



PROPERTY ALTERATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

To provide clear guidance regarding the approach to alterations and modifications within the South Port Community Housing Group (SPCHG) housing program.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all SPCHG managed properties.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To ensure that decision making processes regarding property modifications and alterations are transparent, fair and equitable..
- To complete alterations required to enable a renter to function well in their premises in a timely manner to ensure sustainable tenancies.
- To ensure that all renters managed by SPCHG are able to live within their properties comfortably and independently.
- To manage tenancies consistent with the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.
- To ensure that having a disability is not a barrier to being housed with SPCHG.

4. DEFINITIONS

Alteration –

SPCHG acknowledges that renters may want to undertake certain minor improvements to a property at their own cost. For example, a renter may wish to install air conditioning.

Modification –

SPCHG recognises that the needs of renters or household members may change because of illness, injury, age or disability and that as a result, their home, in its current form, may for medical reasons no longer be suitable. Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*, SPCHG has an obligation to provide ‘reasonable adjustments’ (disability modifications or relocation) to support a tenant with a disability.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include but are not limited to:

- handrails or grab rails
- lever taps
- handheld showers
- specialist alarm system for people with hearing impairment
- minor entry ramps



- vinyl floor covering.

5. PROCEDURE

Alterations.

All alterations must be done in consultation with the SPCHG housing program. Certain improvements may be approved subject to the Manager Housing Operations being informed and consulted prior to any works being undertaken.

Minor works like installation of an air conditioner will generally be approved if it can be achieved without damaging the building excessively in the judgement of the Manager Housing Operations.

Remodelling of premises such as installing mezzanines or constructing built-in cupboards will generally not be approved.

Modifications required due to medical condition.

If a renter requires modifications or alterations to their unit for medical reasons, SPCHG will work alongside the renter and their supports to ensure they are able to live comfortably within their housing.

This applies to renters already in housing managed by SPCHG and renters who are applicants.

The basic requirement is a report from an Occupational Therapist.

If it is not economically or structurally viable for the property to have major modifications, the organisation will do all it can to assist the renter to transfer to a more suitable property where there is one that is suitable.

When Alterations and Modifications are Made Without Permission.

All alterations and/or modifications must be discussed with SPCHG prior to work being undertaken. An alteration undertaken without written permission may breach the RTA re causing damage to premises, and action can be taken in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to request the tenant remove the alteration, repair any parts of the premises damaged by the removal of the alteration or to terminate the tenancy.

Basic Procedure for current tenants.

SPCHG's process for applying for an alteration or disability modification is as follows:

1. Renter requests alteration / modification by contacting SPCHG housing program (in writing, person or by phone).
2. Manager Housing Operations attends to inspect and discuss. SPCHG engage with renter to discuss the alteration and/or modification, reasons as to why, and the best suited option for the alteration and/or modification.
3. When a modification is required for medical reasons SPCHG will require a report from an appropriate medical professional, generally an occupational therapist, to ensure that the modifications/alterations are in accordance with the medical needs of the tenant. Subject to that report, and to the particular conditions within the renter's current premises, unless the renter has access to funding through a disability service, SPCHG will approve and fund the modifications.
4. Once the approval has been granted, SPCHG will organise the appropriate trades to modify and alter the property.



Appendix 1.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Division 2—Discrimination in other areas

25 Accommodation

- (2) It is unlawful for a person, whether as principal or agent, to discriminate against another person on the ground of the other person's disability:
- (a) by denying the other person access, or limiting the other person's access, to any benefit associated with accommodation occupied by the other person; or
 - (b) by evicting the other person from accommodation occupied by the other person; or
 - (c) by subjecting the other person to any other detriment in relation to accommodation occupied by the other person; or
 - (d) by refusing to permit the other person to make reasonable alterations to accommodation occupied by that person if:
 - (i) that person has undertaken to restore the accommodation to its condition before alteration on leaving the accommodation; and
 - (ii) in all the circumstances it is likely that the person will perform the undertaking; and
 - (iii) in all the circumstances, the action required to restore the accommodation to its condition before alteration is reasonably practicable; and
 - (iv) the alteration does not involve alteration of the premises of any other occupier; and
 - (v) the alteration is at that other person's own expense.