



## Community Housing Core Operating Procedure

### Disability Modifications

<b>Policy Logistics</b>	
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Delegated authority:	Fairlie Delbridge, General Manager, Strategy & Innovation
Policy custodian:	Joe Noone, Manager, Industry Partnerships
Due for review:	2017
Confidentiality:	Public

## 1. Overview

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### 1.1. Intent

This procedure outlines how **community housing providers** arrange disability modifications through Renewal SA.

### 1.2. Context

This procedure has been developed in the context of the *Housing Strategy for South Australia (2013-18)* to support the goal of providing opportunities for people living with disabilities to exercise greater choice in housing.

This procedure is based on the *Community Housing Core Operating Policy – Disability Access and Inclusion* which defines the responsibility of community housing providers to ensure people with disabilities enjoy the rights and opportunities provided to all people in the area of housing.

### 1.3. Scope

This procedure applies to **SACHA-funded assets** that are subject to or bound by a **Community Housing Agreement** between a community housing provider and the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT).

## 2. Definitions

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### Community Housing Agreement

The agreement entered into between the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) and a community housing provider, pursuant to section 20 of the *Community Housing Providers (National Law) (South Australia) Act 2013* and includes:

- The *Master Community Housing Agreement* including all attachments, annexures and schedules to it; and
- Any agreement, deed or instrument executed under or which is subject to or bound by the *Master Community Housing Agreement* (including but not limited to project agreements, deeds of statutory charge and pre-existing agreements).

### Community housing provider

An entity that provides community housing and is registered under the *Community Housing Providers (National Law) (South Australia) Act 2013*

### Essential (modifications)

Modifications where there are no viable alternatives and if not provided, the person would be unable to independently access or utilise the home without increasing home based assistance or supports.

### Health or disability professional

A person who:

- is professionally recognised in the field relating to the required modification as having an appropriate level of expertise and knowledge to provide advice on the tenant's need for the modification; and
- has a knowledge of the tenant's individual circumstances; and
- is independent from the tenant (i.e. has no potential conflicts of interest); and
- is currently registered with a professional registration board or body appropriate to their field of expertise (if such a board or body exists).

Usually a Specialist rather than a General Practitioner.

### Renewal SA

The trading name of the Urban Renewal Authority which has delegation to act on behalf of the South Australia Housing Trust (SAHT) in relation to the funding of community housing in South Australia. This includes, but is not limited to, the responsibility for ensuring community housing providers comply with the terms of their *Community Housing Agreement* with the SAHT to deliver quality community and affordable housing outcomes.

### SACHA Funded Asset

A Project Property which is specified as 'SACHA Funded Asset' in Schedule 1 of the *Community Housing Agreement* and which may have previously been referred to as 'debentured property'.

### Volunteer member-tenant managed provider

A community housing provider which is incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1985* (SA) or the *Co-operatives National Law (South Australia) Act 2013* and which does not engage any paid staff or officers, but operates solely on a volunteer tenant member managed basis.

### 3. Procedure detail

Step	Description
1	<p><b>To receive requests for disability modification</b></p> <p>All requests from tenants requiring housing modifications must firstly be made to the community housing provider that the person currently rents from using the <i>Disability Modification Request Form</i> (completed by the tenant or his/her advocate).</p>
2	<p><b>To assess tenant eligibility criteria for modifications</b></p> <p>Community housing providers must assess tenant eligibility against the following criteria. The tenant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be a community housing tenant or existing community housing registrant who is not likely to be housed elsewhere (i.e. outside of community housing) in the known foreseeable future; and</li> <li>• have an intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical impairment that is permanent or likely to be permanent and can be episodic, regardless of causality (For example: injury, chronic health, congenital, age related) which impacts on the housing needs of that person, including building design, amenity, proximity to support services and management of tenancy; and</li> <li>• have an <b>essential</b> need for the modification; and</li> <li>• have unsuccessfully pursued all other appropriate avenues for the funding and/or provision of the modification (For example: other agencies, any available compensation funds).</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>To assess property suitability for modifications</b></p> <p>Community housing providers must assess property suitability against the following criteria. An existing property is considered to be suitable for modification where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no other options other than modification of the property are suitable or viable; and</li> <li>• transferring the tenant to another property is not appropriate (For example: no other suitable properties exist, or transferring will severely disrupt access to vital supports, or the cost of transfer would exceed the cost of modifications); and</li> <li>• an appropriate level of modifications can be provided, subject to the design restrictions and characteristics of the property; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property can be modified at a reasonable cost; and</li> <li>• the cost of modifications is in proportion to the general asset value of the property (For example, expensive modifications are not undertaken on a low value property); and</li> <li>• the property is intended to be retained by the community housing providers in the long term.</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>To verify tenant need for modification</b></p> <p>Community housing providers must seek verification of the tenant’s need for modifications by a <b>health or disability professional</b> before making a request to Renewal SA.</p> <p>The provision of this information is necessary to assess if a modification is essential; and/or to determine the specification of the modifications required (refer to the <i>Disability Modification Verification Form</i> available on the community housing website at <a href="http://www.sa.gov.au/communityhousing">www.sa.gov.au/communityhousing</a> to assist those providing verification).</p> <p>Renewal SA may in some cases reimburse the cost of verification if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the verification is essential in assessing the modification request; and</li> <li>• there is a charge for providing the verification (For example, Medicare gap payments); and</li> <li>• the verification costs are not normally met by another agency (for example Medicare, health insurance, options coordination agencies, etc.) or the tenant themselves (For example, consultation cost); and</li> <li>• the cost of obtaining such verification is significant (For example, the tenant as the modification beneficiary is responsible for meeting some verification costs).</li> </ul> <p>The community housing provider must liaise with Renewal SA regarding the reimbursement of particular costs before obtaining the verification.</p> <p>For cost reimbursement, the community housing provider should forward a copy of the payment invoice to Renewal SA, which will arrange payment of the invoice on behalf of the tenant/community housing provider.</p> <p>Renewal SA will not accept verification that is assessed to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inconclusive, and/or from a source with a questionable level of expertise; or</li> <li>• that does not adequately take into account any reasonable alternatives to the provision of the requested modification.</li> </ul>

