

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

OUR QUALITY SERVICE COMMITMENT



We will

- Treat you equally and fairly
- Be friendly, respectful and compassionate
- Be easy to contact and commit to timely resolutions
- Listen carefully and patiently to understand your concerns
- Give clear, accurate and consistent information, in plain language
- Maintain your privacy and confidentiality.

Complaints and Appeals

We aim to provide high quality services and treat customers fairly at all times. However, we understand there may be times when you are not happy with our service or a decision we have made.

If this happens, we encourage you to make a complaint or lodge an appeal, so we can address your concerns and improve our processes.

Refer to our Complaints and Appeals Policy for more details.

You can help us by

- Treating staff and contractors with courtesy, respect and patience
- Giving us clear and accurate information
- Informing us promptly of issues
- Working with us to resolve issues
- Reading information that we send
- Responding to our contact
- Asking for assistance and advice
- Keeping your contact information up to date
- Taking part in surveys and giving feedback about our services.



Our Service Standards

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Phone Messages | We aim to return your call by the end of the next business day |
| Emails | We aim to respond by the end of the next business day |
| Complaints and Appeals | We will acknowledge your complaint or appeal within 3 business days We will aim to investigate and provide a response within 21 business days. |
| Office attendance (no appointment) | We will aim to see you within 15 minutes or arrange an appointment |
| Appointments | We will be on time or advise you if there will be a delay |
| Housing Applications | We will process your application within 40 working days |
| Home Visits | We will visit you at least annually |
| Rent statements | We will issue you a quarterly rent statement |
| Rent review | We will review your rent subsidy twice a year |
| Emergency repairs | We will arrange a contractor to attend within 24 hours |
| Urgent repairs | We will arrange a contractor to attend within 48 hours |
| Routine repairs | We will arrange a contractor to attend within 20 business days |

Please call the Telephone Interpreting Service on 131 450, if you need help translating this document.

Arabic

يرجى الاتصال بخدمة الترجمة الفورية عبر الهاتف على الرقم 131 450، إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مساعدة في ترجمة هذا المستند

Chinese

如果您需要帮助翻译此文档，请拨打 131 450 致电电话口译服务

Spanish

Llame al Servicio de Interpretación Telefónica al 131 450, si necesita ayuda para traducir este documento.

Vietnamese

Vui lòng gọi Dịch vụ Thông dịch qua Điện thoại số 131 450, nếu bạn cần giúp đỡ dịch tài liệu này.

Women's Housing Company

Suite 901, Level 9, 418A Elizabeth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010

T: 02 9281 1764 or 1300 942 111 (outside Sydney)

E: contact@womenshousingcompany.org Interpreter: 131 450

www.womenshousingcompany.org



CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Customer Rights

Applicants and Tenants can expect:

- Safe, secure and affordable housing, for as long as they meet eligibility criteria
- Peaceful enjoyment of their home
- Responsive property repairs to be done within our service standards
- Fair and consistent services, without discrimination
- Timely and relevant assistance, including access to translators, where required
- Encouragement to provide feedback on our service delivery
- Support to complain about our services or appeal if they do not agree with a decision
- Privacy and confidentiality to be respected at all times
- To be assured that if our service cannot meet their needs, we will make every effort to refer them to a service that can assist.



Customer Responsibilities

Applicants and Tenants will:

- Treat staff, contractors and neighbours with respect by refraining from any harassment, intimidation, aggressive, racist, homophobic, sexist or other discriminatory behaviour
- Commit to finding a fair solution to any conflicts or complaints that may arise
- Follow expectations as set out in the residential tenancy agreement
- Ensure that visitors respect the peace and privacy of neighbours and do not cause any property damage
- Pay rent and other tenancy charges on time
- Look after the property by keeping it clean and tidy and letting us know about any repairs and maintenance as soon as possible
- Provide access to the property, when required
- Show respect and consideration by not storing personal items in common areas
- Not keep pets without permission or feed wild animals at the property, including common areas
- Leave the property in good condition at the end of the tenancy.



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French

Veuillez appeler le Service d'interprétation téléphonique au 131 450, si vous avez besoin d'aide pour traduire ce document.

Greek

Παρακαλούμε καλέστε την Υπηρεσία Διερμηνείας Τηλεφώνου στο 131 450, εάν χρειάζεστε βοήθεια για τη μετάφραση αυτού του εγγράφου.

Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ का अनुवाद करने में सहायता की आवश्यकता है, तो कृपया 131 450 पर टेलीफोन व्याख्या सेवा को कॉल करें.

