



S7		SEARMS Sustainability Rent Setting Policy	
Version	APPROVAL	Effective Date	REVIEW DATE
004	Board	19 July 2024	Annually

ASES Standard	Standard 7: Service Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">Requirement 7.1 Outcomes Monitored Standard Standard 8: Consumer Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">Requirement 8.1 Consumer and Community Engagement StandardRequirement 8.2 Consumer Feedback and Complaints Standard
NRSCH Standard	Performance Outcome 1: Tenant and housing Services Performance Outcome 4: Governance Performance Outcome 5: Probity Performance Outcome 6: Management Performance Outcome 7: Financial viability
Contractual Obligation(s)	RTA with Tenants
Related Policies	Privacy, Confidentiality and Decision-Making Policy Complaints Management Policy Appeals Policy

1. SCOPE

The scope of this policy is SEARMS owned properties as listed at **Annexure A**.

2. PURPOSE

SEARMS is committed to providing culturally appropriate housing and housing services for our Aboriginal community. SEARMS believes that housing security is important to supporting education, employment and health and wellbeing. It is equally important to ensure sustainable housing meeting the community needs via appropriate rent setting and dwelling allocation policies.

SEARMS receives no ongoing external subsidy for the costs associated with owning and managing its properties.

Principles underpinning this policy -

1. allows SEARMS to meet the costs of owning and managing its Housing Portfolio to keep it in good condition.
2. acknowledges the cost-of-living burden on our tenants while meeting item above
3. clearly sets out the mutual obligations of SEARMS and tenants that are critical to cultural self-determination
4. is easy for tenants and staff to understand, implement and comply with.

3. SUSTAINABLE RENT SETTING POLICY ELEMENTS

- Eligibility
- Applications & Allocations
- Sustainable Rent Setting & Annual Review



3.1 ELIGIBILITY:

For Applicants to be considered to enter into a SEARMS sustainable rent program property they will need to demonstrate and meet the following requirements:

- Be an Aboriginal Person* with ties to the Batemans Bay area by either family, Supports, Education, employment.
- Have a good rent reference with \$0 debt to any real estate or housing provider including SEARMS
- Have the ability to sustain your tenancy
- Be over the age of 18 years
- Meet the household composition for the dwelling size
- Applicants currently tenants of another community housing provider and who are adequately housed in permanent accommodation ARE NOT ELIGIBLE for housing under this program.
- Applicants or household members who own or are purchasing accommodation are not eligible

DEFINITIONS for this policy:

Aboriginal Person: *An Aboriginal person who has permanently resided in Batemans Bay or surrounding area for the past 2 or more years. (Surrounding areas within a 50 km radius, excluding members of other housing organisations on waiting lists) or a Walbunja traditional owner person*

Income: *is the total gross income (before tax) of all household members. Includes benefits, family tax, Wages, pensions, allowances, interest and income on investments.*

3.2 ADVERTISING A VACANCY:

For Applicants to be considered to enter into a SEARMS sustainable rent program property they will need to demonstrate and meet the following requirements:

How properties available for rent are advertised

- SEARMS will advise on its Facebook page, on RealEstate.com, and via direct mail to its existing tenants.
 - The advertisement will state that the property is only available for eligible, local Batemans Bay and surrounding area, Aboriginal people.
 - Allocation to eligible applicants will be on a needs basis, using a points system to guide the allocation process.
 - Applications can only be received at SEARMS Aboriginal Corporation Office, in person or by mail. The housing application will be signed and date and time stamped on receipt.
 - Applications will be assessed by SEARMS in consultation with the SEARMS Tenant Advisory Group. The consultation would be progressive, beginning when a property becomes vacant and to when a decision is made on the allocation.
 - Applicants for housing will be advised of the outcome within one week of the decision.



How any conflict of interest matters that arise are dealt with.

Staff and/or TAG members will not be involved in the allocation process if the staff or TAG member or an immediate relative is being considered for housing. (Immediate relatives include partners, spouses, parents, children, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, grandchildren, or grandparents of the member).

3.3 APPLICATIONS & ALLOCATIONS:

General Principles

- To provide an open and assessable application process
- To provide an allocation process by means of a needs/criteria-based analysis of applicants
- To assist applicants (where applicable) are also assisted into registration with NSW Housing Pathways
- To use the resources of the organisation efficiently and effectively

SEARMS does not have a waiting list due to limited stock and very low housing turnover. It advertises the vacant properties via www.realestate.com.au and social media.

Applications will be reviewed and deidentified and taken to the SEARMS TAG for assessment using the SEARMS housing Matrix.

