



Guidelines for the **Upgrade** of Supported Accommodation Properties

Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services
(DCYFS)



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Background

These guidelines refer specifically to the **upgrade** (including disability modifications) of supported accommodation properties. Disability modifications also include specialist equipment (for e.g. ceiling tracking or specialist baths).

The majority of supported accommodation properties are leased from Housing Tasmania. These properties include: disability group homes; family group homes; and young persons residential care units.

The services provided at these properties are primarily funded by Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services (DCYFS) and delivered either directly by DCYFS or by non-government organisations (NGOs) through funding agreements with DCYFS.

Whilst many of the properties were originally acquired by Housing Tasmania as standard residential dwellings, many of the properties have been upgraded and/or modified to make them more suitable for supported accommodation (i.e. wider doorways, modified bathrooms, toilets and other fittings and fixtures).

Additionally, the standard residential dwelling including, the fabric of the buildings, fittings and fixtures, may not necessarily be as robust as those found in a property that was 'purpose built' for supported accommodation.

Residents in these supported accommodation properties (including people with: disabilities; complex and challenging behaviours) tend to place far heavier demands on the fixture and fittings of residential dwellings. As a result, the physical condition of a standard residential dwelling may deteriorate more quickly than a property that has been purpose built.

1. Property Upgrades

The following information provides a procedural overview in regards to:

- property upgrades; and
- disability modifications.

Decisions regarding property upgrades and disability modifications will need to take into account various issues such as:

- The age and condition of the property;
- The current and future intended use of the property;
- The lifecycle of the materials within the property;
- The circumstances of the residents / tenants; and
- The availability of funding, including funding priorities.

Staff from DCYFS and NGOs often make requests that relate to the upgrading or complete refurbishment of properties. Examples include:

- Upgrading of heating where it is perceived that the heating is inadequate (particularly where the level of heating within a home meets Housing Tasmania standards, but does not meet the specific needs of the residents, such as the need to regulate temperature within different rooms);
- Replacement of curtains and carpets;
- Painting of rooms to create a more homelike environment;
- Upgrading and/or modification of bathrooms to provide better outcomes for clients and support staff through the installation of grab rails and installation of roll-in showers; and
- Modification of walls, doorways and benches to enable greater access for people using wheelchairs which will reduce damage to the property.

DCYFS program areas and NGOs must not make any alternation or additions to a Housing Tasmania property without prior written approval from Housing Tasmania. This includes renovations and structural improvements. Chattels, fixtures or fittings must not be removed from any premises without written approval.

2. Requesting a Property Upgrade

A request for a property upgrade must be initiated through the Housing Tasmania office that is managing the community tenancy.

The request must be in writing to the appropriate Housing Tasmania office (Tenancy Officer) who will note the request and forward it through to the appropriate Housing Tasmania Area Manager for consideration.

A Technical Consultant may be required to attend the property to explore the details of the request and establish if the upgrade is technically feasible.

The Housing Tasmania Area Manager (or representative) is to refer the request to the Manager Accommodation Options Team to ensure the request is appropriate within the context of asset planning and is consistent with the service delivery model at the site. The responsible program area or NGO may be asked to submit a written proposal outlining the need for the property upgrade. In some instances, the matter may be referred to the Accommodation Options Steering Committee for consideration.

If funding is available and if the request is approved, Strategic Asset Management (Housing Tasmania) will make arrangements for all necessary works.

Written approval must be received from Housing Tasmania prior to any work being undertaken.

Once the work is completed, Housing Tasmania will attend the property to ensure the work has been completed in accordance with the initial request and approval.

3. Upgrade to Private Residences (Non-Housing Tasmania Properties)

Some DCYFS accommodation support programs are provided at properties that are privately owned.

Under some exceptional circumstances, the Department may consider funding improvements at these properties. Each request will be considered on an individual basis.

Requests for property improvements to non Housing Tasmania properties must be made via the responsible DCYFS Program Manager and discussed with the Manager, Accommodation Options.

4. Disability Modifications and Specialist Equipment Purchase and Maintenance

At times, supported accommodation facilities have or require disability modifications including specialist equipment for the support of the residents.

In the context of these guidelines, specialist equipment relates to items that are fixed to the building, such as ceiling tracking or specialist baths.

Items such as slings for tracking do not fall within the scope of these guidelines.

Where the purchase of specialist equipment is required, the processes as outlined above in section 2 *Requesting a property upgrade* should be followed. Relevant supporting documentation and written reports (e.g. Occupational Therapists reports) should be included with the request.

As required, the Accommodation Options Team will discuss with the relevant program area or organisations and where appropriate, authorise the work.

The purchase or maintenance of specialist equipment will not be reimbursed to organisations, unless by prior agreement. Where a resident or organisation independently initiates a maintenance works, responsibility for the costs will rest with the non government organisation. It is important to seek written approval in the first instance from Housing Tasmania, as retrospective approval and payments will not be considered.

Appendix 1 Process for the upgrade of supported accommodation properties

