

CONSULTATION REPORT



Draft Government Housing Management Policy

March 2025

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the findings from the consultation held by the Cook Islands Investment Corporation (CIIC) on the Draft Government Housing Management Policy (the Policy).
- 1.2 The consultation sought feedback from key stakeholders, including:
- (a) Government agencies;
 - (b) Non-governmental organisations (NGOs);
 - (c) Social housing tenants;
 - (d) Tenants of parliamentary housing;
 - (e) Tenants of specialist public sector housing; and
 - (f) Tenants under discretionary housing provisions.
- 1.3 Overall the consultation identified key themes of feedback related to policy clarity, policy implementation and evaluation, provision for priority housing needs, policy transparency, and fairness and accessibility.
- 1.4 This report makes recommendations as to improvements to the Policy based on these key themes.

2.0 Stakeholder Consultation Methodology and Engagement

- 2.1 The Policy working group within CIIC (working group) identified key stakeholder groups and stakeholders within those groups. Table 1 below shows stakeholder groups and stakeholders identified for consultation.

Table 1

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholder
Government agencies	Crown Law Office
	Ministry of Education (MOE)
	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM)
	Ministry of Internal Affairs (INTAFF)
	Office of the Prime Minister, Central Policy and Planning (OPM CPPO)
	Office of the Public Service Commissioner (OPSC)
	Parliamentary Services
	Te Marae Ora (TMO)
NGOs	Cook Islands Civil Service Organisation
	Cook Islands Disability Council
	Cook Islands Red Cross
	National Council of Women
	Punanga Turuturu Itivaine (PTI)
Social housing tenants	All social housing tenants (30 in total)
Parliamentary housing tenants	All parliamentary housing tenants (7) plus 2 Members of Parliament on waitlist
Specialist public sector housing tenants	All specialist public sector housing tenants (4 in total)
Discretionary housing tenants	All discretionary tenants (2 in total)

Table 1 – Stakeholder groups and stakeholders identified for consultation.

2.2 Table 2 below shows methods of consultation with each of the stakeholder groups and their engagement.

Table 2

Stakeholder Group	Method of Consultation	Engagement
Government agencies	Contacted by email with the following information: • Covering/explanatory letter with instructions on how to provide feedback; • Copy of the Policy; and • Feedback form for completion.	• 6 of 8 agencies contacted submitted feedback via email (INTAFF, MFEM, MOE, OPSC, Parliamentary Services, TMO).

	Parliamentary Services and INTAFF were invited to an in person consult given their proposed roles within the Policy.	• A one-on-one, in-person consult was held with Parliamentary Services. • Minister Mokoroa also attended the social housing consult and provided feedback on behalf of MOE. • 90 points of feedback were received from government agencies.
NGOs	Contacted by email with the following information: • Covering/explanatory letter with instructions on how to provide feedback; • Copy of the Policy; and • Feedback form for completion.	• 1 of 5 NGOs contacted submitted feedback via email (PTI). • 8 points of feedback were received from NGOs.
Social housing tenants	In person group consultation held at the Pokoinu Hall. All tenants were invited by email and mail drop to their home with a copy of the Policy. The consultation was recorded with consent.	• The consult was attended by 24 of the 30 tenants invited. • The consult was also attended by Minister Mokoroa and his CEO. • 24 points of feedback were received from social housing tenants.
Parliamentary housing tenants	In person group consultation held at Parliament. All tenants were invited by email and engagement with Parliamentary Services. The consultation was recorded by Parliamentary Services and made available to CIIC.	• The consult was attended by 5 parliamentary housing tenants of the 7 invited. • The consult was also attended by 2 Members of Parliament on the waitlist for a parliamentary house. • The consult was attended by Minister Elikana, Minister for Parliamentary Services, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Parliament. • 44 points of feedback were received from

		parliamentary housing tenants.
Specialist public sector housing tenants	Contacted by email with the following information: • Covering/explanatory letter with instructions on how to provide feedback; • Copy of the Policy; and • Feedback form for completion.	• 0 specialist public sector tenants submitted feedback by email. • 1 specialist public sector tenant attended the social housing consultation. • 0 points of feedback were received from specialist public sector tenants.
Discretionary housing tenants	Contacted by email with the following information: • Covering/explanatory letter with instructions on how to provide feedback; • Copy of the Policy; and • Feedback form for completion.	• 0 discretionary tenants submitted feedback by email. • 1 discretionary tenant attended the social housing consult. • 3 points of feedback were received from discretionary tenants.

Table 2 – Stakeholder groups, method of consultation for each group and their engagement.