Korean

이 문서를 번역하는 데 도움이 필요하시면 전화 통역 서비스 131 450 번으로 전화하십시오.

Polish

Zadzwoń do działu tłumaczeń telefonicznych pod numer 131 450, jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy w tłumaczeniu tego dokumentu.

Somalian

Fadlan wac Adeega Turjubaanka Taleefanka 131 450, haddii aad u baahan tahay caawimaad turjumidda dokumentigan.

Spanish

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Vietnamese

Vui lòng gọi Dịch vụ Thông dịch qua Điện thoại số 131 450, nếu bạn cần giúp đỡ dịch tài liệu này.

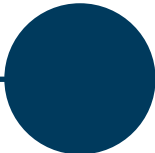
Women's Housing Company

Suite 901, Level 9, 418A Elizabeth St, Surry Hills NSW 2010

T: 02 9281 1764 or 1300 942 111 (outside Sydney)

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Repairs and Maintenance

Taking Care of our Homes

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) believes providing a safe, healthy and functioning living environment contributes to improved wellbeing of tenants and ensures that the amenity and value of our properties is retained.

We are committed to providing an efficient and effective repairs and maintenance service, to keep our properties at an acceptable standard for safety, function and appearance.

Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants are responsible for the following:

- Replacing light bulbs during their tenancy, and
- Replacing lost keys / changing locks when keys are lost.

Tenants are responsible for general upkeep and property care, including private outdoor spaces.

When repairs are required, you should advise our office as soon as possible. You must be available to provide access to maintenance contractors.

Tenants are responsible for the cost of repairs that are caused by neglect, misuse, wilful or accidental damage by a resident or a visitor.

WHC Responsibilities

The WHC has an obligation under the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* to maintain properties and common areas, to ensure they are safe and in working order.

Maintenance is defined under these categories:

- Responsive Repairs (3 priority levels)
- Cyclical Maintenance
- Planned Preventative Maintenance



Responsive Repairs

We assess responsive repair issues into three priority levels, based on the situation and the impact to tenants and properties.

Once prioritised, a qualified maintenance contractor will respond by contacting you within the following timeframes:

1. Emergencies – within 24 hours

Issues that cause serious health or safety risk to the tenant and / or property.

Some examples of emergency repairs are:

- Gas leak or electrical danger
- Sewer pipe overflow or blocked drains
- No lights working inside

In these circumstances, during business hours, call our office on **9281 1764** or if outside Sydney, call **1300 942 111**.

On weekends, public holidays and after hours when our office is closed, if something happens to make your home unsafe, call the **out-of-hours emergency repairs line on 1300 556 057**.

In life threatening situations, first **call 000**.

2. Urgent Repairs – within 48 hours

Issues that may pose a risk to health and safety if left unattended for some time, such as malfunctions in essential items.

Some examples of urgent repairs are:

- Battery changes or faulty smoke alarm
- Failure of hot water supply
- Oven or stove not working

For Urgent Repairs, during business hours, please call our office. Alternatively, email us anytime Repairs@womenshousingcompany.org

3. Routine Repairs – within 20 days

General repairs to keep things in working order.

Some examples of routine repairs are:

- Cupboard hinges, internal door handles, curtain rods require fixing
- Easing of doors and windows
- Tiling repairs
- Minor fencing repairs

For Routine Repairs, during business hours, please call our office. Alternatively, email us anytime Repairs@womenshousingcompany.org

Cyclical Maintenance

A series of regular checks, inspections and maintenance to ensure properties comply with health and safety, legislative and duty of care obligations.

Some examples of cyclical maintenance are:

- Annual smoke detector / fire safety checks
- Pest inspections
- Roof and gutter inspections
- Hot water mixing valve monitoring
- Common area lawns, gardens and cleaning

We provide advance notice of these inspections and works and it is very important that you are available to provide access to your property, if required.

Planned Preventative Maintenance

A scheduled program to replace, upgrade or renovate major items in a property that are at the end of their usable life or to avoid breakdown and deterioration.

Some examples are:

- Kitchen component replacement
- Bathroom refurbishment
- Carpets and other flooring replacement

These works are scheduled based on the life cycle upgrade timeframes as identified through the technical scoping inspections conducted every three years and the budget allocation of our 20-year Asset Maintenance Plan.

Where possible, we will involve you in decisions about works proposed for your home, such as choice of colours and materials.

We provide advance notice of these works and it is very important that you are available to provide access to your property.

Maintenance Contractors

We engage individuals and companies qualified to undertake all maintenance works. All of our contractors are part of a performance panel, which means they hold statutory licences and qualifications that we regularly review.

