

202 Modifications to Properties – Asset Management

1. Policy

1.1 Modifications to Address the Needs of Older People or People with a Disability

Link Housing will support modifications to properties that improve living standards for residents and that have been approved by registered health practitioner such as General Practitioner or, for more complex issues, an Occupational Therapist (OT). Modifications may include, but not be limited to, replacement of a bath with hobless shower, lowering of switches, installation of hand and grab rails, footpaths and improved access.

The aim of home modifications is to assist older people and people with a disability to remain living in their own home by providing affordable modifications designed to make the home environment accessible, safe and easier to live in.

Modifications to properties need to be scoped to meet all relevant design and statutory requirements and contracts need to reflect the scope of works. Upon agreement by all parties to the modifications a contract is to be signed between all parties and the contractor/builder undertaking the modification works. Properties are to be assessed for any potential asbestos prior to modifications being undertaken.

If it is decided that the property is not suitable for modifications to be carried out because it is a head leased property or the property does not lend itself to modifications, an alternate property will be identified which has either already been modified or is suitable for modification.

1.2 Other Property Modifications

Tenants may want to make changes to their home, some of which are of a permanent nature (eg. installation of air conditioning units). Link Housing will generally approve such applications, subject to the following considerations:

- The modifications to the home will not incur additional costs for Link Housing either in relation to the operating costs, maintenance or repairs;
- The modifications are legal, and are appropriate given the structural capability of the building (including the capacity of electrical, water and other services to sustain);
- The installation or modification is carried out by a suitably qualified, insured and licensed tradesperson;
- Repainting is in accordance to painting guidelines and scheduled, planned maintenance programs;
- There may be exceptions to repainting schedules if the tenant has visual or mental health needs for colour changes;
- If required, at the end of the tenancy, the property will be restored to its pre-modified condition at no cost to Link Housing;

- For head leased properties, the proposed modifications must be agreed to by the landlord/real estate agent.

2. Modifications to Address the Needs of Older People or People with a Disability

2.1 Scope and Substantiation Requirements

Modifications may be carried out to meet the requirements of a tenant, or other permanent member of the household.

Generally, the need for modifications will be substantiated by a registered health practitioner (eg. a General Practitioner or Occupational Therapist). The registered health practitioner (typically an Occupational Therapist) will generally be required to provide the functional design specifications for the modifications (eg. location and size of grab rails).

2.2 Ownership, Maintenance and Running Costs

Where a permanent change to the property has been made the modifications are considered to be a permanent feature of the property, for which Link Housing may then have ongoing maintenance responsibility.

Where the modification is installation of an appliance, the ongoing ownership, maintenance, ultimate removal, and running costs, must be subject to a specific agreement between Link Housing, the tenant, and any other applicable third party (usually a funding body). Examples of appliances include minor personal care ablution facilities, large lifters and overhead tracks, motorised door and gate openers, and air conditioners.

In general, the principles are:

- The body which funds the appliance (which may be Link Housing) retains ownership of the appliance, unless ownership is specifically handed over to the tenant, or Link Housing;
- The body which funds installation (usually Link Housing) is also responsible for its ultimate removal;
- The body which own the appliance is responsible for ongoing maintenance of the appliance;
- The tenant is responsible for operating costs (particularly electricity usage for air conditioners).

A written agreement must be signed by all parties, prior to the work being done, where an appliance is involved.

3. Subsidised home modifications

The following provides information on organisations which may assist tenants to access various modifications.

3.1 People aged 65 and over

People aged 65 and over or their carers can apply for home modifications via [My Aged Care](#) .

[Commonwealth Home Support](#) provides entry-level home support, including subsidised home modifications.

[Home Care Packages](#) provide home modifications as part of a package of services.

3.2 Children and people under the age of 65

The [National Disability Scheme](#) may fund the design and construction of home modifications as part of a specific, tailored package known as a 'participant plan'.

3.3 Veterans

The [Rehabilitation Appliances Program](#) assist with home modifications for eligible veterans.

3.4 NSW-based Assistance

The [Home Modification and Maintenance Services](#) website provides information on a range of services in NSW:

4. Other Approved Modifications

Tenants need to apply in writing for other modifications. The proposed modifications will be approved if they meet the conditions listed in section 1.2 above. If the application is approved the tenant must agree in writing to the conditions.

5. Modifications Not Approved

During routine inspections, or other site visits, it may become apparent that an unapproved modification has been made. The situation will be reviewed as if a written application had been made, and the considerations in Clause 1.2 above applied. The tenant will then be notified in writing as to whether the modification is to be removed, or applicable conditions if it may become approved. Upon written acceptance of these conditions, the modification may be approved.

6. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

- Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Disability Access Standards 2010
- Housing NSW Asset Standards
- National Community Housing Standards
- National Regulatory System for Community Housing

7. Privacy and Confidentiality

Link Housing will keep applicants', tenants' and residents' information and feedback confidential, in line with privacy laws and standards.

8. Complaints and Appeals

A tenant or applicant who is not happy with a decision made by Link Housing or who believes that Link Housing has not followed policy can complaint or appeal using the complaints and

appeals policies. These can be obtained from www.linkhousing.org.au or by phoning Link Housing on 9412 5111.

9. Quality Assurance

The Modifications to Property Policy will be formally reviewed every three years.