



Keeping the Territory affordable for people like you and me

Frequently Asked Questions for Key Workers

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 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.



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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.

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 I live outside these locations?

Engagement with Real Estate Agents and Community Housing Providers has only occurred in the locations listed above and therefore Rent Choice vouchers may not be accepted outside these areas. However, any applications received for locations outside those listed above will be assessed and if eligible, the voucher will be issued for the location provided by the applicant.

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How much can I earn to be eligible?

Applicants' gross household income must fall under certain income limits to be considered for the scheme:

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

What if I am already in subsidised housing? Can I 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 subsidy payments cannot be paid when existing subsidies are in place.

How do I check if I am eligible?

Venture has developed an online eligibility calculator which you can access 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.

Do I need to be on the housing register to be eligible?

No, the scheme is open to everyone if they meet the eligibility criteria.

I'm renting an NRAS property, and my incentives are ceasing, when should I apply?

Rent Choice rental subsidies cannot be applied to already subsidised properties, Rent Choice payments can only commence once the NRAS incentive has ceased. You can lodge your application up to 8 weeks before this is due to occur.

How do I 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.

How do you determine my income?

Income for the 12-month period immediately prior to the application will be assessed. The total calculated gross household income must fall below the corresponding income threshold to be eligible to receive a Rent Choice rental subsidy.

What if I am 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.

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What if I know my income or circumstances are changing in the future?

We do not take into account future changes to your income or household composition when assessing your income and eligibility. For example, if you are a couple expecting a baby and you apply, you will be assessed as a couple. If you apply once the baby is born you will then be assessed as a family.

Can I access the rent subsidy 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.

Does the subsidy cover my Bond and rent payments to secure the lease?

No, we must have a signed copy of the Residential Tenancy Agreement before we can commence payments. The participant is responsible for the payment of Bond and any costs to secure the lease. The first subsidy payment to the Real Estate Agent will be backdated to include rent from the Tenancy Agreement commencement date up to 28 days in advance.

I receive salary packaging through my employer, will this impact my eligibility or the subsidy amount I receive?

No, eligibility is determined based on your gross household income, salary packaging will not impact your eligibility assessment.

Can more than one person in my household obtain Rent Choice?

Only one subsidy can be applied per Tenancy Agreement, even if there is more than one eligible key worker living in that property or planning to be part of that household.

Is there a limit on the weekly rent for the property I choose?

No, there is no limit on the weekly rent or the size of the property you choose. The subsidy is calculated based on the median market rent in that location, your household composition and gross annual income, not the weekly rent of the property you wish to lease.

Who does the subsidy get paid to?

The subsidy will be paid directly to the licensed Real Estate Agency. Venture will confirm the payment schedule with the agency once the lease has been provided to us by the participant.

What subsidy amount can I 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 you can use to obtain an estimate of the amount of subsidy you may be eligible to receive.



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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 if I am no longer eligible after I have commenced the scheme?

Eligibility is determined at the time of your application and so if your circumstances change it will not impact your subsidy payments unless you move out of the property.

How do I know which Real Estate Agents or CHPs are accepting vouchers?

We only pay subsidies to Licenced Real Estate Agencies and NRAS approved registered Community Housing Providers. Real Estate Agents and Property Managers have responded positively in the locations listed since the scheme commenced in 2021. We have not engaged with agencies outside those locations and therefore there may be instances where vouchers are not accepted. Information for Real Estate Agencies and CHPs is included on the voucher with contact details for Venture should they need to know more. Our team are keen to build partnerships across the NT to help more key worker households benefit from the scheme.

What happens if I break my lease?

If you break your lease agreement to vacate your 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 your rent obligations cease or until the end of your 12 month Rent Choice period, whichever occurs first.

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, you will then be responsible for the total rent.

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

