

Repairs and Maintenance Policy

April 2024

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| Document Name: | Repairs & Maintenance Policy | Version: | 2.0 | | |
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1 Purpose and Applicability

This policy describes how the Women’s Housing Company (WHC) provides and manages repairs and maintenance services of our property portfolio for tenants.

The WHC is committed to ensuring tenants live in properties that are safe, clean, liveable, and maintained to a good standard, considering the age and life of the premises.

Through this policy, we will ensure that we:

- provide high quality, efficient, and consistent repairs and maintenance services to our tenants;
- preserve and improve the quality of our properties to maximise their useful life;
- meet our legal obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010;
- meet our regulatory obligations under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing; and
- meet our contractual obligations to the NSW Government, including to keep all social housing properties at a benchmarked standard for safety, function, and amenity.

1.1 Scope

This policy applies to all properties owned and managed by the WHC, with the exception of leasehold properties (leased from the private rental market) – refer to section 15.

This policy applies to all WHC staff, maintenance contractors, and tenants.

The **Customer Service Charter** and **Customer Rights and Responsibilities** guides interactions between the WHC and tenants.

The **Contractor Code of Conduct** guides interactions between maintenance contractors and tenants.

2 Strategic Asset Planning

The WHC Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) sets out the portfolio objectives to maximise asset value, minimise risks and enhance operational effectiveness. These objectives have been developed in alignment with the WHC Strategic Plan:

- provide excellent customer service in the delivery of asset management and maintenance services for our tenants in relation to maintenance of their homes;
- provide safe, good quality housing and meet our contractual obligations;
- meet all legislative requirements including building, health and safety standards;
- whole-of-life cycle approach to asset management to maximise the life of the homes we own and manage; and
- grow our portfolio purposefully and sustainably.

The Long Term Forecast sets the portfolio maintenance requirements over 10 and 20 year projections to manage cash reserves and meet upgrade requirements, this approach is underpinned by our Asset Management Framework.

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3 References

3.1 External or Statutory Requirements

This policy complies with the following external legislation or requirements:

- NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and Regulations 2019
- Housing Act 2001 No 52 (NSW) (Housing Act)
- Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Act 2012 (NSW)
- The National Construction Code (NCC), which comprises the Building Code of Australia 2013 (BCA) and the Plumbing Code of Australia 2013 (the Plumbing Code)
- National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH)
- NSW Community Housing Asset Management Policy
- NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act and Regulation 2013 and Rules 2014
- Building Code of Australia (BCA)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW) and Regulations 2011 (NSW)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Dividing Fences Act 1991 (NSW)
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)
- Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Control Act 1999 (Cth)
- Heritage Act 1977
- Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 (NSW)
- SafeWork NSW – How to Manage and Control of Asbestos in Workplace
- SafeWork NSW – How to Safely Remove Asbestos

3.2 Internal Requirements and Forms

This policy refers to the following internal documents, which are available on the WHC website:

- Repairs and Maintenance Factsheet
- Online Repairs and Maintenance Request Form

3.3 Definitions

The following terms are used in this document, with specific meaning:

- “may” is an acceptable action or requirement but not mandatory
- “must” or “shall” or “will” designates a mandatory requirement or action
- “residential tenancy agreement” or “rental lease” or “lease” is the written agreement between the WHC and the tenant with all terms and conditions of the tenancy
- “we”, “us”, “our” refers to the Women’s Housing Company
- “planned maintenance” refers to programmed life-cycle upgrades and replacements of major property components
- “cyclical maintenance” refers to regular inspections and works to keep properties safe and well maintained
- “responsive repairs” refers to unscheduled works in response to a request from a tenant

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4 Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants have specific property-related obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010.