A maintenance contractor will call you directly to organise a suitable date and time to attend your property. When they arrive, they should show identification and a copy of the work order issued by our office.

The contractor should be respectful and clean up any mess they have made. You may be asked to sign a work order to confirm the completed job.

As part of our quality assurance program, we survey tenants and inspect some completed jobs.

More Information

This factsheet provides a general summary only. For full details, please check the policies on our website: www.womenshousingcompany.org.au

Water Usage Charges

All tenants are encouraged to conserve water wherever possible and to comply with water restrictions that are put in place by the local water authority from time to time.

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) pays the local water authority for all fixed charges and usage charges for the properties we manage.

We then seek reimbursement of the usage amount only, by charging tenants in line with the NSW Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charging.

The amount we charge depends on whether your home has a meter that is **shared** with other units in your block or a **separate** water meter.

Homes with a shared water meter

If you live in a property with a common water meter shared with other units in a block, we will charge you for a proportion of the total water usage for your block, as billed by the local water authority.

The WHC pays 25% of the total water usage charge to cover the cost of using water in common areas such as shared gardens.

The remaining 75% of the water usage charge is divided equally between the households in the block that share the water meter, as follows:

| | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Total | Water usage charge for block |
| Less | 25% for common area usage |
| Divided | By number of units sharing meter |
| Equals | Water usage amount charged to you |

The shared meter water usage charge is capped at a maximum of \$5.20 per week for single person households and \$9.30 per week for households of two or more people.



Homes with separate water meters

If you live in a property with an individual water meter linked only to your home, we will charge you for the actual water that you use, as billed by the local water authority.

When is water usage charged?

The local water authority generally invoices the WHC every three months, based on their quarterly billing cycle.

When we receive each invoice for your property, we will raise the relevant charge against your Water Usage Account.

How am I notified of the charge?

We send you a letter and an invoice each quarter.

Included with the letter will be your Water Usage Statement showing the charges processed and payments received from you. The Water Usage Statement account balance will show if your account is in advance or in arrears.

Also included will be a copy of the total invoice from the local water authority.



How do I pay water usage charges?

You can pay for water usage with regular weekly or fortnightly payments when you pay your rent.

Alternatively, you can pay for water usage on a quarterly basis when the charge is processed.

We offer the following ways to pay your water usage charges:

- Centrepay (Centrelink deduction)
- Direct deposit from your bank account
- Deposit at Commonwealth bank branch

Please refer to the ***Paying Your Rent*** factsheet for details about these payment methods.

For direct and bank deposits, please use your tenant number and 'water' as the reference.

Special circumstances

We will consider waiving a portion of the water usage charge for tenants with separate water meters if you or a household member has a medical condition or disability that requires significantly more water than similar sized households.

Please contact your Tenancy Manager to discuss your individual circumstances.

What if I don't agree with my water usage charge?

If you believe we have not applied our water usage charging policy correctly, or an error has been made, you have the right to appeal the way your water usage charge has been calculated.

Please refer to the ***Appeals*** factsheet for instructions on how to lodge an appeal.

What if I can't pay my water usage charge?

If you are concerned about not being able to pay your water usage charges in full and on time, please contact your Tenancy Manager to talk about it.

We can work with you to set up an affordable repayment plan to prevent arrears from growing and clear the debt.

What if I don't pay my water usage charge?

In the first instance, your Tenancy Manager will contact you to discuss the situation, with the aim of understanding any barriers to paying your water usage charges.

If a water usage charge remains unpaid for more than 21 days from the date it is charged, we may take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) to recover the unpaid water usage charges.

More Information

This factsheet provides a general summary only. For full details, please check the policies on our website: www.womenshousingcompany.org.au



Your Personal Information

What is Personal Information?

Personal information is information about a person that can be used to identify them.

Some examples of personal information include:

- Name, address, date of birth
- Financial information, such as income or rent
- Photographic images.

Some personal information is also considered to be sensitive information, including:

- Government identifiers; such as Centrelink References or Tax File Numbers
- Country of birth, languages spoken
- Family court orders, criminal records
- Medical records, health care plans.

How is Personal Information Collected?

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) collects, manages and protects personal information about our customers.

We do this in line with the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988, the Australian Privacy Principles, and the NSW Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002.

We collect your personal information directly from you, through our forms and surveys, emails and letters, phone calls and face-to-face meetings with you.

We may also collect personal information about you from third parties, such as support providers and government agencies, but only with your consent.



How is Personal Information Used?

