



October 2020

# Social Housing Policy

## Feedback summary



## Purpose

This paper provides a summary of the consultation feedback on the proposed draft Social Housing Policy and, in particular, the proposed City Housing Policy: Rent Setting.

## Summary of proposed changes

- Updated Social Housing Policy framework that includes security of tenure and four separate pillars focused on specific operational areas of the policy:
  - Rent Setting
  - Prioritisation and Needs Assessment
  - Enhanced Services to Door
  - Asset Management
- Replacement of existing rent settings with an income-based rent setting

## The Consultation Process

The proposed policy summary information and a feedback form was mailed to every tenant household (1774) and emailed to external stakeholders (82 individuals, 50 organisations).

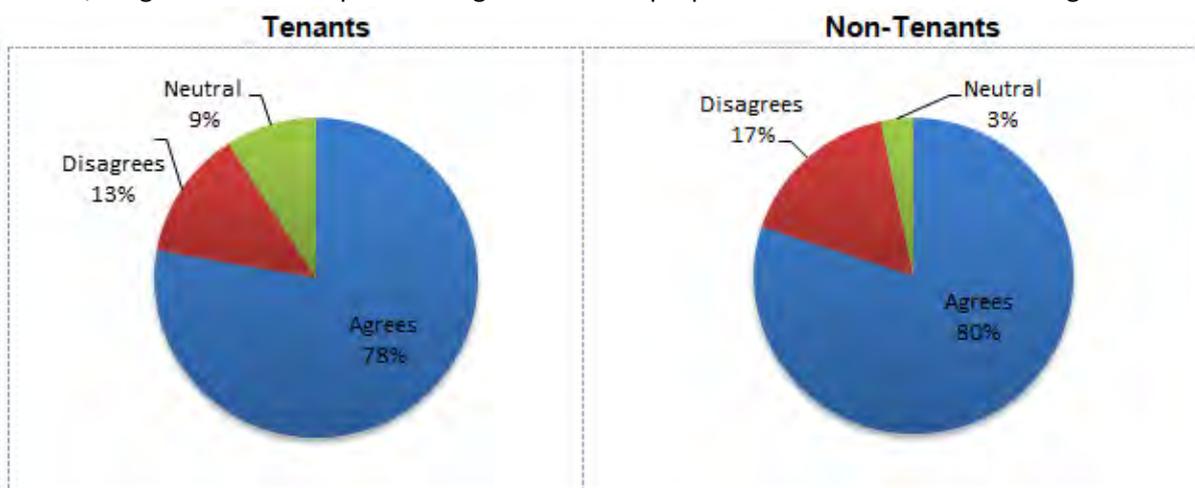
Officers attended meetings with 228 individual tenants, 11 agency groups and 6 tenancy groups (89 attendees). The Lets Talk Wellington website received 1843 individual visits.

The consultation with tenants, other agencies and the wider public attracted 526 responses.

Of the 526 responses, 481 were from tenants (approximately 27% of our current tenancies) and 33 from non-tenants.

Twelve (12) of the tenant responses provided unclear responses as to their level of support so have been removed from the dataset.

Overall, a high number of respondents agreed with the proposed income-based rent setting as follows:



**Table 1** is a breakdown of how strongly submitters rated their view about the proposed rent setting.

**Table 1 – Ratings of views**

<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Non-Tenants</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Definitely Agree	267	56%	Definitely Agree	22	67%
Somewhat Agree	89	18%	Somewhat Agree	2	6%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	42	9%	Neither Agree nor Disagree	1	3%
Somewhat Disagree	20	4%	Somewhat Disagree	2	6%
Definitely Disagree	40	8%	Definitely Disagree	3	9%
No Choice	23	5%	No Choice	3	9%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>481 (493)</b>			<b>33</b>	

## Background

On 12 March 2020, Councillors approved consultation on the draft Social Housing Policy and the proposed City Housing Policy: Rent Setting.

The original consultation process commenced on 19 March 2020 but was immediately postponed as a result of Covid19. Consultation resumed from 2 June to 5 July 2020, which pushed out this update paper to Council from June to August 2020.

