



Tenant Property Alterations

Policy intent

This policy is designed to:

- provide parameters regarding the processing of tenant requests to undertake any work on a public housing property
- Provide parameters regarding the processing of organisations requests to undertake any work on a property owned by the Director of Housing.
- Inform the process of valuing 'tenant improvements' when a property is being sold to sitting tenants.

For the purposes of this policy, 'property' refers to any structure or chattels, any internal and external features including fences and any garden structures, that are present on the site at the time the tenant signs the lease.

As the owner, Housing Tasmania has the right to manage the public housing portfolio in a manner that allows best use of the portfolio and funding available to complete maintenance and upgrades.

This policy applies to all public housing and Aboriginal housing tenants and properties.

Conditions of the lease

The Housing Tasmania lease prohibits public housing tenants from making any amendments to the home a tenant rents or any other public housing property.

Section 3.11 part (f) of the Housing Tasmania lease states:

"You must not make any alteration or addition to the premises. This includes renovations and structural improvements. This also includes not moving chattels, fixtures or fittings from the place that they are installed in the premises at the start of your tenancy."

Clause 4.5 (f) of the Community Tenancy Lease Agreement states:

"[the organisation shall:] Not make any alterations or addition to the Premises or to any part thereof, or any of the Director's fixtures and fittings, without consent in writing of the Director first had and obtained and not to carry out any such permitted alterations except by workman of whom the Director shall have approved, and all such alterations are to be to the reasonable satisfaction of the Director."

Tenants also have additional responsibilities as the lease holder whilst they reside in a public housing property and are responsible for any repair for damage that is not classed as fair wear and tear.



Gaining permission to make alterations

Housing Tasmania understands that tenants may want to make changes to their house for a range of reasons. As Asset Manager, Housing Tasmania needs to ensure that the property portfolio is maintained to the required standard and amenity can be adequately maintained within the specified parameters.

All tenants need to obtain written permission from Housing Tasmania before commencing **any work** on a public housing property.

Any tenant wishing to do work on their public housing home will need to complete the required [Tenant Alteration Request Form](#).

Organisations renting properties from Housing Tasmania under a Community Tenancy Lease Agreement should discuss any proposed alterations with the Business Support Team at their local Housing Tasmania Area Office. Business Support staff can direct their query to the appropriate staff for consideration. A formal written proposal may be required.

Approval parameters

All requests will be assessed on a case by case basis by the relevant Housing Services area.

Only minor works that are non-structural may be approved. Tenants should discuss their plans and intentions with a Housing Tasmania officer before completing the request form.

In general, Housing Tasmania *will not* approve any works request that requires Council approval or alters the existing building. This includes large sheds, extensions, changes to internal walls, installation of carports or garages and the installation/erection of a pool or pond (a pool or pond that exceeds 9m² or is capable of holding water at a depth of 300mm requires a permit).

The erection of one (1) small shed (such as a garden shed or similar) does not require a building or planning permit from the Council. If the tenant already has an exempt structure and they wish to erect another, a building or planning permit will be required from the Council. As a result Housing Tasmania will not approve this alteration.

Any discussion with Housing Tasmania regarding property alterations, or completion of the request form, does not represent approval from Housing Tasmania to commence alteration works on a public housing property.

Decisions to approve will primarily be based on asset management principles and the parameters in which Housing Tasmania must manage the property portfolio.

No alteration can be undertaken without formal written approval.

Community Organisations renting properties from Housing Tasmania may have special requirements for larger scale additions and alterations. Any work requiring structural changes and or approvals from local government (Council) must be referred to Housing Tasmania in the first instance. ² Housing Tasmania may consider these alterations. However, the



organisation should not submit any proposals or plans to their local council and or make any commitments to undertake the work without having first sought and obtained approval from Housing Tasmania. The issue of costs should be discussed with Housing Tasmania before any commitment is entered into regarding alterations.

Note: When seeking advice on whether approval is required from Council it should be sought from both the Building and Planning Sections of Council as these areas have different criteria. The regional Water Authority may also need to be consulted.

Tenant requests

Tenants must make all requests to undertake work on their public housing home in writing using the required form. All written requests are to be assessed by the relevant Area Manager or their delegate.

Tenants must complete the required form that can be obtained from any Housing Tasmania Area office or on-line at the [About Housing website](#).

Only the tenant/s can request to make a property alteration. No other household member can do so on behalf of the tenant, with or without the tenant's knowledge.

Occupational therapists may provide a written request for modifications to a property on behalf of the tenant.

Organisations should contact the Business Support Team at their local Housing Tasmania Area Office to discuss their specific circumstances.