We use your personal information where it is necessary to deliver our core activities, such as:

- Providing housing and support services
- Maintaining our properties
- Keeping tenants informed of community housing matters
- Complying with legal and child protection obligations.

We also use your personal information for an activity to which you have given consent, such as taking your photo at an event and using it for our newsletters and annual reports.

With your consent, we disclose your personal information to third parties such as government agencies, support service providers, and our property maintenance contractors.

We may disclose your personal information without your consent, but only under certain circumstances, such as if we are required by law, or to prevent or minimise a serious threat to life, health and safety.

Is my Personal Information Secure?

We store your personal information in a variety of formats, including databases (in our office and with our Information Technology (IT) suppliers) and paper based files.

All reasonable steps are taken to protect personal information from being lost, misused, changed, disclosed or accessed by unauthorised people.

These steps include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring our office is secure at all times
- Ensuring our IT systems are protected by cyber security systems
- Undertaking due diligence with respect to third party service providers who may have access to personal information
- Implementing and monitoring policies and procedures relating to security, privacy, and confidentiality
- Training staff on processes relating to the secure handling of personal information
- Restricting access to information by staff based on their job role and responsibilities
- Undertaking due diligence with third parties before they have access to personal information
- Securely de-identifying, destroying, or deleting personal information that is no longer required to be stored.



Correcting Personal Information

We take great care to make sure the personal information we hold about you is correct and up to date.

If we become aware that your personal information is incorrect, we will contact you to update the information we hold about you.

Please contact us if your personal information changes or if you believe the information we have about you is incorrect.

More Information

This factsheet provides a general summary only. For full details, please refer to the **Women's Housing Company Privacy Policy** on our website:

<http://www.womenshousingcompany.org.au/aboutus/corporatepolicies>



Paying Your Rent

Tenant requirements

Under the *NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010*, you are required to pay your rent on time.

In line with the Women's Housing Company (WHC) Rent Policy, you are required to keep your rent account paid two weeks in advance.

We understand that life events can happen, which may make it difficult to pay your rent on time. However, if you do not pay your rent when it is due, your rent account will be in arrears, which may put your tenancy at risk.

We are committed to assisting you to meet your tenancy obligation to pay rent and to resolve any rent arrears issues, which will keep your tenancy on the right track.

Payment methods

We offer the following ways to pay your rent:

- Centrepay
- Direct deposit from your bank account
- Deposit at Commonwealth bank branch

Centrepay

If you receive a benefit or pension from Centrelink, you can authorise Centrelink to deduct your rent from your benefit each week or fortnight and pay your rent into our bank account. Centrelink will then deposit the balance of your benefit into your nominated bank account.

This is a free service and ensures your rent is paid automatically. You can provide consent for your Tenancy Manager to set up this arrangement on your behalf.



Direct Deposit or Online Banking

You can set up an arrangement with your bank or financial institution to make regular automatic transfers to the WHC bank account.

You will need the following details:

Account Name: Women's Housing Company

BSB: 062-033 **Account:** 00901605

Payment Reference: Your Tenant Number

Online or Internet banking transfers are free. Your bank may charge a fee to set up a regular transfer over the counter – ask them first.

To avoid overdraft fees from your bank, you should ensure there is enough money in your bank account to cover the rent payment.

Deposit at Commonwealth bank

You can pay into our bank account at any Commonwealth Bank branch.

At the start of your tenancy, we provide you with a bank deposit book, which contains our bank account details and your Tenant Number, which must be used as the payment reference.



What if I can't pay my rent?

If you have unexpected expenses, such as medical bills, or high electricity or phone bills, and you are concerned this might prevent you from paying your rent in full or on time, please contact your Tenancy Manager to talk about it.

Contacting your Tenancy Manager quickly will help with finding a way to prevent rent arrears from growing and clear the debt.

We will check your rent charges and payments to ensure these are correct. Your Tenancy Manager will negotiate a repayment plan that you can afford, to resolve rent arrears over a reasonable time period.

Where appropriate, we may refer you to a financial advice service for information and support. You may also be eligible for low interest loans to purchase white goods (e.g. fridge, washing machine) or loans for affordable computers and internet access.

If you are experiencing financial difficulty or want assistance in repaying a debt, such as credit card or rent arrears, you can contact the **National Debt Hotline on 1800 007 007** for free confidential advice from professional financial counsellors.

It is never too late to contact your Tenancy Manager if you are experiencing problems paying your rent.

What if I don't pay my rent?

If you do fall behind with your rent payments, and you do not arrange to start repaying the debt, you put your tenancy at risk.

We do not want you to lose your home.

We act promptly to address rent arrears so that debts do not grow to an overwhelming level.