Tenancy consultation included:

- A consultation summary booklet outlining the proposed changes and a free-post feedback form being mailed to all City Housing tenants.
- Online consultation via Let’s Talk Wellington (LTW).
- Offer of phone conversation or 1:1/small group appointment with Tenancy Advisor to ask questions and/or provide feedback.
- Information sent to English as a Second Language tutors, organisations and tenant support workers so they could help tenants understand and make a submission.
- Opportunity to email feedback to City Housing.
- Opportunity to make an oral submission at one of two Strategy and Policy Committee meetings.

Public consultation included:

- Feedback primarily via the LTW engagement platform.
- City Housing staff attendance at smaller external community group meetings as requested.

The full outline of all tenant and public feedback will be provided as an attachment to the Financial Sustainability Options Council paper in November.

## Consultation Questions

The consultation feedback form consisted of four (4) questions as per the below.

1. We propose to set City Housing tenants' rent based on their income and circumstances. How strongly do you support this proposal?*										
<table><tr><td><b>1</b></td><td><b>2</b></td><td><b>3</b></td><td><b>4</b></td><td><b>5</b></td></tr><tr><td>Definitely agree</td><td>somewhat agree</td><td>neither agree nor disagree</td><td>somewhat disagree</td><td>definitely disagree</td></tr></table>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	Definitely agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	definitely disagree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>						
Definitely agree	somewhat agree	neither agree nor disagree	somewhat disagree	definitely disagree						
2. Thinking about your response to question one, what are your reasons for your level of support?*										
3. Do you have any other comments about our proposal to set City Housing tenants' rents based on their income and other circumstances?										
4. Do you have any other comments about our new draft Social Housing Policy? You can find it online in the 'Documents' section at <a href="http://letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/rent-setting">letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/rent-setting</a>										

## Consultation Feedback Summary

### Overview

Of the tenants that agreed with the proposed rent settings (365 of 481 or 78% of respondents) explained their agreement with the policy proposal as being because it was the fairest option available. It would be the best way to look after those struggling on little money, those with disabilities, single family households and those struggling to find work.

Many felt that in recent years rent had gone up while income and benefits remained at the same level, which caused more people to struggle with paying the 70% of market rate rent.

Most respondents are only on superannuation or the benefit and stated that rent took up the majority of that each week. It was felt that rent based on income would allow people to have more money left after rent for other essential goods such as food and medical supplies, and that even a small difference in leftover money would make a large difference in quality of life.

This proposal was therefore seen as something that could be an all-around help and create more equality among tenants and impact positively on wellbeing/mental health.

Some commented that it seemed that rent based on income is the point of social housing and it is good to be moving closer to what is offered by central government housing since that is where respondents might otherwise be.

The overall summary of tenants that disagreed with the proposed settings (60 of 481 or 13% of respondents) said it was because it was unfair. Some felt that it was an unequal proposal because those with the same housing should just pay the same rent or those who can pay more should be given the better quality social housing. It was felt that inequalities and tensions between tenants would otherwise occur.

Others explained that their employment and therefore their income were not consistent and they would struggle if their rent did not reflect that, ie, rent based on income that was unusually high. This included the idea that if rent was based on a constantly changing income and therefore was also constantly changing then it would be a struggle for people to determine their finances.

It was felt that the proposal created a disincentive to tenants seeking employment to have a better standard of life if working just meant they had to pay more on rent, and therefore never got ahead, especially for those in low income jobs.

Those on single superannuation were concerned that their income now put them into a higher income band that meant their rent would increase. There was also concern expressed that those tenants currently receiving an 80+ rent freeze would face large rent increases that impacted on the standard of living they have been used to with such a freeze.

A few complained that the Council calculator indicated that a small change in income would cause the rent to increase and this was seen as unfair. Many also felt that it was unclear what circumstances were to be taken into account when deciding rent and the proposal needed to be made clearer.

It was submitted that the accommodation supplement should not be included in base income that is assessed to apply a Discount Market Rent (DMR).

Some felt this proposal was indicating a shift away from social housing to affordable housing and applicants on higher incomes would take preference for housing over those on lower incomes in order to generate revenue.

The overall summary of non-tenants that agreed with the proposed settings (24 of 33 or 73% of respondents) said it was because people in low incomes should pay what they can afford and current prices were too high creating mental and physical health issues. The proposal allows accountability and dignity.