The SEARMS Housing Matrix is a point-based system that is used to guide the decision-making process to match the property to the most suitable applicant.

Bond – SEARMS requires a 4-week Bond for all properties.

Rent – Is paid fortnightly in advance.

Lease Term - Depending on the property, SEARMS may offer a short-term let (crisis), 3-month lease (transitional), 6 month or 12-month leases.

SEARMS Housing Officers may also assist applicants in checking their eligibility for **Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)**.

Exceptional Circumstances

SEARMS may consider allocation of a vacant property to an applicant who does not meet the income criteria with appropriate support letters from support providers or recognised leaders in the Walbunja community.

Extenuating circumstances can include cases where the applicants:

- are living in overcrowded or substandard accommodation.
- are homeless and they have made every attempt to secure or maintain appropriate housing.
- have serious health problems or a disability which is affected by their current accommodation.
- are subject to violence or serious harassment where they currently live.
- are isolated from their family or community.
- do not have access to other forms of housing.



3.4 SUSTAINABLE RENT SETTING REQUIRING ANNUAL REVIEW

Actual revenues and costs and forecast costs will be analysed to set the sustainable rent for 1 July. This is referenced against the market rent costs to calculate the rebate being applied for each sustainable rent.

The analysis takes into account costs that can be directly attributed to a property and pro-ratas (%) of indirect costs.

4. PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

- **April each year** - SEARMS will analyse financial data (both historical and forecast) to set sustainable rents.
- **May each year** - The result of this analysis will be communicated to tenants to advise their rent payable from 1 July each year.
- **1 July each year** – New rent payable will become effective.

5. SEARMS COST ANALYSIS

Step 1: Analyse costs to obtain an average cost by property size

Fixed Costs – direct per property

- Rates – land, water
- Body Corporate
- Insurances
- Property compliance – smoke alarms, RCD, pest inspections

HR direct/indirect – proportionate per property

- Wages, entitlements

General Costs - proportionate per property

- Service compliance – NRSCH, ASES, ISO, contractual
- ATO, SGC, Fair Work, SafeWork Office - premises & costs to run
- Insurances
- IT/Telecoms
- Legal and consulting
- Audits

Capital works planning – average per property

- Responsive \$ & M
- Planned cyclical works

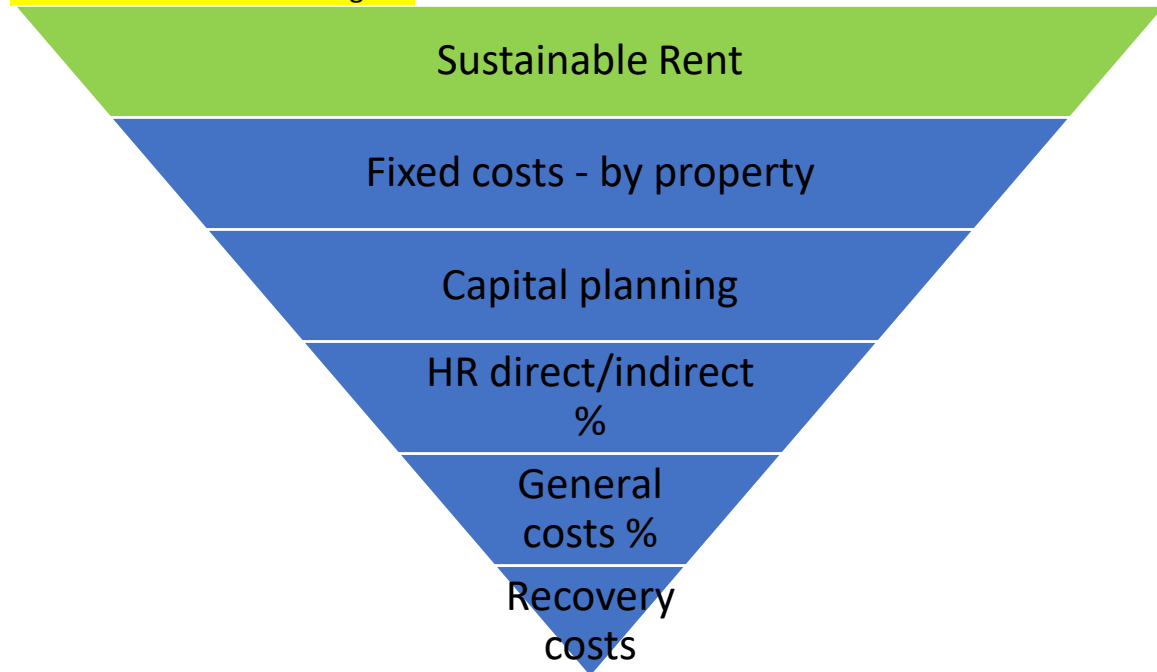
Average cost by property size (example using 2024 figures)

