National Rent Affordability Scheme: frequently asked questions

**What is NRAS?**

NRAS is the National Rental Affordability Scheme, an Australian Government initiative that aims to address the shortage of affordable rental accommodation by offering a financial incentive to accommodation providers. The incentive is offered on the condition that the dwellings are rented to eligible low to moderate income earners at a minimum of 20 percent below market rates. Priority is given to students who are travelling from elsewhere within Australia for NRAS dwellings.

**Why do I have to provide my income information and what will you do with it?**

NRAS regulations require the University, as an approved accommodation provider, to assess each individual’s eligibility to live in NRAS approved dwellings. To be eligible you must have earned less than $52,324 in the 12 months before you take up residency, and to remain eligible you must earn less than $65,405 in subsequent years (Re-assessed annually). Your income information will allow us to determine your eligibility and to allocate available accommodation in a manner consistent with the NRAS conditions. If you choose not to supply your income information, then you will not be considered for NRAS approved accommodation.

Your income information may be disclosed to affiliated accommodation providers for the purposes of assessing your initial and continuing eligibility. Except as disclosed in this information sheet, your income information will not be disclosed to people outside the University other than in accordance with any legal or academic obligation (we may, for example, be required to provide your information to the Commonwealth of Australia to comply with NRAS funding obligations), or to persons who have no need of access to the information, unless you tell us in writing, that you have given consent for us to do so.

**I am a school leaver and haven't previously been employed, what income information do I provide?**

The income section is based on your income and not your parents for the period 1 February - 31 January in the 12 months prior to your application.  If you have not earned any income, this includes income from family trusts or dividends, then you can enter 0.00 in your application.

**What is a Commonwealth Statutory Declaration?**

A Statutory Declaration is a written statement of facts, declared to be true in the presence of an authorised witness. In the Australian Capital Territory Statutory Declarations must be made in accordance with the Statutory Declarations Act 1959 (the Act).

The Act defines who may act as an authorised witness, and a list is included with the Statutory Declaration form. Only individuals who are licensed or registered to practice in Australia in a listed occupation may act as an authorised witness. For example a medical practitioner cannot act as an authorised witness if they are not licensed to practice in Australia.

A person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under the Act and may be fined or jailed, or both.

**Who will assess my eligibility?**

The University and/or UniLodge @ ANU is responsible for assessing an individuals initial and continuing eligibility to live in a NRAS approved dwelling. It is also your responsibility to advise the Hall of Residence, UniLodge or the Accommodation Services Office if your situation changes and you are no longer eligible.

**What happens if I do not meet the Initial Income Limit for NRAS approved accommodation?**

Individuals whose income as listed on their accommodation application is above the Initial Income Limit will not be eligible to live in NRAS approved accommodation, but may still be considered for non-NRAS accommodation.

Where you receive and accept an offer for NRAS approved accommodation and it is subsequently determined that your income is above the Initial Income Limit, then the University will use its best endeavours to locate an alternative room in another non-NRAS approved University accommodation facility. Where another room is not able to be located immediately, you will be able to take up residency in the NRAS accommodation until one becomes available, though you will be required to pay the market rate tariff. Alternatively either you or the University may choose to terminate the agreement where an alternative accommodation option is not available or acceptable.

**What if my income is greater than the Upper Income Limit in subsequent years?**

Where your income exceeds the Upper Income Limit in subsequent years, you will cease to be eligible to live in NRAS approved accommodation, and your residency will cease at the end of your room agreement. You may still be eligible however to live in non-NRAS approved accommodation.

**Which is residence falls under the NRAS scheme?**

The University has 550 beds in Lena Karmel Lodge that fall under the NRAS scheme. This residence will exit the scheme on 31 January 2022.

**Why do I have to be assessed for eligibility if I haven't applied for an NRAS approved dwelling?**

Due to high demand for student accommodation, the ANU cannot guarantee that you will receive an offer for your preferred residence. Your application may therefore be considered for any of the available student accommodation facilities, including NRAS approved facilities.

**If I am eligible does that mean I will receive an accommodation offer?**

Not necessarily, demand for NRAS approved accommodation is high, and therefore we cannot guarantee that all eligible applicants will receive an offer for NRAS approved accommodation.

**If I receive an offer for an NRAS approved facility, what supporting documentation must I provide?**

Included with your offer letter will be an Income Notification Form that will need to be submitted to the University on the day that your room agreement commences. You will also be required to provide supporting documentation substantiating your income.

Examples of supporting documentation that could be provided (please note these are examples only and are not exhaustive):

* Most recent payslip from each employer (preferably showing your year-to-date income)
* Letter from your employer(s)
* Notices of assessment for annual tax returns
* Statements from Centrelink
* Scholarship offer letters.

If the University is unable to satisfactorily determine your income based on your completion of the Income Notification Form and the supporting documentation that you provide, you may be required to complete a Commonwealth Statutory Declaration.

**What do you mean by gross income?**

Gross income is the income received before tax and other deductions.

Examples of what to include and what not to include when declaring your gross income to the University for NRAS purposes are:

To be included:

* Income from all work related activities
* Income from Scholarships, bursaries, prizes and stipends (although you are required to include all income from this source income for tuition costs will be excluded in determining your eligibility)
* Income received from the Australian Government including rental assistance and youth allowance
* Interest and dividends earned on investments, including interest from bank accounts and share dividends
* Income from other sources including overseas Government assistance
* Income from families for accommodation costs only.

Not to be included:

* Lump sum payments such as lottery wins
* Pocket money/allowances received from your parents (except where paid as a salary or for accommodation payments).

**Does this mean that the weekly tariffs for the NRAS approved dwellings will be 20 percent below those of the existing ANU student residences?**

No, the market value of NRAS approved dwellings will be determined by an independent property valuer and tariffs will then be set a minimum of 20 percent below this value. Tariffs in the existing University student residences are already below market rates due to low capital costs and Government subsidies.