If WCC is providing social housing, then rents needs to be tied to earnings so it is fairer and equitable and so that rents are affordable as they are currently too high.

This proposal will help bring things in line with Kāinga Ora and other social housing providers.

Some said it is not fair on ratepayers if those on higher incomes get subsidised rent.

The overall summary of non-tenants that disagreed with the proposed settings (5 of 33 or 18% of respondents) said it was because ratepayers should not subsidise tenants more than what the government is prepared to through accommodation supplement. That is a central government role and they should provide accommodation supplements recognising income disparities.

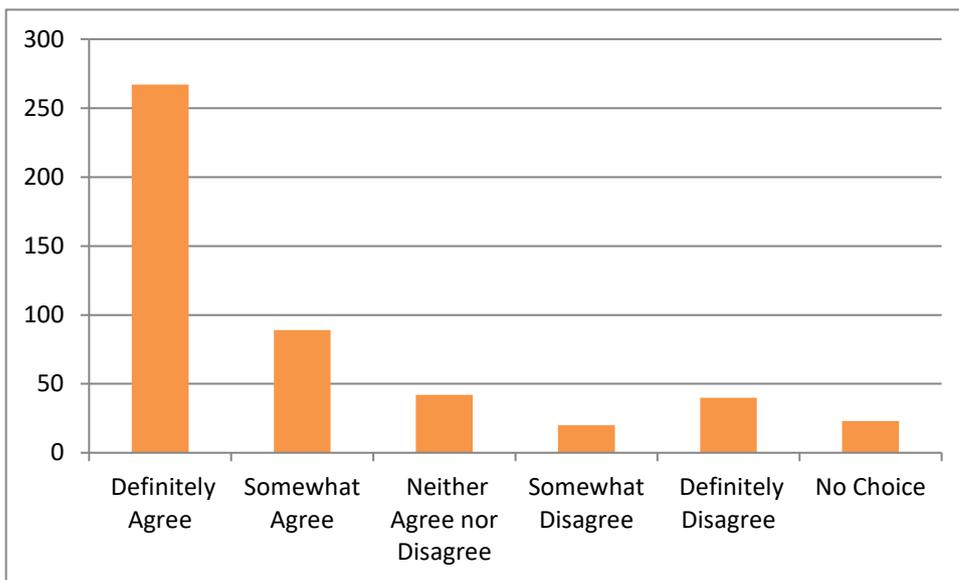
WCC should charge a standard percentage below market rent to all tenants and allocate to the neediest.

Some non-tenants said they didn't trust WCC to do this proposal without subsidising from ratepayer funds and should instead focus on infrastructure because the ratepayer should not pick up the bill for social housing rent.

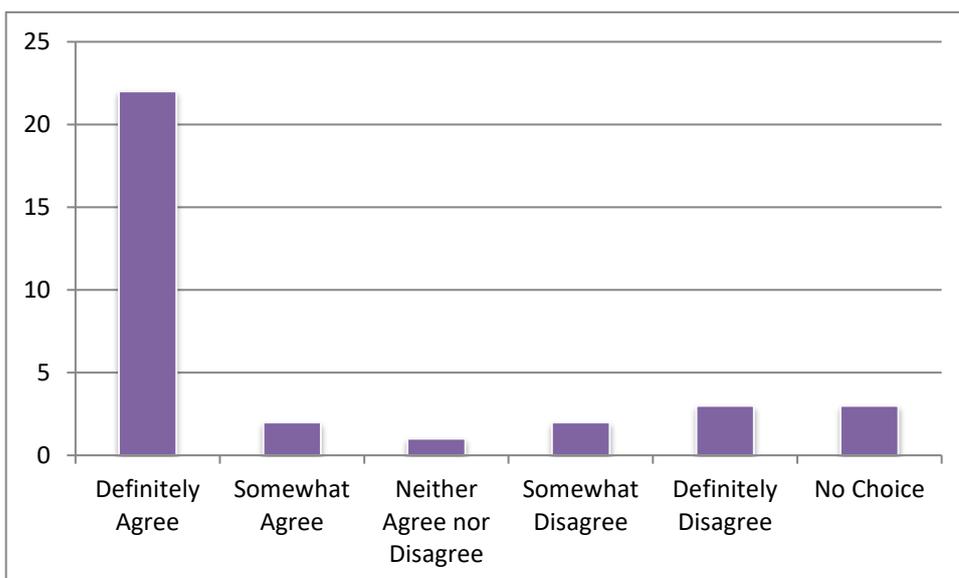
Others said they did not like the engagement process as they felt the Council did not meaningfully engage with tenants.