4.1 Property Care

Under the terms of the standard residential tenancy agreement, tenants agree to:

- keep the property reasonably clean and tidy, including dusting, cleaning accessible windows, removing cobwebs and garden maintenance in private outdoor spaces (balconies, courtyards, front and rear yards);
- replace light globes in the property during the tenancy and ensure all globes are working at the end of tenancy;
- control and eliminate pests and vermin, where infestations are caused by tenant activities;
- report any repairs or maintenance issues promptly;
- obtain the landlord's written permission before adding or removing any fixtures or doing any alterations or modifications;
- not cause or permit damage to the property through deliberate or negligent acts – tenants are responsible for the acts of household members and visitors;
- meet the cost of repairing any damage caused by neglect, misuse, accidental or wilful acts by a resident or visitor to the property; and
- at the end of tenancy, leave the property as near as possible to the condition it was in at the start of tenancy, except for fair wear and tear.

Tenants may have family, friends and / or support services to assist them to meet the above obligations. Tenants can request that the WHC assist them to make referrals for property care assistance, which can be arranged at the tenant's expense.

4.2 Keys and Security

Tenants must not alter, remove, or add any lock or other security device (including security cameras) to a property without the WHC's written permission.

The WHC does not hold spare keys for our properties. It is recommended that tenants consider giving a spare key to a trusted friend or neighbour. In the event of lost keys or being locked out, tenants are responsible for arranging a locksmith to gain access or have new keys cut. The WHC can make these arrangements on behalf of tenants, however it may be quicker and cheaper to engage a local locksmith.

Tenants are responsible for arranging their own contents insurance (if required), as the WHC's insurance only covers the property and permanent fixtures and fittings.

4.3 Providing Access

When the WHC arranges property inspections and maintenance works, we provide tenants with advance notice, call or text for urgent maintenance works and written advice of the date and time for scheduled maintenance that the contractor requires access to a property. Maintenance contractors may also phone tenants to arrange appointments to complete works inside tenants' homes.

Tenants are required to be home at the scheduled or agreed time to provide access for the contractor to enter their home, so the inspection or works can be completed. Where works are carried out in common areas, tenants must not obstruct these works.

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If tenants cannot be available at the scheduled or agreed time tenants must call the WHC before the day of the appointment, to negotiate an alternative date and time for the appointment. If an appointment is missed by a tenant without prior notice, the WHC may charge the tenant a fee.

Contractors engaged by the WHC must show identification to tenants before entering their properties. Tenants should request to see a contractor's identification before allowing them into their home.

Tenants must not unreasonably deny access to their property. The WHC reserves the right to make application to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) for Access Orders to enable safety inspections and works to be conducted.

4.4 Reporting Repairs and Maintenance

Tenants must advise the WHC of repairs and maintenance issues as quickly as possible. Timely reporting ensures tenants can continue to enjoy their home fully and can reduce the likelihood of repairs issues escalating, potentially causing further property damage.

Tenants can report repairs and maintenance issues by:

- **Calling** during business hours (weekdays 9am – 4:30pm) on **9281 1764** or **1300 942 111**
- **Emailing** details (and photos if relevant) to Repairs@womenshousingcompany.org
- **Online Repairs Request Form** on our website (and uploading photos if relevant) [Report an Issue | Women's Housing Company \(womenshousingcompany.org.au\)](#)
- **Visiting** our office to speak with our Property Services Team

The WHC provides a free interpreting service for tenants who speak a main language other than English. Tenants can call with the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on **131 450**.

4.5 After Hours Service – Emergency and Priority Repairs

In life-threatening situations, call 000 for fire, ambulance, or police.

Outside of business hours, where there is an emergency or urgent repair required, tenants should call the after-hours service on **1300 556 057**.

An emergency or urgent repair is where there is a severe or significant risk or threat to health, safety or security of the occupants of the premises and prompt action is required to rectify the situation.

The after-hours service will assess the information provided and arrange the appropriate response.

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5 WHC Responsibilities

The WHC has obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010 in relation to property care, including:

- provide properties in a reasonably clean and fit to live in
- provide and maintain properties in reasonable condition
- make any repairs referred to in the original ingoing condition report.

Reasonable condition depends on the age of the property and the potential life of the property.

The WHC has a legal obligation to ensure all properties are fitted with operating smoke alarms, batteries are regularly changed, and smoke alarms are inspected annually.

In accordance with the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010, the WHC provides appropriate written notice to tenants before inspecting a property or carrying out planned and cyclical maintenance, such as annual smoke alarm testing. Property maintenance (excluding emergencies and priority works) must only be completed between 7am and 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.