Notification of decision

Housing Tasmania will notify tenants in writing using the relevant [Tenant Property Alterations](#) 'approved' or 'declined' standard letter.

Notification from Housing Tasmania should occur within 30 days from the date of receipt of the completed request form.

Alterations without approval

If a tenant makes alterations to a public housing property without written approval from Housing Tasmania, this is considered a breach of the lease and a Notice to Vacate may be issued. The Area Manager will make the final decision in this regard.

Housing Tasmania will instruct the tenant to return the property to the original condition and the tenant will incur the entire cost of doing so.

Housing Tasmania will enter into a [Condition of Property Plan](#) with the tenant so that expectations are clear, including timeframes and details of the work to be completed. The timeframe may be short if the alterations are structurally unsound.

If the property is not returned to the original condition within the required timeframe, Housing Tasmania will arrange for the works to be completed by Housing Tasmania contractors. The cost for doing so will be passed onto the tenant either during the tenancy or on vacation, whichever is relevant and appropriate.



Standard of alterations

Approved property alterations must be completed to a standard that complies with relevant building and regulatory codes. A Housing Tasmania officer may need to inspect the works on completion. If the works are not finished to the required standard, within the timeframe determined by Housing Tasmania, the tenant will be instructed either to return the property to the original condition or to ensure the alterations are rectified to the required standard. Inspection of the works may occur after the tenant has vacated and costs may be passed on to the tenant at this time.

Condition of property reports

Housing Tasmania completes home visits for the purpose of inspecting the property condition.

If alteration work has been completed with or without permission, the tenant may be required to return the property to the original condition on vacation. This may be discussed with the tenant at the time of the condition of property inspection. However, even if not discussed, tenants need to be aware of Section 11.1 (b) of the lease which states:

"...When either of us lawfully terminates this Lease you must... leave the premises as nearly as possible in the same condition as set out in the Condition Report apart from reasonable wear and tear;"

Housing Tasmania maintenance responsibilities

Housing Tasmania provides homes for people that are clean and in good condition at the commencement of the tenancy. Essential maintenance and repairs will be undertaken at the request of the tenant or through cyclic maintenance programs such as external painting.

Housing Tasmania will:

- provide a house that is clean and in a satisfactory condition when the tenant moves in
- ensure that all houses we manage continue to be safe, and well-maintained according to Housing Tasmania policy
- undertake emergency and urgent repairs as quickly as possible
- undertake other repairs within 28 days, but sooner whenever we can.

Housing Tasmania is not responsible for the maintenance of renovations or home improvements the residing tenant undertakes. Housing Tasmania will not maintain any fixtures or fittings during a tenancy that have been installed by the tenant, such as additional heating, new carpet or screen doors.

In general, Housing Tasmania will not maintain non-standard items in properties that may have been installed by previous tenants. Housing Tasmania reserves the right to remove non-standard items when they fail and to not replace such items.



Reimbursement

Any approved alteration work costs will be the responsibility of the tenant.

Housing Tasmania will not reimburse public housing tenants for any alteration work completed by the tenant, approved or otherwise.

For example, if the tenant installs security doors on a public housing home, the cost of the security doors including installation will be the responsibility of the tenant.

Tenants may remove such items when they vacate, but the property must be returned to the original condition. Any costs for work that is required and completed after the tenant vacates due to repair or removal of items/chattels will be passed onto the tenant for payment.

Purchase of property by sitting tenant/s

Public housing tenants purchasing the property they are renting may have the value of approved real estate improvements they have undertaken taken off the purchase price.

Only works approved under this policy will be valued by the Office of the Valuer General. As a consequence tenant chattels will not be included in the valuation. Similarly landscaping (unless approved under this policy) and gardens will not be included.

When properties are being sold to tenants, the Area Office will need to advise Strategic Asset Management of the details of works approved during the term of the current tenancy.

Future improvements

If a request is approved by Housing Tasmania, the approval will only relate to the specific request.

If a tenant wishes to make any further alterations, Housing Tasmania will require that the tenant complete an additional Tenancy Alteration Request form before commencing any works. The tenant must wait for a reply letter from Housing Tasmania.

Decision making process

The Area Manager will make the final decision regarding the request. The Area Manager may liaise with Strategic Asset Management on specific issues or to obtain specialist advice.

In exceptional circumstances and where consideration is being made to the request, the Area Manager may escalate the request to the Manager Housing Services who will discuss the matter with the Manager Strategic Asset Management.

Where requests are made directly to Strategic Asset Management, the requests should be referred to the relevant Area Manager for processing.