Questions 1 and 2 of the feedback form asked if people to rate their level of agreement with the proposal and invited comments to support their rating. **Tables 2 and 3** provide an illustration of the breakdown of ratings.

**Table 2 – Detail of tenant support for proposed income-based rent setting**



**Table 3 – Detail of non-tenant support for proposed income-based rent setting**



**Table 4** provides a summary of the reasons for the ratings people provided: Note that the quotes included are as written in the submissions.

**Table 4 – Summary breakdown of reasons supporting ratings – tenants and non-tenants**

**Tenants:**

Rating	Reasons
Definitely agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rents too high</li> <li>• Wisest and fairest option / Fairness, kindness, transparency</li> <li>• Cost of living is increasing and becoming too high for many</li> <li>• Superannuation/pension only not enough to pay rent currently and pay for other necessary costs</li> <li>• Would be an all-around help</li> <li>• Unemployed and those with kids need the help</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Differences in local vs central housing – make more similar would be good as WCC tenants would usually be in Kāinga Ora</li> <li>• Families – will make easier to support children</li> <li>• Unfair at moment between those who can pay more and those who can not</li> <li>• Allows people to save money</li> <li>• Covid-19 employment struggles and general employment struggles affecting ability to pay</li> <li>• Good for lower income people</li> <li>• Makes it easier to use money for other important needs e.g. food, medical</li> <li>• Allows for changes in circumstance</li> <li>• Better and fairer than old policy</li> <li>• Think rent is higher than earnings at the moment</li> <li>• Policy change makes sense</li> <li>• Will help wellbeing/mental health</li> <li>• Means more money for food</li> <li>• Those who are working can afford to pay more</li> <li>• Would be helpful and equitable</li> <li>• Rents too high and keep rising (even paying 70% is a lot for many)</li> <li>• Don't create more hardship for those in need</li> <li>• WCC duty of care to do this</li> <li>• Should only be done for low income people</li> <li>• Would help as unforeseen circumstances occur</li> <li>• Superannuation is not rising as fast as rent and rent is a major expense</li> <li>• Take into account more factors i.e. provide more help elsewhere too</li> <li>• Gives poor people chance to get ahead</li> <li>• If makes rent cheaper then support</li> <li>• Makes so can keep housed and not become homeless</li> <li>• Doing it this way seems to be the point of WCC housing</li> <li>• Justifiable approach</li> </ul>
Quotes	<p><i>“My understanding of one of the reasons behind Wellington City Housing exist is to provide rental homes for Wellingtonians with low incomes and special housing needs.</i></p>