The WHC must comply with contractual obligations to the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), as the owner of most of the properties managed by the WHC. Specific property condition standards must be maintained in relation to safety, security, function, and amenity. To ensure this outcome, the WHC arranges a third-party contractor to inspect and assess each property on a three-yearly cycle. Maintenance issues identified during these technical Property Assessment Survey (PAS) inspections are then scheduled to be completed as part of the planned maintenance program.

The WHC is responsible for ensuring that maintenance is undertaken on the properties, common areas and community facilities of the properties we own or manage.

6 Responsive Repairs

The WHC will triage repairs and maintenance requests based on the impact of the situation to tenants and properties. We will arrange an appropriate response that complies with obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010. These categories will be subject to regular review to ensure they are up to date with legislative requirements and meet customer expectations.

6.1 Responsive Repair Priorities

| Repair Category | Response Time |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Priority 1 Emergency Works | Within 4 hours make safe or completion |
| Priority 2 Urgent Works | Within 24 hours completion |
| Priority 3 Routine Works | Within 5 working days completion |
| Priority 4 General Non-urgent Works | Within 14 days completion |

Priority definitions are outlined below and are available for tenants, staff and contractors so expectations are clear and risks are appropriately managed.

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6.2 Responsive Repair Definitions

Priority 1 – Emergency Works (within 4 hours make safe or completion)

In life-threatening situations, call 000 for fire, ambulance, or police.

Where there is a significant or severe risk to health, safety or security of occupants, a maintenance contractor will attend within 4 hours of notification.

Examples of emergencies include:

- Live exposed electrical wires or electrical fault with power lost to the property;
- Gas, water or sewerage incidents i.e. burst water service or sewerage incidents where the Tenant cannot shut off the service and involves a threat to health and safety;
- Break in where the property cannot be secured and the Tenant is at risk of harm of personal safety and security;
- Significant storm damage involving structural damage which poses a risk to the health, safety and security of the Tenants; or
- Flooding or serious flood damage.

The maintenance contractor will make the site safe (e.g. isolate electrical circuits, board up window, etc.) within the 4 hour response timeframe. Another appointment may be required to completely fix the issue.

Priority 2 – Urgent Works (within 24 hours completion)

Where there is a risk to the health, safety or security of the occupants of the premises and a 24-hour action is required to rectify the situation, such as:

Examples of priorities include:

- Power or lights to the Property is affected and cannot be reset at the power board or by replacing a globe;
- Gas, water or sewerage incidents where the Tenant can turn off the service;
- Sewerage overflow to outside (exterior) the dwelling;
- Sewer blockage or broken lavatory system; or
- Break in where the property can be secured, i.e. Attempt to break in results in split door frame but the door can still be locked and secured.

Priority 3 – Routine Repairs (within 5 days completion)

Are repairing essential services, elements or functional failures or breakdowns, such as:

- Oven
- Cooktop (where all hotplates are affected)
- Hot water system

With the tenant's consent, the WHC will provide the maintenance contractor with the tenant's phone number. The maintenance contractor will phone the tenant to make an appointment, aiming to attend the property and fix or replace the critical property element within 5 days.

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Priority 4 – General Non-urgent Repairs (within 14 days completion)

Are works to address faults and to stop future failures or breakdowns, such as:

- Easing of doors and windows
- Tiling repairs
- Minor fencing repairs

The maintenance contractor will phone the tenant to make an appointment, aiming to attend the property and fix the issue within 14 days.

7 Cyclical Maintenance

The WHC’s cyclical maintenance program aims to keep properties safe and well maintained.

7.1 Safety and Compliance

Regular inspections and maintenance are carried out to meet legislative and regulatory requirements to ensure the safety and security of tenants.

These works include annual smoke alarm inspections, preparation of Annual Fire Safety Statements, electrical safety inspections, lift safety servicing, and hot water temperature mixing valves, where relevant.

7.2 Preventative Maintenance

Regularly scheduled works are conducted to avoid breakdown and deterioration of property components. The aim of preventative maintenance is to reduce the number of responsive repairs required.