In the first instance, your Tenancy Manager will contact you to discuss the situation, with the aim of understanding any barriers to paying your rent. She will make referrals to appropriate support services and negotiate an affordable repayment plan.

However, where these approaches are unsuccessful, we may need to take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) for a legal order for you to pay the outstanding amount.

In serious or repeated cases, where we have not been able to make contact with you or you have not attempted to repay your debt, we will take action in accordance with the *NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010* to terminate your tenancy and take possession of your home.



More Information

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Get Involved

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) provides opportunities for you to get involved in your tenant community and have a say in the way we deliver our services.

We offer a variety of ways to get involved including well-being activities, social events, workshops, consultations, surveys, block meetings, and the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG).

Social Activities

Social activities offer the chance to get together with Women's Housing Company tenants to experience Sydney highlights as a group.

Some recent outings we have hosted include a walking tour of the Vivid Lights Festival, a swim at McIvers Ladies Baths in Coogee, a picnic at the Auburn Botanic and a trip to the Art Gallery of NSW.

Information Sessions

Community partners help us provide useful information sessions on issues such as seniors' rights, avoiding scams, and getting into employment.



Well-being Classes

Participating in well-being activities has been shown to reduce stress and promote good mental and physical health.

We offer well-being activities such as yoga, tai chi and art therapy. No experience is required. Activities are free, with all materials and equipment provided. This is a great opportunity to try something new while making new friends.

Surveys – Have Your Say

We are keen to know about your experience of being a WHC tenant, so we can keep doing the things that work well and improve our processes to make things more efficient and effective. Surveys are a great way to gather your feedback on the services we provide. You can respond to our surveys online, via email or by post.

We invite all tenants to participate in the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey. The results help us to prioritise our activities in the Operating Plan for the next financial year.

We may also invite you to complete surveys for specific services such as repairs and maintenance as well as workshops, activities and social events.



Tenant Advisory Group (TAG)

Another way we seek feedback on our policies, decisions and activities is through consulting with the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG).

The TAG is a group of tenants who get together to share experiences, exchange information and provide feedback about our services. The TAG provides tenants with opportunities to discover, share and explore new ideas, gain new skills and improve communication.

All tenants are welcome to attend TAG meetings. We host TAG meetings every two months. Locations vary to enable as many tenants as possible to attend. Dates and locations are published in our quarterly newsletters.

Block Meetings

Block meetings are an opportunity for you to get together with your neighbours, your WHC Tenancy Manager and Tenant Inclusion Coordinator to discuss ways to improve the shared spaces in your block and make it a better place to live.

We also share information about upcoming WHC events and activities, as well as services and programs in your local area.

Workshops

We run free workshops to help tenants improve important skills such as using a computer or learning how to go online with a smart phone. We also offer creative workshops from time-to-time such as jewellery making and creative writing.

We host gardening workshops and can work with tenants to create community gardens in your block, providing an opportunity to grow edible crops to share with your neighbours.

Tenant Consultations

We invite you to have your say in decisions that affect you and other WHC tenants.

For example, when we are planning upgrade works in your building, we hold consultation meetings to discuss what is planned and then work together to provide the best outcome.

More Information

To get involved in any of these activities or to find out more about participating in your tenant community, please contact us on 9281 1764 (or 1300 942 111 if outside Sydney) or email Contact@womenshousingcompany.org

Calculating Your Rent

Market Rent

Market rent is the amount your property would be leased for in the private rental market.

The market rent is shown on your tenancy agreement and is the maximum rent you will be charged, **if you are not eligible for subsidised rent.**

We review market rent each year and we will notify you when there is a change.

Subsidised Rent

Most WHC tenants are eligible for subsidised rent, which is significantly less than market rent.

Subsidised rent is calculated based on your total gross household income. The level of subsidy varies depending on the housing program and the household income level.

In most cases, your rent will be 25% of your household income PLUS the Commonwealth Rent Assistance your household is eligible to receive.

Below is an example of a rent calculation:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Household income, per week | \$500 |
| 25% of household income, per week | \$125 |
| + | + |
| Commonwealth Rent Assistance, per week | \$60 |
| Total rent charge, per week | \$185 |



Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)

CRA is a payment from the Australian Government for people who receive a Centrelink payment AND pay rent to a private landlord, real estate agent, or a non-government organisation, such as a Community Housing Provider.

If you are eligible for CRA, Centrelink will pay this amount to you each fortnight, along with your other payments, to assist you to pay your rent.