<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>To make a request to Renewal SA for a disability modification</b></p> <p>If the tenant meets the eligibility criteria, community housing providers must forward the approved <i>Disability Modification Request Form</i> with verification of tenant need to Renewal SA.</p> <p>Provision of all modifications by Renewal SA is subject to budgetary constraints at the time of application. The full list of allowable internal, external and other modifications can be found in <u>Attachment 1</u>.</p> <p>Renewal SA will advise the community housing provider of the outcome of the modification request as soon as possible.</p>
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>To obtain tenant contribution to modification costs</b></p> <p>Tenants will not be required to contribute towards the cost of the provision, installation or maintenance of disability modifications, except where the tenant has received a compensation payout where some funds are specifically provided to allow for the provision, installation or maintenance of housing modifications.</p> <p>Tenants who receive compensation money after modifications have been provided would be required to reimburse modification costs, if compensation was specifically granted to provide for housing modifications.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>To manage payment of approved modification requests</b></p> <p>All disability modifications must be provided in accordance with the relevant Australian Standard, or other specification as appropriate.</p> <p><b><u>Community housing provider management, payment and reimbursement of approved modification requests that are up to \$1000</u></b></p> <p>If the modification work is anticipated to be under \$1000 and the community housing provider wishes to manage the modification work themselves, the provider should submit a quote from a qualified tradesperson to Renewal SA for assessment and approval prior to undertaking the work.</p> <p>If the community housing provider is a <b><i>volunteer member-tenant managed provider</i></b>, minutes from the meeting approving the work need to be supplied with the application.</p> <p>If the work is approved by Renewal SA, the following process must be followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community housing provider organises work to be undertaken and pays the account;</li> <li>• Proof of account payment and invoice to be forwarded to Renewal SA within one month of the invoice being paid (refer to the <i>Reimbursement Form</i>).</li> </ul> <p>Reimbursement should not take longer than three months from when the actual invoice and paid accounts are received by Renewal SA.</p>

	<p><b><u>Renewal SA management and payment of approved modification requests</u></b></p> <p>If the modification work is to be undertaken by Renewal SA, Renewal SA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• liaise directly with the tenant or community housing provider to fully scope the work; and</li> <li>• appoint a contractor and manage the provision and payment of the modification.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>To maintain modifications</b></p> <p>Community housing providers will be responsible for the cost of ongoing maintenance of modifications unless the community housing provider is specifically exempted from doing so under the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1995</i> (SA).</p> <p>Where an existing modification requires complete renewal due to fair wear and tear, the responsibility for the cost will be determined using the same procedures as for new modification requests.</p> <p>Where a tenant has paid for the provision of the modification (For example, due to a compensation payout), the community housing provider will be responsible for the maintenance of the item unless the tenant was provided with funding as part of any compensation payment to maintain modifications.</p> <p>Where a tenant has paid for the provision of a modification that subsequently requires complete renewal, the tenant may be required to pay for the replacement where they still have access to adequate compensation funds.</p>

## 4. Resources

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### 4.1 Directive documents

- *Community Housing Agreement*
- *Community Housing Core Operating Policy – Disability Access and Inclusion*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)*
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA)*
- *Residential Tenancies Regulations 2010 (SA)*

