Guide for MWOD and MWD(U)

Choice Accommodation

DHA
Defence Housing Australia

Guide for MWOD and MWD(U)
Choice Accommodation

This guide is designed to explain MWOD and MWD(U) Choice Accommodation (MCA), the administrative processes and your responsibilities as a recipient of MCA.

For enquiries regarding MCA, please contact your local Defence Housing Australia (DHA) Housing Management Centre (HMC).

The MCA provisions described in this guide are specified in the Defence Pay and Conditions Manual (PACMAN), Chapter 7.

Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied) (MWD(U))
a Defence member who maintains a home for dependants and who is separated from them for service recognised reasons.

Member Without Dependants (MWOD)
a Defence member who does not have any dependants (MWD) or a Member With Dependants (Unaccompanied).

What is MWOD and MWD(U) Choice Accommodation?

MWOD and MWD(U) Choice Accommodation (MCA) provides a range of quality off base rental properties for eligible Defence members.

MCA is a hassle-free alternative to Rent Allowance (RA) and Living in Accommodation (LIA). It offers a simple move-in move-out process and does not require you to pay bond or rent in advance.

Properties are available in convenient locations either close to base or close to city centres and with easy access to amenities such as shopping centres, cafés, entertainment, sporting grounds and public transport.

Why choose MWOD and MWD(U) Choice Accommodation?

MCA has been developed to meet the housing needs of MWOD and MWD(U) Defence members. Its benefits include:

- minimal financial outlay - no bond or advance rent payments required
- it is not restrictive - no fixed term lease
- easy payment arrangements - rent is automatically deducted from your pay
- a simple process - one application
- pre-allocation of properties - no viewings necessary to secure a property
- a closed market - avoid competition in the open rental market
- great locations - properties have been pre-selected with your needs in mind
- one point of contact for all maintenance issues

Your step by step guide

		Page
1	Check your eligibility	4
2	Find a property	5
3	Move into your property	6
4	Start contributions from your pay	7
5	Notify DHA of any change to domestic circumstances or operational conditions	8
6	Notify DHA when you plan on vacating	9

1 Check your eligibility

How is eligibility determined?

Eligibility for MCA housing is dependent on your member categorisation and the approval of Rent Allowance (RA).

RA approval applies to MWOD and MWD(U) who are not required to live in.

NOTE: You may not be eligible for MCA if you own your own home in location. You should discuss your situation with your DHA case manager.

MCA properties do not allow pets.

2 Find a property

How do I find out about available properties?

To determine your RA entitlement and the availability of MCA in your location logon to DHA Online Services and apply for RA.

Enter your housing date and a list of available properties will be provided along with other relevant information such as photographs, a list of features, floor plans and dimensions.

Once you have decided on a property use the property reservation tab to secure your choice. Your DHA case manager will then contact you.

For more information about property availability or to discuss a property in more detail, contact your local HMC.

Will I be required to make advance payments?

Unlike renting a property in the open market, you do not need to pay a bond or rent in advance. This minimises your financial outlay.

3 Move into your property

How do I set up my utilities?

You are responsible for your utility accounts. In some instances there may be a connection fee. When arranging the connection or disconnection of your electricity, gas, telephone, Internet and Pay TV you may choose to use the Fast Connect service. This is a free service where you will have access to a choice of service providers.

If you wish to use this service a ***Fast Connect authority*** form is available online **(fastconnect.net.au)** or you can access this via our website **(dha.gov.au).** If you have any questions about this service contact Fast Connect on 1300 661 464 (local call cost around Australia).

Who do I speak with to arrange the removal of furniture and effects?

Toll Transitions is your relocations service provider if you are eligible for a removal at Commonwealth expense. For enquiries on your relocation and entitlements or the transportation of your furniture and effects, phone Toll Transitions on 1800 819 167.

When can I move in?

Before moving into your property you will need to make an appointment with your DHA case manager to sign your tenancy agreement.

The tenancy agreement outlines the conditions of occupancy. It is a legally binding contract between DHA and the Defence member and sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

On signing the tenancy agreement you will be able to collect the keys to the property. At your appointment you will also be provided with a ***Condition report*** that must be completed and returned to your local HMC within 14 days.

Will I need to provide access to the property?

From time to time DHA will require access to your property to carry out repairs and maintenance, for periodic inspections, or to organise a sale or valuation of the property. Your responsibilities in providing access are detailed in the tenancy agreement.