Rent Subsidy Reviews

To ensure you are receiving the correct rent subsidy, we review household incomes twice each year, around the time that Centrelink reviews benefit rates in March and September.

We also review your rent subsidy when your household income changes. It is important to let us know if your circumstances change, such as, you start or stop working, if a new person is approved to move in with you, or if someone moves out.

We will send you a Rent Subsidy Calculation to show your new rent and the effective date.



Providing Income Evidence

To accurately calculate your subsidised rent, we need evidence of every type of income earned by household members aged 18 years or more.

If you receive Centrelink Payments:

You can provide us with authority to access your income details directly with Centrelink – if you do this, you don't need to provide any documents at rent review time.

Without this authority in place, you must provide a current Centrelink Income Statement.

It is important that you declare all income to Centrelink to ensure you receive the correct subsidies.

If you earn wages:

If you work fixed hours per week, we need payslips for the last 4 weeks.

If you work casual hours that change from week to week, or work regular overtime, we need payslips for the last 12 weeks.

If payslips are not available, please ask your employer to provide a letter showing your gross (before tax) weekly income.

If you are self-employed:

Please provide your completed and lodged Australian Tax Office return for the last financial year, PLUS bank statements showing all transactions for the last 3 months for all business and personal accounts.

Alternatively, you may provide a profit and loss statement for the last financial year from a registered accountant PLUS bank statements showing all transactions for the last 3 months for all business and personal accounts

If you have savings and investments:

If you have \$5,000 or more in bank accounts, please provide statements showing the last 3 months transactions for all your accounts.

If you receive income from investments (including property), foreign pensions, child support, or lump sum compensation payments, we need a letter or statement from the issuing organisation with details.

Failure to provide information

If you don't let us know when your household circumstances change, or if you fail to provide income evidence for a rent subsidy review, we will be unable to determine if you are eligible for subsidised rent. This may also be deemed rental fraud.

We may cancel your rent subsidy and charge you market rent.

What if I disagree with my rent calculation?

If you think your rent calculation is incorrect, contact your Tenancy Manager immediately. We will check the calculation against the information provided and amend any miscalculations.

If you still do not agree with the rent calculation, you can appeal the decision by writing or emailing us within 30 days.

More Information

This factsheet provides a general summary only. For full details, please check the policies on our website: www.womenshousingcompany.org.au

Being A Good Neighbour

Respect and Consideration

The Women's Housing Company provides affordable homes for women from a diverse range of backgrounds and lifestyles. Being a good neighbour means being considerate and respectful of others and building positive relationships.

As a tenant, you have the right to the peaceful enjoyment of your home.

Under the Residential Tenancy Agreement, you are responsible for your own actions and the behaviour of household members and visitors.

Tips for Positive Communities

Most of the homes we provide are in small to medium sized apartment blocks, so neighbours are often living quite close to each other. Please be considerate when you are doing something noisy – tell your neighbours before you start and avoid making noise when people are sleeping.

We all appreciate our neighbours being friendly and helpful, but we also value our privacy. It is important not to overstep boundaries or to intrude in others' lives.

Common areas are used by all tenants in a block, such as gardens, corridors, stairwells, parking areas, and shared laundries. Please consider others who share these spaces with you.

If you share bins with your neighbours, set up a roster for moving bins on collection days and keeping the bin area tidy.

Some properties have allocated parking spaces, while others may have a 'first come; first served' basis for parking. Please only park vehicles where indicated and ensure your visitors don't park in resident-only car spaces.



What Behaviour is Not OK?

Any behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to other people.

Some examples include:

- Loud noise, particularly at night, such as music, banging doors, moving furniture, walking loudly on hard floors, etc.
- Noise or nuisance caused by visitors
- Noise or nuisance caused by pets
- Noise or nuisance caused by vehicles
- Abuse, intimidation or harassment
- Aggressive and / or threatening language or behaviour
- Vandalism
- Any criminal activity.

What Can You Do?

If you are having problems with a neighbour, speaking with them is a good start – they may not be aware they are causing an issue.

However, these conversations can be difficult or uncomfortable and you might not get a suitable outcome.



If a conversation doesn't change the situation, you can tell your Tenancy Manager, who can provide advice on available services to assist you.

Other options include:

- Call the Community Justice Centre (CJC) on 1800 990 777 – they provide free and independent mediation to assist with neighbour disputes
- Call your local Council for issues about dumped rubbish or nuisance pets
- Call the Police on 000 if you witness or suspect criminal activity, you experience violence or feel threatened, or to report rowdy behaviour or late night noise.
- Call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 if you are worried about your own or someone else's mental health – Police may be able to involve the Mental Health Crisis Team.

