency or CHP to determine in their standard rental application assessment process.

## What subsidy amount can an applicant expect to receive?

The amount provided is calculated based on the median market rent in the property location, the Key Worker gross annual household income and household composition. An online eligibility calculator is available on our website which can be used to obtain an estimate of the amount of subsidy an applicant may be eligible to receive.

# Rent Choice FAQs for Real Estate and CHPs

## How long is the subsidy paid for?

Individual subsidies are paid over a maximum period of 12 months (pro-rata). Payment of the subsidy is made over 12 instalments every 28 days. Subsidies cannot be paid beyond a Tenancy Agreement end date. Should the Tenancy Agreement end prior to the end of the 12-month subsidy period, instalments will cease before the tenancy ends and the final instalment will be adjusted to ensure that advance rent subsidy is not paid beyond the Tenancy Agreement end date.

## What happens if the participant breaks their lease?

If a participant breaks their Tenancy Agreement to vacate the rental property prior to the end of the fixed lease term, the standard Residential Tenancies Act 1999 obligations apply. The subsidy payments will continue for the property until their rent obligations cease or until the end of the 12 month subsidy period, whichever occurs first. Participants can reapply for Rent Choice for another property if they still meet the eligibility criteria.

## What happens when the subsidy stops?

We will advise you when the subsidy is due to expire, including the date this will occur and when the last payment will be made. Once the subsidy ceases, the tenant will then be responsible for the total rent.

## What do we need to do?

We have worked hard to make Rent Choice hassle free for our Real Estate and CHP partners. We simply ask that when participating in the scheme, the agent representative signs a letter of agreement to;

- Confirm the payment details and accept subsidy payments
- Ensure the private rental property is not used for commercial purposes (such as holiday letting) as per the Residential Tenancies Act 1999
- Declare any conflict of interest
- Confirm that no other subsidies are being applied to the property.
- Ensure all adult occupants are named or approved occupants on the lease agreement
- Inform Venture Housing if the tenant is to vacate the property before the end of the lease term

## How can I find out more about Rent Choice?

You can find more information on our website

<https://www.venturehousing.org.au> or scan the QR Code to access our webpage