3.0 Key Themes from Consultation

3.1 Much feedback was received during consultation. Analysis of the feedback showed that five recurring themes emerged from the consultation. These were:

3.2 Policy Clarity

- (a) Provision of further and more detailed information to provide greater clarity. Specific examples are:
 - (i) Providing more detail in the introduction to the Policy of the challenges faced by CIIC in managing government housing and the need/rationale for the Policy.
 - (ii) In relation to parliamentary housing, providing more detail as to the requirements of the Civil List Act 2005 and the Remuneration Tribunal Act 2005 and Order 2019. Ensuring alignment between the Policy and requirements of the Remuneration

Tribunal Order 2019 or making recommendations as to the next review of the Remuneration Tribunal Order.¹

- (b) Minor amendments to make the wording of specific clauses of the Policy clearer.

3.3 ***Tools for Policy Implementation and Evaluation***

- (a) Provision for the development of tools for implementation of the policy, such as forms, templates, reports and registers.
- (b) Rental rates or a formula/method by which they will be calculated.
- (c) Development of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework for the Policy.

3.4 ***Provision for Priority Housing Needs***

- (a) A number of points of feedback identified the need to provide government housing for priority needs. Examples given included:
 - (i) Provision of safe housing for victims of domestic violence/vulnerable groups. It is noted that this recommendation would ensure a more gender-sensitive approach.
 - (ii) Provision of housing for students from the Pa Enua who come to Rarotonga for their education.
- (c) It is noted, from the parliamentary housing consult that some Ministers for the Pa Enua are using their government house to provide accommodation for students from the Pa Enua. It is noted that use of parliamentary housing in this manner can address housing needs that are not currently contemplated in the Policy. This matter is not currently discussed in the Policy and should be included.

3.5 ***Transparency and Consistency***

- (a) Provision of specific guidance as to exercise of discretion set out in the policy. For example:
 - (i) The CIIC Board's discretion to change eligibility criteria at section 7.2(d).
 - (ii) The CIIC Board's discretion to allocate discretionary housing at section 10.1(c) and clear definition of the meaning of "beneficial to the wellbeing of Cook Islands people".
 - (iii) The Housing and Project Officer's discretion in relation to the social housing income threshold at section 7.2(c).
- (b) Clear guidance as to how various prioritisations in the Policy work. For example:

¹ Note it was intended that the Remuneration Tribunal Order 2019 would be reviewed in early 2025. CIIC has been advised by Parliamentary Services that there is no budget to convene the Remuneration Tribunal to carry out the review. Parliamentary Services (and some Members in attendance at the parliamentary housing consultation) have recommended that CIIC finalise this Policy so that it may inform any future review of the Remuneration Tribunal Order.

- (i) Social housing prioritisation of applications from the Pa Enua who do not have access to land ownership or suitable accommodation at section 7.1(c) and 7.2(b).
 - (ii) Consideration of housing for priority sectors in relation to specialist public sector housing at section 9.2(b).
- (c) A recurring theme across various consultation forums was the need for decision-making in relation to government housing to be transparent and aligned with policy principles/objectives. Significant feedback related to criticism of recent CIIC decisions to use government houses for Blackrock Daycare and a private daycare. Commentators did not understand the exercise of the discretion in this manner in the context of a housing crisis in the Cook Islands and limited government housing stock.

3.6 *Fairness and Accessibility*

- (a) Inclusion of a limit as to how many times a social housing tenancy may be renewed. Currently section 7.3(b) of the Policy does not limit renewals provided the eligibility criteria is met. Recurring feedback suggested a limited number of 2-year renewals to ensure accessibility of housing to those on the waitlist.
- (b) Development of the income threshold for social housing to allow for inflation/increases to costs of living over time and to take better account of dependents.
- (c) Further clarify requirements around home/land-ownership/access on Rarotonga for social, parliamentary and specialist categories of housing.

4.0 Recommendations/Next Steps

- 4.1 This consultation report, outlining the key themes, feedback and next steps, is provided to the CIIC Board, Cabinet and the stakeholder groups and stakeholders identified at 2.1 of this report.
- 4.2 Based on the feedback received it is recommended that the Policy is revised to better take account of the key themes highlighted from the consultation.
- 4.3 An updated draft of the Policy to be presented to the CIIC Board for consideration at the May 2025 Board meeting.
- 4.4 Once approved by the CIIC Board, the revised Policy is presented to Cabinet in June 2025.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The consultation process has provided valuable insights into stakeholder concerns and areas for improvement. By implementing the recommended updates, the Policy can better meet housing need while ensuring sustainable housing management. Continued engagement with stakeholders will be essential in the successful implementation of the revised Policy.

6.0 Acknowledgement

- 6.1 CIIC recognises the contributions from various stakeholders identified in this report, who engaged in the consultation process. Their input has been essential to improving the Policy. Meitaki maata.