

H09 Property Modifications and Requests

1. Purpose

YWCA National Housing and YWCA Housing (YWCA) are committed to providing housing solutions that are suitable, functional, and safe for our tenants. YWCA ensures its allocation of property is appropriate for tenants at the time of entry, however is aware that people needs change over time and, where possible and sustainable, YWCA seeks to assist its tenants to adapt property elements to meet those needs.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all YWCA staff involved in tenancy management.

The policy applies to both tenancy agreements and rooming house agreements. Unless stated otherwise, references to “tenancies” include rooming house residencies, and references to “renters/tenants” include rooming house residents and the residents of a household other than the primary tenant.

3. Policy Aim

YWCA understands that the situation and needs of its tenants can change over time and at times, these changes may require modifications to their residence to for it remain a suitable and functional home for them. This policy aims to guide YWCA in sustainable decision making and assessment of property modifications to consider solutions and provide adaptations that meet the needs of tenants and YWCA.

Disability modifications cover a number of items, which include but are not limited to;

- Grab rails
- Suitable access options
- Flick mixer tapware
- Switch mechanisms
- Level access showers

4. Policy Statement

YWCA has a commitment to sustainable tenancies. YWCA considers a request from a tenant or their support provider for modifications to the property when the sustainability of the tenancy is impacted by the tenants modified needs as a result of ageing, disability, ongoing infirmity or other medical condition.

When considering requests for home modifications, YWCA seeks to balance the following principles:

- responding to a tenants changing housing needs is part of sustaining their tenancy; and

- YWCA’s housing services must be managed within the constraints of YWCA’s financial business model, as well as the physical, contractual and legal limitations of the properties under management
- YWCA’s rights and duties under residential tenancy legislation, community housing regulation and standards and contractual obligations.

YWCA uses this policy as a governing document to support the process of handling modifications and their associated fixtures and fittings effectively and efficiently and with clear communication, ensuring the delivery of safe, clean and functional properties to future tenants.

5. Definitions

Disability	means a condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions)
Modification	means a change to the built form of a property that may include changing the way something works (eg: standard tap fittings to a flick mixer fitting), additions (eg: grab rails, ramps), adaptations (eg: removing shower hobs to create level access)
Formal assessment	means a report from a qualified professional, such as an Occupational Therapist, that denotes the reasons, requirements, and specifications of the modifications a person requires to live safely and independently in their home

6. Requesting Modifications

Tenants seeking home modifications are asked to complete the YWCA Property Modification Request Form and obtain YWCA approval. If appropriate and required, YWCA may refer the tenant to a relevant service (e.g. Community Health Occupational Therapist, NDIS or LGA) to have their needs assessed, including what modifications are required for them to sustain their ability to live independently and retain their tenancy. YWCA will not unreasonably withhold consent for disability modifications.

YWCA also takes into consideration any relevant assessment or instruction by the tenants General Practitioner (GP) or other relevant health professional, however additional formal assessment for modifications may still be required.

In making its decision, YWCA will assess whether the proposed modifications to the property are:

- documented – clearly supported by relevant professional opinion;
- necessary – without the modifications, the person may not be able to live independently and the tenancy may not be sustainable;
- feasible – the modifications are physically possible without affecting the structural integrity of the property; the cost to YWCA Housing and/or tenants self or package funding for the works
- reasonable – assessment of the asset management plan and/or contractual requirements for the property; the interests of the tenant (including their long-term needs and whether further modifications may be needed in the future)
- alternatives – the current property may no longer be a suitable home for the person and/or there is another housing solution that may meet the needs of the tenant better now and into the future; what options are available if the modifications cannot be approved

YWCA will inform tenants in writing of the final decision and, if not approved, the alternatives available.

YWCA’s National Team Leader and Senior Manager Property Development have responsibility for approving

home modifications within the parameters of their delegated authority.

7. Funding Modifications

If the modifications are approved in principle but the costs are assessed as unreasonable and/or unfeasible, YWCA will liaise with the tenant and/or their support provider regarding alternative funding options. This may include the tenant paying for the modifications, using assigned package funding (such as NDIS or MyAgedCare package) or an external agency contributing to the cost through a program grant or similar.

Where it's proposed that the approved modifications are to be funded by the tenant or an external agency, YWCA will enter into a written agreement with the tenant. The agreement will stipulate:

- who is responsible for undertaking the initial installation or related works
- standard to which works must be completed, such as by a qualified tradesperson
- any additional approvals or contract arrangements required
- any ongoing maintenance requirements and responsibility for the modifications
- who is responsible for removing the modifications and/or restoring the property to its original condition at the conclusion of the tenancy including costs.

If YWCA assesses that the modifications would be of ongoing benefit to future tenants, the agreement may provide that restoration to the original condition at the conclusion of the tenancy is not required, but must specify the arrangements regarding ownership of any equipment and/or materials that form part of the modifications.

8. Tenant Modifications

Where a Residential Tenancy Act allows, tenants may make certain prescribed minor modifications only themselves without YWCA consent. The tenant must pay for the modifications themselves, using a suitably qualified person if appropriate.

YWCA may request the tenant pay the cost of restoring any changes at the completion of the tenancy and in some situations, a Restoration Bond can be required.

9. Complaints, Feedback and Appeal of decisions

YWCA has an effective and appropriate response in place to deal with complaints and ensures that accurate information and records of investigations are maintained. YWCA will ensure that privacy principles are followed at all times and tenant confidentiality is maintained throughout the incident management process.

YWCA welcomes anyone to query any decisions we make and/or ask questions about our work practices. If a customer wishes to provide feedback to YWCA and/or believes a decision made by us is incorrect, they can register their feedback and/or lodge an appeal using the YWCA Feedback and Appeals Policy.

Document Control Data	
Policy Framework	
Responsible Body	Chief Executive Officer
Accountable Officer	General Manager, Community Housing
Transparency and Accessibility	This policy will be available on the website https://www.ywcahousing.org.au/policies/
Supersedes	All previous local policies
Associated documents	YWCA Housing Policies and Procedures YWCA Feedback and Appeals Policy and Procedures YWCA Privacy Policies and Procedures YWCA Customer Service Charter
Legislation, Frameworks, Standards, Codes and Agreements	Housing Assistance Act 1996 (COM) Housing Act 1983 (VIC) Housing Act 2003 (QLD) Housing Regulations 2015 (QLD) Housing Act 1982 (NT) Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (VIC) Residential Tenancies & Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (QLD) Residential Tenancies Act 1999 (NT) National Affordable Housing Agreement Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Queensland Human Rights Act 2019 National Community Housing Standards Department of Human Services Standards (VIC) Consumer Charter for Community Managed Housing and Homelessness Services (VIC) National Community Housing Regulatory Code Victorian Community Housing Regulatory Code NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission State based building codes and regulations State based agreements between YWCA and statutory bodies

Approval and Amendment History			
Review period – 2 years			
Approval Date	Version	Amendments	Next Review
May 2022	1.0	Superseded Modified Housing Requests Policy	May 2024