	<p><i>Therefore, it makes sense to put tenant's income and circumstances as variables in the rent calculation formula."</i></p> <p><i>"Because it is the wisest and fairest if that is the way it will be done properly. Myself, I would welcome a reduction in rent as I am struggling at present because the pension (Super) is only paid once a fortnight (rent every week to be paid). The cost of living is increasing all the time."</i></p> <p><i>"Fairness, Kindness, Transparency"</i></p> <p><i>"First an foremost it is totally fair when you are a pensioner and have no other income except your pension. Half of my pension goes to paying rent, the rest goes to paying bills and food expenses"</i></p> <p><i>"Its not fair the way a lot of people are left in hardship while others on a much more substantial income pay the same rent"</i></p> <p><i>"I definitely agree that parents with children and grand parents who are looking after their grand children and people on the unemployment benefit I believe strongly that the people I just mentioned deserve help with their rent."</i></p> <p><i>"I definitely agree with this proposal as a single mother of two girls aged 10 weeks &amp; 2 years. So it will definitely help me big time to support my girls better to thrive in life."</i></p> <p><i>"some people have higher income but some of us live with the lower income so it is not fair for us to pay the same amount with the higher income people"</i></p> <p><i>"I have chosen 1 definitely agree for my level of support regarding to set fairer rents for council rents. This is a great proposal to make very fair and will help lower income tenants to spen on neccesities that will help them in the long run. This would give them relief, peace of mind and not stressed"</i></p> <p><i>"This would be very advantageous to lower income earners. Paying 70% of the market value is a much greater chunk of a beneficiaries income than it is to someone who is in full time employment. Some beneficiaries at present could be paying 1/2 or more of their weekly net income in rent. Those who are woking can afford to pay more."</i></p> <p><i>"I think social housing providers have a duty of care to provide rental accommodation which is consistent with the tenants ability to pay"</i></p>
Somewhat agreed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of proposal confusing so did not put definitely agree but still agree</li> <li>• Already barely meet needs so would help</li> <li>• Good thing for job seekers and oldies</li> <li>• Good if means can have a little extra money for saving or paying for other things</li> <li>• Hope no implementation issues</li> <li>• Creates ability to save money</li> <li>• Rent increases are currently high due to market</li> <li>• Differences of some who work and some on limited income</li> <li>• Fairer especially for disabled and those who cannot find work</li> <li>• Negative for inconsistent incomes</li> <li>• Fewer rent reviews e.g. every 3 years</li> <li>• If do proposal then also improve quality of housing</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent is currently higher than income</li> <li>• It would help the elderly</li> <li>• More beneficial than having to use other resources like constantly getting food grants</li> <li>• More equality among tenants</li> <li>• Pandemic impact</li> <li>• Rent up while income has stayed the same</li> <li>• What percentages/level of income is deciding rent?</li> <li>• What about inconsistent hours/work/pay?</li> <li>• Reasonable as it is/keep as it is</li> <li>• Consideration of individual circumstances key</li> <li>• Difficulty that if rent changes then cannot make consistent financial decisions</li> <li>• Sometimes people work harder to do better for families but if that just increases rent then can never get ahead</li> </ul>
Quotes	<p><i>"We somewhat agree because on of us is working (S.Peschko) and yet we are paying (I/we think) the same amount of rent as those with more money as we are. Our rental unfortunately takes most of the one income"</i></p> <p><i>"As the address of this letter it looks faires with hope no gaps in it or better to say not easy to apply it"</i></p> <p><i>"Barely able to get ends to meet. I don't have any other income except Super Annuation. Found explanation confusing"</i></p> <p><i>"Paying based on level of income is very fair however some of your units are quite old and need basic facilities/compliance like heaters, vandilation (kitchen &amp; bathroom) extraction fans, security cameras for unknown regular footsteps and controlling tenants behaviours as at time it can be very intimidating (weekend parties/noises) if these things are addressed it make all the sense to increase/decrease rents (it has to be reasonable &amp; fair for all)"</i></p> <p><i>"I agree to changing rent based on a percentage of income, but It would all depend on what that percentage would be. Although I agree with this I am aware that I will end up seeing a substantial rent increase"</i></p> <p><i>"The current rent scheme dose not take into consideration tenant income. But, I, myself, work casual work, I have no idea what will my income be weekly or annually. I wiat to be called every day to cover shifts. If I have no shifts I don't get payed"</i></p>
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal not clear</li> <li>• Indecisive respondent</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of proposal</li> <li>• Intent of proposal not clear to respondent</li> <li>• Unclear meaning of "according to earnings"</li> <li>• Problems with housing quality</li> <li>• Thought this was already the policy</li> <li>• Other factors should be considered not just income e.g. house condition</li> <li>• Fine as it is/keep rent as is</li> <li>• Need fair assessment of income to do this</li> <li>• Refugee families with no work income</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happy to pay higher</li> <li>• Don't understand – don't penalise low income tenants</li> </ul>
Quotes	<p><i>"I am not really understood what according to your earning means"</i></p> <p><i>"I think the Council is taking a dishonest approach to peopless' income by the way they are assessing income. So while I agree that it's good to be fairer in rents, it needs to be fairly assessed"</i></p> <p><i>"The City Housing dept has always treated me (and Conrad deceased) well and I am prepared to pay more per week for my flat after all this has been finalised."</i></p> <p><i>"Not too sure, unfortunately with the Covid at the moment we hardly get any extra hours from work and the cost of living is very expensive eg groceries, school donations, kids clothes, bills, etc"</i></p>
Somewhat disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-consistent hours of work means rent should not be based on income</li> <li>• Rent makes up big part of income</li> <li>• Makes it harder for those who are trying to earn more money to get themselves in better financial position</li> <li>• If do this then those who do work should be given better quality places</li> <li>• Worried rent supplement will put in higher bracket and have to pay more</li> <li>• Not fair for those in part or full time work vs those on benefit</li> <li>• Proposal needs work especially as could be a sudden jump in rent</li> <li>• Unclear what income is taken into account</li> <li>• Rent increase suddenly would create "rental stress"</li> </ul>
Quotes	<p><i>"I'm a security guard and my hours have changes a lot last week I only did 27 hrs which just made enough. My hours are not consistance"</i></p> <p><i>"It will make it difficult for people who are trying to earn more money to get themselves in a better financial position. Also 500,000 is not enough to buy a house in Wellington (20% of 500,000 is 100,000) this limit is too low"</i></p> <p><i>"Some tenats have rent supplement to help make ends meet. My concern is this payment, if combined with current income, could put them in a higher bracket thus increasing their rent and negating it's purpose. Some tenants who have talked about this are very distressed on top of having stringent budgets already!"</i></p> <p><i>"Under the proposed changes you are going to charge someone on minumum wage 45-46% of their net income as rent which will cause rental stress . This proposed changes will result in sudden rent hikes for many tenants. Even retirees on the basic state pension will face a rent increase. And other tenants on minimum wage will and modest incomes not much higher than minimum wage will face sudden rent increases of between \$70 and \$100 per week. this definitely more than meets the definition of rental stress"</i></p> <p><i>"It is not fare for people who work in part or full time job to pay high amount of rents while other who are under the benefit getting low rent. In the current system, People in the benefit still getting support from WINZ, so they might be happy. If you want to help them you can reduced your rent for them but don't apply the so called "fair rent""</i></p>
Definitely disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have the same flat you should pay the same price</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As it is is good, rent should stay as it is</li> <li>• Work not stable but could have increased rent under new system so not fair</li> <li>• Unfair if just found job and suddenly have to pay higher rent</li> <li>• Shouldn't base on "fixed" household income when income from benefit changes all the time based on time of year and costs that arise</li> <li>• Dubious whether all circumstances will be taken into account when deciding rent</li> <li>• Even if have technically higher household income e.g. due to multiple people in same house, does not mean can pay increased rent</li> <li>• Rent should be fixed for everyone or otherwise unfair</li> <li>• Unfair to decent, working people</li> <li>• WCC calculator indicates that don't have to earn a lot over benefit to be affected with rent increase</li> </ul> <p>NB: a number of those marked "5" for definitely disagree misunderstood the premise and the comments indicated a support for the policy similar to comments at a "1" and "2", for example:</p> <p><i>"low income already anything to save money is much appreciated"</i></p> <p><i>"Fair rents that reflect tenants income gives them a better standard of living and quality of life"</i></p> <p><i>"Think this is a good idea as many people struggling with illnesses for a long time. Rely on govt money which is not much"</i></p>
Quotes	<p><i>"This Proposal is ONLY for Poor Unemployed people or very low paid-low working hours etc ! this proposal is so Unfair to decent hard working people that earn between \$475 to \$675 which is around the basic living wage for 30 to 40 working hours etc, I only agree with charging higher rent's to much higher wage earners of \$875+ but not as high as your rent calculator is charging/stating etc, as I have tested that rent calculator and from \$one dollar to \$410 is at \$126 per week in rent, but it Jumps way up to \$147 per week in rent at \$440 in wages that is also unfair, the rent limits needs to be much Fairer... "</i></p> <p><i>"I work about 20 hours a week but my income is not stable as in some weeks I don't have much work. It would be too stressful for me if the rent percentage increased"</i></p> <p><i>"If you have the same flat you should pay the same price"</i></p> <p><i>"Although I sympatise with lower income tenants, why should I pay more for the same house and also loose a larger portion of my pension. Every year we get a ren increase letter, this is stressful enough as it is plus I have t hand over my bank statements which seems to me like you already do income based rents ??"</i></p> <p><i>"should be in flat rate"</i></p> <p><i>"Think its unfair system to those wanting to buy a house and those working will feel like there covering other peoples rent"</i></p> <p><i>"Because I signed my tenancy agreement on the understanding that I would be paying 70% of the market rate. I have also experimented with your calculator and you don't have to be earning a lot over a benefit for it to be affected. Im very concerned about</i></p>

