

Housing Officer interview questions

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What to expect

Housing Officer interviews are usually structured around how you apply policy to real tenant situations, manage competing priorities and communicate with people who may be under stress. Employers want to see that you can be fair and consistent while still showing empathy.

- **Process and policy questions:** These test your understanding of allocation, eligibility, rent arrears and tenancy compliance. You might be asked to walk through how you would assess an application or handle a breach.
- **Behavioural questions:** Past examples of dealing with difficult tenants, coordinating with support services or managing a heavy caseload.
- **Scenario and judgement questions:** Hypothetical situations that probe how you balance policy with compassion, for example a tenant who misses rent due to a medical emergency.
- **Client-facing and communication questions:** How you explain decisions, de-escalate conflict and adapt your approach for diverse tenants, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or people with disability.
- **Systems and administrative questions:** Familiarity with HIMS, Salesforce or similar tenancy management systems, and how you keep records accurate.

The interview is often a panel of two or three people, including a hiring manager and sometimes a senior housing officer. It usually runs for about 45 minutes to an hour. You might start with an introduction and role overview, then move through a mix of behavioural and scenario questions. Some employers include a short written exercise or a case study where you review an application and recommend an outcome. You will usually have time at the end to ask questions about the team and the portfolio.

1. Walk me through how you would assess a housing application from start to finish, including how you confirm eligibility.

Why they ask

This is a process question that checks your understanding of allocation policy and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

A walk-through structure: start with the application intake, then eligibility checks, then priority assessment, then documentation and decision. Mention any systems you use and how you record the outcome.

Example answer

"First I would check the application is complete and that the applicant has provided all required identity and income documents. Then I would verify their circumstances against the eligibility criteria in our allocation policy, such as residency, income thresholds and any special needs. If they meet the criteria, I would assess their priority category, which might involve looking at medical reports or support letters. I would record everything in HIMS, note the decision and any reasons, and then notify the applicant in writing. If they are not eligible, I would explain the decision clearly and let them know about review rights."

2. Tell me about a time you had to manage a tenant who was behind in rent. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

Behavioural question to see how you balance empathy with compliance and arrears recovery.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Focus on the conversation, the repayment plan and the outcome for the tenant.

Example answer

"A tenant in my portfolio had missed several rent payments after losing their job. I contacted them early, before the arrears grew too large, and we had a phone conversation. I listened to their situation and explained the options under our policy. We agreed on a repayment plan that was manageable, and I referred them to a financial counsellor and an employment service. I also followed up a month later to check they were on track. They stuck to the plan and cleared the arrears over time, and they kept their tenancy."

3. You receive a complaint from a neighbour about a tenant's behaviour. How would you respond?

Why they ask

Scenario question about dispute resolution, policy and communication.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: acknowledge the complaint, gather facts, apply policy, communicate with both parties, document, follow up.

Example answer

"I would thank the neighbour for raising it and let them know I will look into it. I would not promise any action before I have the facts. I would check the tenancy agreement and any relevant policies, then speak with the tenant to hear their side. If the behaviour is a breach, I would explain what needs to change and what support might help. If it is a neighbourhood dispute outside our remit, I would refer the neighbour to the appropriate service. I would document everything and follow up to see if the issue is resolved."

4. How do you prioritise your work when you have multiple applications, inspections and tenant calls due at the same time?

Why they ask

This tests time management and problem solving, common in housing officer roles with high caseloads.

How to structure your answer

A process structure: list your method for triaging, mention systems, deadlines and communication.

Example answer

"I start by checking what is urgent and what is important. Anything with a legal deadline, like a tenancy agreement sign-up or an inspection report due back to the authority, comes first. I use my calendar and task list in Outlook or Teams to block time for casework. If a tenant calls with an emergency like a burst pipe, I deal with that immediately and reschedule less urgent tasks. I also keep my manager informed if I think a deadline might slip, so we can reprioritise together."

5. Give an example of how you have worked with a support service to help a tenant maintain their tenancy.

Why they ask

Behavioural question about community engagement and stakeholder management.

How to structure your answer

STAR, emphasising the referral, the collaboration and the outcome for the tenant.

Example answer

"I had a tenant with a mental health condition who was struggling to keep up with correspondence and rent. I referred them to a local community mental health service with their consent. I then worked with

their support worker to set up a plan where the worker helped them open mail and attend appointments. I also adjusted how we communicated, using phone calls instead of written notices where possible. The tenant stayed in their home and their arrears stopped growing. That kind of partnership is essential in this role."

6. What do you know about the Residential Tenancies Act in your state or territory, and how does it affect your work?

Why they ask

Technical question to see if you understand the legal framework and compliance obligations.

How to structure your answer

A technical structure: name the Act, outline key obligations, give a practical example of how you apply it.

Example answer

"The Residential Tenancies Act sets out the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants, including notice periods, repairs, entry rights and termination. In my work, I apply it when I prepare tenancy agreements, respond to repair requests or issue breach notices. For example, if a tenant reports an urgent repair, I know the Act requires it to be fixed within a certain timeframe, so I escalate it to our maintenance team immediately and keep the tenant informed. I also make sure any action we take follows the correct notice periods so we are compliant."