These works include roof and gutter inspections, preventative plumbing maintenance and common area pest control including termite inspections, where relevant.

7.3 Lawns, Grounds, and Common Area Maintenance

Regular maintenance is carried out in common areas, grounds and gardens of units blocks and complexes. These works include cleaning of internal common areas, mowing lawns and gardening.

8 Planned Maintenance

The WHC believes that a planned approach to property maintenance, rather than a responsive approach is more cost effective and delivers better solutions with less disruptions to tenants.

Planned works are scheduled based on the following considerations:

- Legislative requirements
- Lifecycle upgrade timeframes, as identified through three-yearly technical inspections
- Risk assessment for each property
- Overall budget allocation, in line with the 20-year Asset Maintenance Plan

Wherever possible, the WHC will involve tenants in decisions about proposed works for their homes, such

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as a choice of colours and materials.

In some cases, where bathroom works result in tenants being without access to essential facilities for more than 24 hours, the WHC may provide temporary bathroom facilities on-site or may temporarily relocate tenants to alternative accommodation while works are completed.

For relocations, the WHC will consult tenants to ensure temporary accommodation arranged by the WHC is suitable. The WHC will cover reasonable accommodation and meals expenses during the time bathroom facilities are unavailable.

The WHC will keep tenants informed throughout the process of completing planned maintenance.

9 Alterations

Alterations are property improvements arranged by tenants, at their own cost, with WHC approval.

Tenants may request permission to make an alteration to their property, such as to install flyscreens, extra cupboards, or an external awning. A detailed application should be submitted to the WHC, including the licence and insurance details of the proposed contractor who will carry out the works for the tenant.

The WHC will assess each alteration application on its merits and advise if the alteration is approved to proceed.

10 Modifications

Modifications are changes to properties arranged by the WHC because a tenant, household member, or an applicant has an identified need, and their current property is no longer suitable.

Modifications can improve the quality of life of tenants and provide the option to remain living independently in their home for as long as possible. Modifications are generally required for tenants or household members who are frail, elderly or have a disability or medical issue.

Minor modifications include grab rails, hand-held showers, and lever style taps.

Major modifications involve structural changes, such as ramps, widening doors, replacement of floor coverings, modifications to kitchen, bathroom and laundry, and modifications that require Development Application (DA) approval.

Tenants may request the WHC to undertake a modification, providing appropriate documentation such as a report from an Occupational Therapist or other medical professional.

The WHC will assess modification requests and consider the following factors:

- Whether the tenant will be able to sustain their tenancy if modifications are completed;
- Whether it is economically viable to undertake the modifications;
- Whether approval must be obtained from other parties (e.g. property owner, local council); and
- Sources of available funding for modifications.

If additional information is required to complete the assessment, the WHC may arrange to visit the tenant at home to discuss the requirements. The tenant can invite any medical or support person to attend the in-home assessment as required.

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The WHC decision to approve or decline a modification request will be communicated in writing to the tenant within 28 days.

If approved, the WHC will arrange for the modification works to be completed.

If modifications are not economically viable or will not resolve the tenant's issues, the WHC may encourage and assist the tenant to submit a Community Housing Application for Transfer. The WHC may offer a management transfer to another property that meets the tenant's needs when one becomes available.

11 Hazardous Building Materials

WHC acknowledges its responsibility to hazardous building material management obligations to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all tenants and workers, and all practicable steps are taken to prevent or minimise this risk and meet this commitment.

Buildings contain many different types of materials and associated chemicals. Unless managed and handled properly some of these can potentially affect the health of people undertaking works and those living there.

Materials such as asbestos or lead paint when maintained in good condition, not peeling or creating dust, or are sealed behind non-hazardous materials such as new paint, pose little health risk. However, disturbing or removing unsafely can create a greater hazard, the WHC has measures in place to manage hazardous building materials and ensure contractor works within our homes is conducted safely.

12 Property Damage and Vacating Charges

The WHC will assess if property damage is beyond fair wear and tear and has been caused through the wilful or negligent actions of the tenant, household members or visitors.