	<p><i>this. Supported living has only just been increased and now this. You dont receive more than \$60 for health costs and my part time job helps to cover the remainder of them”</i></p> <p><i>“The proposal to charge rent based on income is not fair because personally aside from rent, I also need to pay for power, food, clothing, food and personal loans such as 3 weeks bond and 1 week advance”</i></p> <p><i>“We are refugged and have just found jobs so It is not fair that we now pay more rent”</i></p> <p><i>“We believe it is fairer to be charged rent for the property's value rather than basing rent on house-hold income. We (the tenants at this address) are all Work and Income beneficiaries and our benefits are regularly adjusted depending on living and medical costs that arise. This means that any increase in benefit is going toward paying a bill. For example our benefits are increased slightly during the winter months to help meet the cost of powerwhich increases during the those months.Additionally our benefits are adjusted to cover health related costs that arise or stop.It is therefore unfair to set a 'fixed' house hold income when our benefits are not 'fixed'. The current set up of rent being set based on 30% less the market value is fairer and allows us low income earners to live sustainably and when possible to save for sudden and unforceeable living costs that come up. It is already hard to afford rent and pay for power &amp; other costs during this time. We also feel that the current policies such as rental caps and affordable rent limit policies are good protective policies for the tenants and should remain. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to weigh-in on the decision. We appreciate your consideration and ask that you keep the current rent set up.”</i></p> <p><i>“I disagree with the proposal because it will mean that my family and I will struggle financially to pay. The rent that we pay now suits our current financial status”</i></p>
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**Non-tenants:**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
Definitely agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People in low income should pay what can afford</li> <li>• Not fair on ratepayers if those on higher incomes get subsidised rent</li> <li>• Rent prices too high currently and creates mental/physical health issues</li> <li>• Need to help tenants in council housing so communities thrive</li> <li>• If meant to be social housing then rent needs to be tied to earnings</li> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Meant to be about helping people</li> <li>• System should work for those using it</li> <li>• Allows accountability and dignity</li> <li>• Fairer system</li> <li>• Wil ensure affordability as rent currently too high</li> <li>• Too easy to hide income currently so can occupy social housing</li> </ul>
Quotes	<p><i>“Tenants in city housing deserve our support. In scaling rent to their income, we enable people to save more, live better lives, and spend more on the things that matter most. Especially those who live with their children or other dependents, having set rent which does not reflect income can be really difficult. Right now, many people are struggling due to Covid 19. If WCC is able to scale rents up or down in response to personal circumstances, I believe it would go a long way to helping our communities thrive”</i></p>