### 4.2. Forms and templates

- *Disability Modification Request Form*
- *Disability Modification Verification Form*
- *Reimbursement Form*

### 4.3. Supporting documents and resources

- *Australian Standards AS 1428.1*
- *Community Housing Maintenance Accommodation Standards*

## 5. Procedure approval

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## 6. Version record

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Version number	Version date	Change description	Principal change author
1.0	June 2015	Final draft of <i>Community Housing Core Operating Procedure - Disability Modifications</i>	SuLing Leong

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## 7. ATTACHMENT 1

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### 7.1 EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS ABLE TO BE PROVIDED

The following external property modifications may be provided where **on each occasion** both the tenant eligibility and property suitability criteria are met. Modifications should only be provided following consultation with the tenant, the community housing provider and/or any specialist advice relevant to the tenant's circumstances, and should be provided if budgets allow.

#### 7.1.1 Provisions for Mobility Aids (for example wheelchairs, scooters etc)

Ramps for the purposes of accessing a house via a mobility aid may be provided where the tenant is unable to manage steps (even with the aid of handrails).

External facilities for the secure storage of mobility aids (For example, small garden sheds, enclosed verandahs) may also be able to be provided, where the tenant:

- Does not require the mobility aid for movement within the house; and
- Does not have appropriate space within the house to store the device.

External facilities for charging powered mobility aids may be provided, where the tenant meets the above criteria for provision of external storage facilities. Appropriate floor surfaces or coverings and lighting may be provided if necessary and possible.

#### 7.1.2 Drying areas and clothes lines

Additional drying areas and clothes lines may be provided, or current facilities modified, excluding electrical drying devices. In providing or modifying such facilities, consideration to the need of other persons living in the property will be given. Appropriate flooring surfaces or coverings to such areas may be provided where possible and necessary.

#### 7.1.3 External lighting

Additional or modified (for example, sensor) external lighting may be provided.

#### 7.1.4 Fencing and gates

Fencing and gates at an existing property may be modified. However, fencing and gates at an existing property will only be renewed where it is not possible to modify the existing fencing or gates.

Any new or replacement fencing or gates that are provided will be in keeping with the general type and standard of fencing already within the area and relevant council guidelines.

Appropriate devices to assist with the use of gates (For example, automated openers) may also be installed if necessary and possible.

### **7.1.5 Handrails (entry and exit)**

Handrails to assist with entry or exit to the main front and rear doors may be provided. An additional handrail may also be fitted to properties with a third main door.

### **7.1.6 Ramps**

Ramps may be provided where the tenant cannot independently use steps even with the aid of a handrail, or requires the ramp for mobility aid access.

Where ramps are required, they will only be provided:

1. to a maximum of two entry/exit points at the property (usually front and back doors); and
2. were for each ramp, the floor height of the property is less than 1000mm above the external surface level of the property. Where the floor height for either ramp is more than this height, consideration should be given to providing an alternative property to the tenant.

### **7.1.7 Skylights**

Skylights to assist the visually impaired may be provided. The specification of the skylight provided will be subject to the feasibility of installation.

## **7.2 INTERNAL MODIFICATIONS ABLE TO BE PROVIDED**

The following internal property modifications may be provided where both the tenant eligibility and property suitability criteria are met. Modifications should only be provided following consultation with the tenant, the community housing provider and/or any specialist advice relevant to the tenant's circumstances, and should be provided if budgets allow. On every occasion, consideration will be given to the need of any other persons living in the property.

### **7.2.1 Bathrooms**

Modifications to bathrooms (For example, removal of baths, provision of lever taps, grab rails) may be carried out. Renewal SA will negotiate with the community housing provider with respect to funding part of the cost of the modifications where it is seen that the modification is also an upgrade to the property.

### **7.2.2 Flashing doorbells**

A flashing doorbell may be provided to tenants with a hearing loss at or below the 90 decibel range.

### **7.2.3 Floor coverings**

Floor coverings may be newly installed, replaced or removed where required, as follows:

- Where existing floor coverings are inappropriate and need replacement (For example, replacement of carpets with linoleum, for tenants with severe dust allergy problems); or
- Where existing floor coverings are inappropriate, and need removal but no replacement (For example, removal of carpets on concrete floors, for tenants who are wheelchair users); or
- Where there are no existing floor coverings, and the provision of new floor coverings is needed (For example installation of lino on wooden floors, for tenants with severe dust allergy problems).

### **7.2.4 Grab rails (internal)**

Grab rails to assist with stability and movement within the property may be provided.

