

2.2.6 Repairs & Tenant Damage & Property Inspections



Preamble

Women's Housing Company (WHC) is a community housing association as part of the social housing system in NSW. WHC provides long term housing for single women and medium term housing through support partnerships.

Women's Housing Company strives to deliver maintenance and repair services that maintain and improve the physical environment for tenants while at the same time protecting and preserving the assets of the organisation.

Women's Housing Company will maintain our obligations under the Residential Tenancy Act 1987 and undertake repairs and inspections in accordance with the Act.

POLICY

Women's Housing Company provides **verbal and written information about repairs** to tenants when signing their tenancy agreement. The difference between urgent repairs and non-urgent repairs is explained to tenants.

Housing workers are required to provide emergency contact numbers for plumbers and electricians with the tenancy agreement.

In addition tenants receive a rental guide pamphlet in their appropriate community language if English is not their first or preferred language.

Tenants occupying property on the private leasehold market are informed that WHC is not in control of arranging repairs, but that all requests to the managing Real Estate Agency must be facilitated via Women's Housing Company.

Tenants are informed that tenant caused damages are the financial responsibility of the tenant. This also applies to damage caused by visitors of the tenant for which the tenant is equally responsible.

Women's Housing Company conducts annual **property inspections** of all properties, capital and leasehold alike.

Property Inspections are conducted as part of responsive and preventative strategies to improve housing quality and minimise expenditure.

PROCEDURE

On the day tenants sign their tenancy agreement they will be provided with;

- a copy of the renting guide in their appropriate community language;
- a tenant manual providing them with further information on repairs; and
- emergency phone numbers for a plumber and an electrician at the bottom of their tenancy agreement.

Tenants are informed about:

- the difference between urgent repairs and non-urgent repairs, timeframes for addressing repair needs are highlighted, and examples are provided
- the process to arrange repairs;
 - The tenant rings the office, or attends in person, to notify WHC of a repair need, outlining the problem
 - The relevant housing worker or in their absence the receptionist or another member of staff will clarify the repair needs and assesses the level of urgency. The tenant is asked if they **authorise** WHC to pass on their phone contact number/s to a contractor to arrange a suitable time directly with the tenant
 - Only if the repair need is **urgent**, the respective worker will issue a **work order immediately** and will **follow up with the chosen contractor** to ensure the urgent repair need can be addressed within 48 hours.
 - If the repair need is not urgent any of the following may apply;
 - if the worker taking the call is not the relevant housing worker, a message can be left for the relevant housing worker by email detailing the problem
 - for repairs that are responsive and minor (less than \$1,500) the housing worker collates the responsive repair requests or work orders by type of repair need and property location – this is to ensure cost efficiency
 - the relevant housing worker issues a work order on the Tenant Management System (TMS) database and sends a fax to the chosen contractor to action the repairs
 - for repairs and maintenance that is planned or major an asset manager conducts these tasks – exception to this is the upgrade of vacant properties in which case the housing worker will facilitate the whole maintenance and repair process, however in communication with the asset management team. Works over \$1,500 requires three quotes.
- The right to complain or appeal a decision about repairs

More detailed Policies & Procedures relating to asset management are found in section **7. Asset Management**.

Housing workers are required to inspect all properties, leasehold and capital, annually to assess in terms of repairs and maintenance needs and damages.

The housing workers are required to issue a **property inspection notice** to the tenant in writing, allowing for 7 days notice plus 4 days postage.

Date developed: 1987

Date/s policy was ratified and/or changed by Board: 31/1/05; 28/8/07

Note: Procedures are designed to guide the implementation of a policy and will be updated on a regular basis as part of ongoing best practice service improvement.

Property inspection notices may also be issued for other reasons including investigations into breach of tenancy.

Women's Housing Company aims to combine the annual fire safety inspection and pest inspection together with the annual inspections for capital properties in order to minimise the impact on tenant availability.

In such cases WHC aims to have two staff present, the housing workers and an asset manager.

Tenants are encouraged to be at home for the inspection or to arrange a person of their trust to be available.

If the housing worker has not been alerted to the fact that access cannot be provided to a particular day and time as specified in the notice, the housing worker will access the property with keys held at the WHC office.

In cases where WHC set of keys are not functional or not available, the housing worker will follow up with the tenant to arrange a new time for the annual inspection. It is preferable to negotiate the same time with the pest inspector, to be done by the asset manager. It is the responsibility of the asset manager to communicate any outstanding fire safety issues with the tenant and to follow up any further works in relation to the pest inspection, and any tenant communication needs arisen from this.

The housing worker notes any repairs, maintenance and damage issues as observed and identified by the tenant on a standard form. This standard form is filed in the blue property file. At the office, the housing worker enters brief notes about the state of the property into TMS under the property inspection section.

Major repair, maintenance and damage issues need to be identified to the asset management team immediately, should they not be present at the inspection. The housing worker will also issue a reminder message via email to the asset management team once the TMS entry is made.

Major issues include those which require WHC action within 12 months, such as painting of internal or external walls, carpet replacement, stove replacement, hot water replacement, dysfunctional windows, doors, security and/or are of value greater than \$1,500.

The Senior Housing Worker will run a random report on property inspections as per TMS to ensure annual inspections are conducted in time and recorded appropriately.

Tenant damages reported to or identified by WHC are the financial responsibility of the tenant. Damages caused by visitors of a tenant are still the responsibility of the tenant unless evidence has been provided that criminal charges have been laid against such person by the tenant. Damages by an unknown third party need to be reported to the police and a police event number must be provided to WHC.

The housing worker needs to make an assessment as to the need for action by WHC and a timeframe for such action.

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For instance, if a tenant has painted their rented property without permission in a colour, style or quality not acceptable to WHC, the housing worker will record such action and advise the tenant in writing that they will be required to return the particular wall to its original state on vacation of the premises, at their own costs.

However, WHC is not required to act beyond such notification.

If a tenant informs WHC that they broke a window by accident, which requires immediate repair to ensure the safety of the tenant, WHC is required to act.

The tenant will be informed in writing that they will be required to pay off the costs of the repairs, after WHC pays for the bill initially. The tenant will be requested to sign a non-rent debt contract. Only on receipt of the signed non-rent repayment contract is the work to be issued.

However, in those cases where there is no time to wait for this contract for safety reasons, a note on TMS needs to clearly state that the tenant has been informed about the non-rent debt contract and that the tenant has agreed to sign and return the contract to WHC as soon as possible. The tenant needs to be given an approximation of the expected costs.

A debit note will be issued and sent to the tenant together with a copy of the invoice for the repairs.

In these cases the debit note and the copy of the invoice is prepared by the financial team, and the cover letter is written by the housing worker.

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