Bedrooms	Highest	Average
2	\$300.36	\$278.69
3	\$365.01	\$311.76
4	\$297.90	\$297.90
5	\$307.33	\$307.33

Step 2: Recovery costs – average per property:

- Analyse arrears as a % of rent charged

Sustainable Rent model diagram



Step 3: Sustainable rent payable recommendations (using 2024 figures)

Bedrooms	Market Rent	75% Market Rent	Current Rent Avg	Ave Historical cost	RECOMMENDATION 2024 Sustainable rent incl recovery cost example
2	\$380	\$285	\$277	\$279	\$300
3	\$500	\$375	\$363	\$312	\$330
4	\$600	\$450	\$345	\$298	\$350
5	\$600	\$450	\$254	\$307	\$360

Step 4: Implementation

Tenants will be given the opportunity to make an appointment to go through their sustainable rent payable amount noting:

- No consideration of CRA is included in the above.
- Occupants as well as tenants can apply for CRA.
- Tenants on high incomes that previously paid Market Rent will receive a rebate to the sustainable rent payable



- UNDEROCCUPANCY will be reviewed on a case by case basis
- Rent increases will comply with RTA Act NSW

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility	Delegation
Maintain record keeping and effectively manage tenancies in accordance with the Policy	Housing Manager & Officers
Monitor the effectiveness of the Policy	Chief Operating Officer
Monitor and report to the Board	Chief Executive Officer
Annual cost analysis and recommendation	Chief Financial Officer
Review the Policy Annually	SEARMS Board

7. LEGISLATION

Residential Tenancies Act 2010

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2010-042>

8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Rent review process

Appendix 3: SEARMS Fact Sheet

9. FURTHER RESOURCES

Fair Trading NSW <https://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/housing-and-property/renting>

Median Rents [Rent and Sales Report - interactive dashboard | Family & Community Services \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

Commonwealth Rent Assistance <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/rent-assistance>

Tenant advocates <https://www.tenants.org.au/taas/mmtaas>

Version	APPROVAL	Reason	Effective Date	REVIEW DATE
004	Board	Review outcome	19 July 2024	Annually
003	Board	Review due to HAC meeting, NCAT matters	3 July 2024	Annually
002	Board	ASES format change	1 May 2024	Annually
001	Board	NEW, clarification for SEARMS portfolio	10 June 2022	Every 2 years



ANNEXURE A

Property Address	
10 Irene Av, Batehaven NSW 2536	44 Pacific St, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
11 Catalina Dr, Batehaven NSW 2536	5 Berrima St, Catalina NSW 2536
11 Pleasurelea Dr, Sunshine Bay NSW 2536	50 Karoola Cr, Surfside NSW 2536
117 Country Club Dr, Catalina NSW 2536	64 Calga Cr, Catalina NSW 2536
12 The Outlook Rd, Surfside NSW 2536	64 Ridge St, Catalina NSW 2536
16 Binda St, Malua Bay NSW 2536	64 Surfbeach Av, Surf Beach NSW 2536
16 Marina Pde, Surfside NSW 2536	66 Albatross Rd, Catalina NSW 2536
17 Albatross Rd, Catalina NSW 2536	7 Palm Pl, Surfside NSW 2536
17 Clare Cr, Batehaven NSW 2536	9 Sturt Pl, Denhams Beach NSW 2536
19 Sandpiper Pl, Catalina NSW 2536	9 The Outlook Rd, Surfside NSW 2536
19 Wallarah St, Surfside NSW 2536	Unit 1 / 37 Old Princes Hwy, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
22 Bernadette Bvd, Batehaven NSW 2536	Unit 1 / 4 Gregory St, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
22 Surfside Av, Mossy Point NSW 2537	Unit 1 / 40 High St, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
23 Clare Cr, Batehaven NSW 2536	Unit 1 / 6 Gregory St, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
23 Tasman St, Surf Beach NSW 2536	Unit 2 / 23-25 Dolphin Av, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
24 Clare Cr, Batehaven NSW 2536	Unit 2 / 37 Old Princes Hwy, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
25 Clare Cr, Batehaven NSW 2536	Unit 2 / 4 Gregory St, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
28 Albatross Rd, Catalina NSW 2536	Unit 2 / 40 High St, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
4 Kennedy Cr, Denhams Beach NSW 2536	Unit 2 / 6 Gregory St, Batemans Bay NSW 2536
44 Berrima Pde, Surfside NSW 2536	