	<i>"Rent proportional to income allows for both accountability (look after this low rent property or you will be back on the private market) and dignity (allowing a certain proportion of income to be reliably allocated to housing whatever the vagaries of the employment situation)"</i>
Somewhat agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good reasons for proposal</li> <li>• Will help bring in line with Kāinga Ora and other social housing providers</li> </ul>
Quotes	<i>"It's a good reasons and I agree with the city council"</i>
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No idea about proposal</li> </ul>
Quotes	<i>"Because I have not idea about your proposal"</i>
Somewhat disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't trust WCC to do this proposal without subsidising from ratepayer funds</li> <li>• Don't like engagement process as felt didn't meaningfully engage tenants</li> </ul>
Quotes	<i>"I don't trust that the Council can do this without effectively subsidising housing with Ratepayer funds"</i>
Definitely disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratepayers should not subsidise</li> <li>• Should charge standard percentage below market rent and allocate to most needy. Central government role</li> <li>• Focus on infrastructure instead. Ratepayer should not pick up bill for social housing rent.</li> </ul> <p>Note: many non-tenants shared the same misunderstanding around rates and ratepayers involvement with WCC housing, despite the explanation to the contrary in the WCC proposal.</p>
Quotes	<p><i>"WCC Rate payers should not be subsidising tenants more than what the government is prepared to through accomodation supplements/benefits"</i></p> <p><i>"I think the council should charge a std % below market rent and allocate to most needy; I think central govt should provide accom supplements recognising income disparities- that's a central govt role in my view."</i></p>