What Will the WHC Do?

We encourage neighbours to resolve disputes early, to avoid issues escalating.

For neighbour disputes reported to our office, we will investigate by talking to everyone involved to gain their perspective and review evidence from external sources, such as support providers and Police.

If we believe the issue is a personal dispute between you and your neighbour, and there is no breach of tenancy, we may:

- Refer neighbours to mediation with the Community Justice Centre
- Hold a block meeting to discuss and resolve issues that affect multiple people.

If we believe further action is necessary, we may:

- Refer tenants to support services to assist them to meet their obligations
- Issue warning letters to remind tenants of their rights and responsibilities and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour
- Consider offering a management transfer to one or more of the tenants involved.

For problems that involve criminal activity, the WHC cannot take direct action. The Police are the only authority that can investigate these matters. However, once a criminal conviction occurs, we can take action.

Serious Tenancy Breaches

For ongoing or serious breaches of the Residential Tenancy Agreement, where these are supported by evidence, we will take action at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

The Tribunal will consider the evidence presented and can make orders that the behaviour must stop. In extreme circumstances, the Tribunal can terminate a tenancy.

While terminating a tenancy is a last resort, the WHC will pursue this action through NCAT where all other options have failed.

More Information

This factsheet provides a general summary only. For full details, please check the policies on our website: www.womenshousingcompany.org.au

Complaints

Feedback on our Services

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) aims to provide high quality services at all times. However, we understand that there may be occasions when you are not happy with the services we provide.

In these circumstances, we encourage you to make a complaint as this provides valuable feedback about our services and helps us to improve.

Making a complaint about our service delivery will not result in any form of retaliation or discrimination. You should feel safe and assured that you will be heard respectfully and professionally.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with the quality or standard of a specific service we have provided or the conduct of our workers.

This includes services provided by staff, volunteers or maintenance contractors engaged by the Women's Housing Company.

Some examples of complaints include:

- **Failing to provide a service** such as not completing a repair, not conducting a tenant visit or not issuing a rent statement
- **Inappropriate staff behaviour** such as not returning a phone call
- **Poor administration of a service** such as not recording changes in circumstances or not sending appropriate forms
- **Inconsistent or inaccurate service** such as responding differently in similar circumstances or providing incorrect information about WHC policies



How can I Make a Complaint?

During business hours, you can call our office on 9281 1764 or 1300 942 111 (if outside Sydney).

Email us Contact@womenshousingcompany.org

Send a letter to our office at Suite 901, Level 9, 418A Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

You may request a meeting to speak with us in person. You can bring a friend or an advocate. We can arrange for an interpreter if required.

Assistance to Make a Complaint

We can assist you to make a complaint if required, for example, by explaining the process, arranging an appropriate support service or an interpreter.

External bodies can also provide assistance:

- Local Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services listed on www.tenants.org.au
- Community Legal Centres listed on www.clcnsw.org.au
- NSW Fair Trading Information Centre, contactable by calling 133 220 or via www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au



What Happens Next?

We will send you a letter or an email to confirm receipt of your complaint within 3 business days.

As part of our complaints management process, we may call you for clarification on the matter. We may be able to resolve your concerns by providing additional information.

How are Complaints Managed?

Any staff member can receive a complaint and record the details in our complaints management system.

Complaints are dealt with professionally and with confidentiality. If a complaint is about the behaviour of a staff member, their supervisor will handle the complaint.

Your complaint will be investigated thoroughly and impartially, with detailed notes kept on file.

We aim to resolve complaints within 21 days. If more time is required to complete an investigation, we will advise you of the anticipated date of resolution and any reasons for the delay.

You will receive written notification of the outcome of your complaint.

What if I Disagree?

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you can escalate the matter in writing to the Senior Management Team (SMT).

A member of the SMT will review how the complaint was dealt with and the outcome. The SMT will respond within 10 business days.

How is Information about Complaints Used?

We regularly review information from complaints to identify issues and trends, in order to improve the way we deliver services.

Complaint numbers, types and outcomes are regularly reported to the Board.

The National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) also requires reporting of complaint data, which we de-identify for privacy.

Other Avenues for Complaints

NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) handles disputes between tenants and landlords.

Tenants who believe that the WHC has breached its obligations under the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* can contact NCAT on 1300 135 399 or visit www.ncat.nsw.gov.au

The **Registrar of Community Housing** investigates complaints that raise concerns about a registered community housing provider's compliance with the Regulatory Code, under the NRSCH, including the way it is governed or how it manages its assets.