Will I have property inspections?

Periodic inspections of the property may be conducted to ensure the property is maintained. The purpose of the inspection is to identify any maintenance issues or wear-and-tear to the property that should be addressed. Inspections will be arranged at an agreed time.

Will I be responsible for cleaning the property?

You are responsible for keeping your property clean and well maintained.

What is the difference between fair and non-fair wear-and-tear?

DHA recognise that over time there will be some deterioration due to the normal ageing process and use of the property. This is known as fair wear-and-tear.

Any damage, mistreatment or neglect is considered non-fair wear-and-tear, and any items identified will need to be repaired. Any damage must be reported to your local HMC and the cost of repairs will be your responsibility.

The tenancy agreement outlines your responsibilities in regards to fair wear-and-tear and non-fair wear-and-tear.

Do I have to undertake maintenance on the property?

Under the terms of the tenancy agreement you must notify your local HMC of any damage, defects or deterioration to the property. Routine maintenance issues can be reported by phoning 139 DHA (139 342) during business hours (Monday–Friday 8.30am–4.30pm).

Emergency maintenance issues that affect the immediate health, safety or security of you or the property must be reported immediately. If you phone the maintenance line after hours, you will be connected to the after-hours emergency service.

Emergency maintenance includes problems such as burst water pipes, no water, serious flooding, sewer blockage, complete loss of power, gas leaks and fire or storm damage.

4 Start contributions from your pay

How do I make rent payments?

Payments are deducted from your pay on a fortnightly basis through the Defence pay system – ADFPAY. This will be arranged by DHA following the signing of the tenancy agreement.

If you have questions about your deductions you can contact the Defence Call Centre 1800 Defence (1800 333 3623).

How is my contribution calculated?

Your MCA contribution is calculated using RA rent ceilings and contribution rates. These rates are based on your rank and your categorisation.

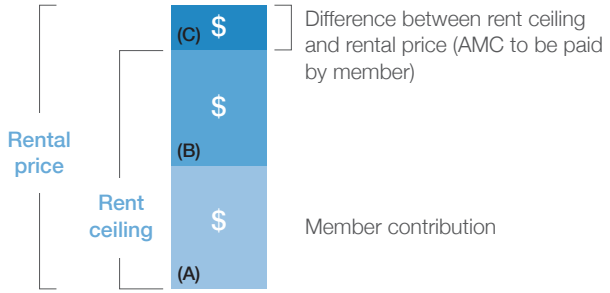
If you select a property with a rent that is on or below what your RA rent ceiling would be, you will only pay your standard RA member contribution. If you select a property that has a rent above your RA rent ceiling you will pay your standard RA member contribution plus the amount above your RA rent ceiling. This amount is referred to as an Additional Member Contribution (AMC).

The RA rent ceiling is a financial limit on the amount of RA that you can be paid. This limit is determined and reviewed annually by Defence.

Please note there is no entitlement to furniture rental assistance.

Example: Property with a rental price of $405.00

Rent of property selected	$405.00
RA rent ceiling	$380.00
Member contribution	$225.00
Amount above RA rent ceiling (AMC) (difference between RA rent ceiling and rent of property)	$25.00
Amount to be deducted from pay (Member contribution + AMC)	$250.00



Member pays member contribution (A) plus any difference between rent ceiling and rental price (C)

Can I increase the RA rent ceiling?

There is no ceiling increase provision for MCA, however, you are able to choose a property that has a rent above your RA rent ceiling. It is your responsibility to be aware of what your contribution (including any AMC) is prior to signing an agreement for the property.

Can I expect rental increases?

Similar to rental properties in the open market your property will be subject to possible rent increases during the term of your lease. A rent increase may occur:

- on the anniversary of your occupation of the property, based on market rent values, or
- due to the annual review of Defence rates for RA member contributions and RA rent ceilings.

5 Notify DHA of any change to domestic circumstances or operational conditions

I have a change to my domestic circumstances. What do I need to do?

Your domestic circumstances determine your eligibility to occupy MCA properties and the contributions you are required to pay. If there is a change to your circumstances you will need to inform DHA in writing within 14 days.

Examples of changes include but are not limited to:

- marriage
- an interdependent relationship approved by Defence
- birth of a child
- a change in rank
- purchase of own home
- moving house within locality (refer to section in this guide about vacating)
- operational conditions i.e. deployment or going to sea
- promotion/demotion of rank
- changing your unit, but not moving locality

Are there any circumstances where I am not required to pay a member contribution?