Question 3 asked if people had any other comments on the proposal to set City Housing tenants' rents based on their income and other circumstances. Many comments were repetition of comments made in Question 2 but also included:

- Discussions around the quality of living also being reflected in rent, ie, discounts for those living in lesser quality homes.
- Questions around accommodation supplement being included as income, as well as the comment that if accommodation supplement reduced at same level as rent reduction then what was the point of the change as not freeing up any money.
- Many want implementation sooner rather than later.
- Many hope this wouldn't cause them to lose social housing for any reason.

*"If tenants are on a benefit, & rents are reduced what is to stop, the MSD reducing the accommodation supplement, by the same amount? This would leave tenants in exactly the same financial position, rents may be reduced, but if accommodation supplements are reduced by the same level, tenants are still left with the same level of disposable income"*

*"I think it's a great initiative but the parameters of qualifying for this should be very clear and well-thought out on a case-by-case basis. No one can anticipate all the circumstances one may have - ranging from health (mental or physical) to education background and options for work and economic stabilisation- there needs to be empathy for people of all walks of life. The number of children in a household as well as those children's needs ought to be considered, with special attention to those children who are in need of a great deal of care (disabled, ADHD, autism or otherwise). Those who are mildly disadvantaged and require city housing versus those who are extremely disadvantaged will get the help they need and deserve at an appropriate rate."*

Question 4 asked people if they had any other comments about the new draft Social Housing Policy. Comments included:

- Confusion and lack of understanding around changes to rent freeze for 80+. Many do not want this to change, especially for those who are already over 80.
- Discussions around the quality of social housing generally with issues about cleanliness and age of housing.
- No online access to get info on proposal. Some people were confused due to language barriers and others because they did not understand what some of the terms would mean in practise, for example, taking into account extenuating circumstances.
- Asking for more enhanced services that used to be around.
- Like the proposals if it means that more council housing can be built in future.
- Some were worried about having to leave/being forced to leave due to these policy changes.
- Some were worried about the asset limits being too low and supported the idea of increasing them so that they can buy a home and have more savings.

*"Rent freeze to tenants over 80 years old to continue."*

*"I want the rent freeze for over 80 to stay."*

*"I disagree I have been a tenant since 1969 I have been paying the same rent for 14 years and now you are proposing to remove the 80+ rent freeze. I won't be able to afford over \$247 on me and my wife's superannuation. I propose you keep the 80+ rent freeze."*

*"On the surface, this proposal misrepresents the WCC agenda as fairer rents for social housing tenants. However, this proposal actually represents an erosion of the WCC commitment as a premier social housing provider in NZ and conflates it with All Wellingtonians well housed. It expands the eligibility demographic to those struggling in the overheated private rental market who will pay full market rent and charge up the City Housing coffers. While the Independent Housing review from several years ago, charged the WCC to review operational costs, (including high cost City Care maintenance contracts), they have instead eroded the social values of social housing retrenching the community action services and the client facing services by reducing the number of tenancy advisors."*

*"It is very comprehensive Social Housing Policy document. Thank you very much for its compilation, for your unfailing help and support"*

*"The change to asset limits and intent to review the limit two yearly is a sensible move. The existing \$35,000 asset limit gives absolutely no motivation for a tenant to work towards home ownership or even holding savings for any other reason."*

Some out of scope comments made related to specific tenant circumstances, for example, health issues/disabilities and about the standard of social housing, for example complaints about partying neighbours and the lack of cleanliness:

*"I feel that others are taking better accommodation houses. I have been at the same run down council flat for 15 years and have never been offered an upgrade. Flat needs to be updated inside and not a nice area to live in."*

*"I am a double amputee - both legs."*

## **Next steps**

Recommendations pertaining to the Social Housing Policy and City Housing Policy: Rent Settings will be incorporated into overall options for consideration by Council in November when addressing the financial sustainability of the City Housing service at WCC.