A complaint can be made by contacting the Office of the Registrar of Community Housing on 1800 330 940 or by using their online form at www.nrsch.gov.au/complaint_form

More Information

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Appeals

Appeal of Decisions

The Women's Housing Company (WHC) aims to treat customers fairly at all times. However, we understand there may be occasions when you are not happy with a decision we have made. In these circumstances, we encourage you to lodge an appeal.

Appeals provide us with an opportunity to review decisions and to reflect on whether all relevant information was considered when making the original decision and if the decision was made in line with legislation and / or our policies.

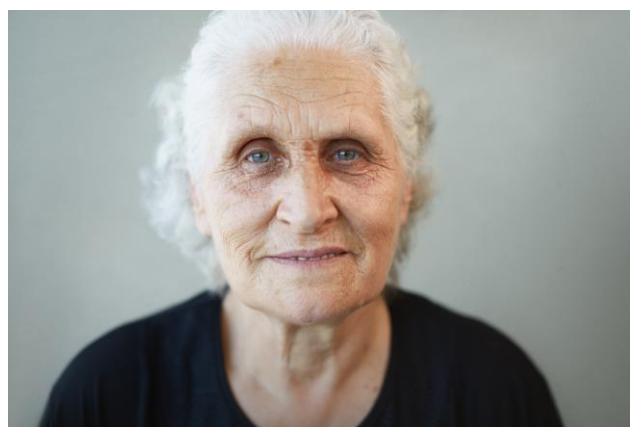
Lodging an appeal against a decision we have made will not result in any form of retaliation or discrimination. You should feel safe and assured that you will be heard respectfully and professionally.

What is an Appeal?

An appeal is a request for a review of a decision made by the WHC to provide or not provide a service regarding your housing application, your tenancy or your property.

You have 30 days from the original decision date to lodge an appeal (except housing offers – must be lodged within 14 days of the offer).

Appeals are first reviewed internally. If the outcome of your appeal is still in dispute, the matter may then be appealed to the independent Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) by calling 1800 629 794 or visiting their website to lodge an online appeal www.hac.nsw.gov.au



How can I Lodge an Appeal?

During business hours, you can call our office on 9281 1764 or 1300 942 111 (if outside Sydney).

Email us Contact@womenshousingcompany.org

Send a letter to our office at Suite 901, Level 9, 418A Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

You may request a meeting to speak with us in person. You can bring a friend or an advocate. We can arrange for an interpreter if required.

Assistance to Lodge an Appeal

We can assist you to lodge an appeal against a decision if required, for example, by explaining the process, arranging an appropriate support service or an interpreter.

External bodies can also provide assistance:

- Local Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services listed on www.tenants.org.au
- Community Legal Centres listed on www.clcnsw.org.au
- NSW Fair Trading Information Centre, contactable by calling 133 220 or via www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au



Which Decisions can I Appeal?

Social housing applicants and WHC tenants can appeal the following decisions:

- Eligibility for social housing, including priority assessment
- Removal from the NSW Housing Register
- Property entitlements, such as number of bedrooms, type of property
- Locational need for 'high demand' areas
- Offers of properties and the suitability of each offer (*appeals lodged within 14 days*)
- Eligibility for a housing transfer, including management transfers
- Need for modifications (for disability / medical reasons only)
- Approval for an alteration to your property
- Non-rent tenancy charges (e.g. rechargeable property repairs)
- Calculation of water usage charges
- Calculation, change or cancellation of a rent subsidy
- Permission to be absent from a property and rent calculation during absence
- Permission to have a pet
- Relocating tenants to other social housing at the expiry of a leasehold arrangement.

What Happens Next?

We will send you a letter or an email to confirm receipt of your appeal within 3 business days.

As part of our appeals review process, we may call you for clarification on the matter. We may be able to resolve your concerns by providing additional information.

How are Appeals Managed?

Any staff member can receive an appeal and record details in our appeals review system.

Appeals are dealt with professionally and with confidentiality. The staff member who made the original decision will not manage the appeal.

Your appeal will be investigated thoroughly and impartially, with detailed notes kept on file.

We aim to resolve appeals within 21 days. If more time is required to complete an investigation, we will advise you of the anticipated date of resolution and any reasons for the delay.

You will receive written notification of the outcome of your appeal.

What if I Disagree?

You have the right to lodge a second tier appeal with the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC), an independent agency which deals with appeals from people who dispute decisions made by social housing providers.

The HAC will seek information from all parties and review how the original decision was made to ensure guidelines, policies and processes have been followed.

Call the HAC on 1800 629 794 or visit their website www.hac.nsw.gov.au

More Information

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