Where this is the case, the Tenancy Manager will confirm the cost of repairs, cleaning or maintenance required to bring the property back to a suitable standard and communicate the costs that will be re-charged back to the tenant.

The WHC will provide evidence of these charges and will negotiate a repayment plan with the tenant. Where required, the WHC will take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to recover these costs.

13 Quality Assurance

The WHC uses a range of measures to monitor and ensure that maintenance work completed at our properties meets high-quality assurance standards:

- Conducts audits of internal processes and those of the maintenance contractors;
- When processing invoices from maintenance contractors, WHC staff review photographic evidence of works provided by the contractors;
- Technical Officers conduct on-site audit inspections of a sample of repairs and maintenance jobs,

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to visually inspect works;

- When a contractor completes works in a tenant’s home, the tenant is offered the opportunity to sign-off the work order, verifying that the works have been carried out. Tenant sign-off is not compulsory, however where a work order is signed by a tenant, the contractor submits it to the WHC at the completion of the job. The WHC uses this information to monitor the timeliness of works being completed.
- The WHC gathers tenant feedback following a sample of repairs and maintenance works, by phoning tenants to ask about their experience. Email and text message surveys are also used to gather feedback following a sample of repairs and maintenance works.

14 Properties within a Strata Scheme

The WHC manages some properties that are part of a strata scheme, such as individual units within a block. In most cases, the manager of the strata scheme (also referred to as an owners’ corporation) has responsibility for arranging repairs and maintenance in common and external areas of a strata block.

In these instances, the WHC liaises with the real estate agent and / or the strata manager to communicate any issues affecting our tenants, however the WHC does not have authority to influence these repairs and maintenance decisions.

The WHC will monitor the outcome of requests made and will keep tenants informed.

15 Leasehold Properties

The WHC leases properties from the private rental market to provide additional social housing. These properties are known as leaseholds. The WHC is the tenant of the real estate agent or landlord, and sub-leases these properties to our tenants.

WHC tenants living in leaseholds must not contact the real estate agent or landlord under any circumstances.

Tenants living in leaseholds must report all repairs and maintenance issues directly to the WHC, in the same way as tenants living in properties owned and managed by the WHC – refer to section 3.4.

The WHC will submit repairs and maintenance requests to the relevant agent or landlord on behalf of our tenants living in leasehold properties. With the tenant’s consent, the WHC will provide the agent or landlord with the tenant’s phone number. The agent or landlord will engage their own maintenance contractor, who will phone the WHC tenant to make an appointment to attend and assess the issue and determine the appropriate action required.

The WHC expects agents and landlords to meet their obligations under the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010. The WHC encourages agents and landlords to complete repairs within the same timeframes as the WHC offers with our own repairs and maintenance service.

The WHC monitors repairs requests submitted to real estate agents and landlords, to ensure timely resolution.

Where a real estate agent or landlord persistently fails to complete reasonable repairs and maintenance

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in accordance with their legal obligations, the WHC will use a range of actions to resolve issues, including:

- Make a formal urgent request to the agent or landlord, advising them of the breach of the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010, and proposing a timeframe to complete the work
- Complete the work and claim reimbursement from the agent or landlord
- Apply to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) for an order to remedy

The WHC will ensure our tenant is kept informed throughout the process.

In rare and exceptional circumstances, where matters cannot be resolved, the WHC may offer the tenant a transfer to another property.

Real estate agents and landlords are under no obligation to approve alteration requests (e.g. flyscreens) and may reasonably refuse requests for major property modifications (e.g. replace a bath with a hobless shower).

16 Compliments, Complaints and Appeals

Any person who has a complaint about how the Repairs and Maintenance Policy has been administered, or tenants who wish to appeal a decision, should refer to the [Compliments Complaints and Appeals Policy](#).

17 Privacy and Confidentiality Statement

The Women's Housing Company will ensure that all applicant and tenant information is kept confidential and is managed and protected in accordance with the WHC [Privacy Policy](#) and relevant privacy law.

From time to time, de-identified demographic information may be released to third parties for statistical purposes only.

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