### **7.2.5 Heating and cooling (climate control) devices**

Renewal SA will allow up to \$1675, including GST, for the purchase and installation of an appropriate reverse cycle air conditioner, where at least one household member has one of the following life threatening medical conditions:

- Multiple sclerosis; or
- A spinal cord injury resulting in paraplegia or tetraplegia; or
- Another medical condition causing spinal cord problems that leads to thermoregulatory dysfunction; and
- Climate control is deemed essential on account of the client's physical inability to self-regulate core temperature.

This information must be verified by a health or disability professional.

Once Renewal SA has approved the provision of an air conditioner, the community housing provider can elect to purchase and install the reverse cycle air-conditioner itself. In this case the community housing provider must submit the *Reimbursement Form* to Renewal SA.

### **7.2.6 Intercoms & automated door openers**

Intercoms and automated door openers may be provided, where a person is unable to physically open or close doors themselves and require these for safety reasons.

### **7.2.7 Internal lighting and switches**

Special light fittings or switches may be provided for people with visual or physical impairment.

### **7.2.8 Internal painting**

Architraves and doors may be painted in highly contrasting colours to assist tenants with visual impairment to move about a property. Similarly, low allergy paint may also be able to be used where necessary.

### **7.2.9 Kitchens**

Kitchen modifications (For example, lowering bench-tops and switches, provision of lever taps or grab rails etc.) may be carried out. Renewal SA will negotiate with the community housing provider with respect to funding part of the cost of the modifications where the modification is also an upgrade to the property.

### **7.2.10 Laundries**

Laundry modifications (For example, lowering troughs, taps and switches, provision of lever taps or grab rails) may be carried out.

### **7.2.11 Non slip floor surfaces**

Appropriate measures to address slippery floor issues may be provided (For example, special floor coatings or alternative flooring materials).

### **7.2.12 Renal dialysis machines (fixtures and fittings)**

Fittings and fixtures necessary to facilitate the use of renal dialysis machines may be provided (For example provision of water supply and plumbing to bedrooms).

### **7.2.13 Smoke alarms (modified)**

Modified smoke alarms to suit the needs of the hearing impaired may be provided to tenants with hearing loss at or below the 65 decibel range.

### **7.2.14 Steps or stairs**

Clear marking (including tactile indicators) of steps and stairs may be provided, to assist visually impaired people in locating the stairs. Additional steps may also be provided.

### **7.2.15 Taps**

Alternative taps may be provided (For example lever taps), to assist persons who may have difficulty using normal taps.

### **7.2.16 Toilets**

Modifications to toilets (For example provision of wheelchair access, a second toilet or grab rails) may be carried out.

### **7.2.17 Water saving devices**

Specific water saving devices (for example water restricting showerheads or taps) may be provided for households that experience high water use due to the disability/s of household members. However, such devices would only be provided to specifically account for the activity that caused the high water usage. For example, if it was essential that a tenant have frequent and prolonged showers, a flow saving shower head may be installed.

Where a community housing provider charges its tenants for water consumption, it may at its own discretion elect to provide a discount on this charge.

The community housing provider or tenant may alternatively choose to pursue any possible rebates or discounts with the relevant water supply company, or benevolent groups.

### **7.2.18 Water temperature regulation devices**

These devices may be provided to one or more areas of the property as required.

## **7.3 GENERAL MODIFICATIONS ABLE TO BE PROVIDED**

The following general property modifications may be provided, where on each occasion both the tenant eligibility and property suitability criteria are met. Modifications should only be provided following consultation with the tenant, the community housing provider and/or any specialist advice relevant to the tenant's circumstances, and should be provided if budgets allow.

### **7.3.1 Power saving devices**

Specific power saving devices may be provided for households that experience high power use due to the disability/s of household members. However, such devices would only be provided to specifically account for the activity that caused the high power usage.

Where it is not possible or feasible to provide devices to account for high power usage (For example, where the tenant requires constant room temperature regulation), the tenant should pursue any possible rebates or discounts with the relevant power generating or supply companies, or benevolent groups.

### **7.3.2 Security measures**

Security items (for example, safety or combination doors, door and window locks, security screens) may be provided where the tenant:

- understands and accepts the additional issues that may prevent a quick exit from a property in the event of an emergency (where relevant); and
- signs a declaration acknowledging the above point.

## **7.4 STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS**

Major structural modifications may be provided to support the installation and use of other equipment; for example, widening of doorways to accommodate the passage of wheelchairs.

## **7.5 OTHER MODIFICATIONS**

Any other modifications not specifically covered in this procedure should be referred to Renewal SA, who will consider the request on a case by case basis in accordance with the principles, tenant eligibility and property suitability criteria of this policy.