Under the following circumstances, a MWOD may not be required to pay rent contributions:

- on and from the 22nd day of a period in which the member has been living under field conditions or on a seagoing ship, even if the period after that day is broken by a return of up to seven days to his or her accommodation
- if posted to a seagoing submarine
- if absent from Australia on a deployment as outlined in the Defence Pay and Conditions Manual (PACMAN), Chapter 7.

These circumstances require written confirmation to support your claim. For members going on deployment the ***Deployment housing retention*** form should be completed during the pre-deployment preparations. This form is available on our website **(dha.gov.au).**

What do I need to do if I will be away for an extended absence?

There may be times when you are away for extended periods of time (30 days or longer). It is important, particularly for insurance purposes, that you advise your local HMC and arrange access for any possible maintenance issues, emergencies or inspections.
If you are undertaking operational conditions deployed overseas, seagoing, or under field conditions, you need to contact your DHA case manager. You will need to complete a ***Deployment housing retention*** form signed by your unit Commanding Officer/Officer Commanding.

What forms do I need to complete?

FORM	PURPOSE	REASON
Notification of housing change	To provide your details and the variables that determine your contribution and your occupation date.	Use this form when relocating in locality without a removal at Commonwealth expense.
Deployment housing retention	To advise DHA and Defence that you intend to maintain your current subsidised housing while deployed.	This form confirms and authorises the deployed status to allow adjustment of your contribution accordingly. It must be signed by your Unit Commanding Officer/ Officer Commanding.

6 Notify DHA when you plan on vacating

I want to vacate my property. What do I need to do?

As outlined in your tenancy agreement you must submit notification to DHA 28 days (or more) before you plan to move. If you submit your notification without the required notice, you will be required to pay the equivalent of 28 days worth of rent, even if you are no longer living in the property. If you wish to move to a new property within locality, a ***Notification of housing change*** form must be submitted to DHA.

Where it is necessary to break the lease for service reasons that are beyond your control and you are unable to give the mandatory 28 days notice (e.g. short notice posting), you are still required to submit the notification together with evidence of your new posting.

If you have a removal at Commonwealth expense you must submit your documents to Toll Transitions. You can phone Toll Transitions on 1800 819 167. Otherwise you must complete a ***Notification of housing change*** form and submit to your local

What is a Pre-Vacation Inspection?

A Pre-Vacation Inspection (PVI) occurs prior to you moving out. You must attend the PVI so that you understand your obligations for any maintenance or potential tenant charges for non-fair wear-and-tear. Your tenancy agreement defines the fair and non-fair-wear-and-tear details.

At your PVI we will discuss the cleaning requirements for your property. We will identify any non-fair wear-and-tear and you will be asked to complete a ***MCA Tenant Acknowledgement Form (TAF).***

The TAF identifies any potential charges for which you may be responsible. By signing the TAF you are acknowledging that all noted charges and information is correct.

What are my cleaning requirements?

When you move out of your property it is your responsibility to ensure it is cleaned to the required standard. Information regarding this will be provided at your PVI. You will also be responsible for the cost of professional carpet cleaning which you will need to arrange for the day following uplift.

A list of recommended cleaners can be provided by your local HMC.

How do I cancel the deductions from my pay?

When you are vacating your property due to service reasons, you will need to provide 28 days notice to DHA. You must also complete any removals documentation from Toll Transitions. Toll Transitions will notify DHA of your vacation date. Following this, DHA will arrange for deductions of your contributions to be ceased in the Defence ADFPAY system.

If you are not booking the removal through Toll Transitions you will be required to complete a ***Notification of housing change*** form or an ***MCA clearance form***. Please contact your DHA case manager for further information.

Handy contacts

Defence Housing Australia
139 DHA (139 342)
dha.gov.au
email: info@dha.gov.au

Toll Transitions
1800 819 167
tolltransitions.com.au/defence

Defence Call Centre
1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 3623)

Defence Community Organisation
defence.gov.au/dco
see website for office locations
and contact details.

Defence Pay and Conditions Manual
(PACMAN)
defence.gov.au/dpe/pac/

Fast Connect
1300 661 464
fastconnect.net.au

DHA
Defence Housing Australia