

Document Name	Alterations & Disability Modifications Policy
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Document Owner	Senior Asset Services Officer
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Alterations and Disability Modifications Policy

Context

This policy outlines how SAH will manage requests from tenants to make alterations or disability modifications to a property.

Policy Statement

SAH acknowledges that tenants may want to:

- alter and improve properties to improve the amenity for themselves and anyone legally residing in the property in accordance with the relevant state tenancy act and will be assessed on the basis of the state specific requirements. SAH will not be responsible for any of the costs relating to alterations.
- modify premises as the needs of tenants or household members may change because of illness, injury, age or disability and that as a result, their home, in its current form, may no longer be suitable. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, SAH (and other landlords) have an obligation to provide “reasonable adjustments” (disability modifications or relocation) to support a tenant with a disability. For Minor Disability Modifications, SAH will discuss the cost of the alteration with the allocated support provided.

The aim of this policy is to make sure that each application is responded to in a fair, transparent and systematic way that clearly explains options, choices and decision making processes.

Disability Modifications

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) defines home modifications as “changes to the structure, layout or fittings of the participant’s home that are required to enable the participant to safely access and move around their home as a result of their disability”.

Types of modifications

Minor Disability Modifications	Major Disability Modifications
<p>We define a minor modification as one that does not require structural changes to a property. Each individual modification would usually cost \$5,000 or less (including compliance, materials, insulation & GST). Examples of minor modifications include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handheld shower set(s) Installing lever style tap(s) Installing lever style door handle(s) Rehanging a door(s) Grab rail(s) Water flow or temperature control Air Conditioning 	<p>We define a major modification as one that requires structural changes to a property or where the cost is likely to exceed \$5,000 (including compliance, materials, insulation & GST). Examples of major modification include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widening door way(s) Installation of access ramps over two steps Modifying the kitchen, bathroom or laundry Replacement of floor coverings Providing entrance and exit ramps and Installing a hoist(s)

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SEEKING APPROVAL

Before a tenant can make a change to the property, the leaseholder (head tenant) must first contact SAH housing team, through their allocated housing (tenancy) worker using their allocated support worker if applicable. To assist SAH with either approving or declining an application, tenants should provide as much information as they can about the proposed works on the property modification request form. Tenants can request a property modification form from their Housing Worker.

For Minor Disability Modifications, SAH will require an Occupational Therapist Report (OTR) and in some cases may require supporting information like a medical certificate and/or letter of recommendation from an appropriate healthcare professional and/or regulatory body (eg. TAC)

SAH will respond to an application within 21 days of the application being received by SAH.

ASSESSING AN APPLICATION

SAH will:

- determine if the alteration is able to be rectified, repaired or removed at the end of the tenancy and consider these costs appropriately
- assess if there is any current or future loss caused by the proposed alteration and factor that into its decision.

Minor Disability Modifications are more likely to be approved due to their non-structural nature and that on completion, the property will most likely remain suitable for other future uses without the need to bring the property back to its original condition.

Where applicable, SAH will:

- seek approval from the owner or manager of the property
- assess any impact on neighbours or future tenants
- take all reasonable steps to assess whether the home has any asbestos or any hazardous building products in the degree to which those products will be altered as part of the proposed alteration (for example drilled, cut, and removed)
- assess if there are any prohibitions by law such as a strata by-law, building or health & safety regulations

SAH will need to be reasonably satisfied that appropriate contractors will be lawfully engaged to complete the works. If required SAH would be able to recommend authorised licensed tradespeople that can be engaged by the tenant to undertake the agreed works.

Any required compliance matters must be shown to be met or adequately demonstrated to be able to be met to the satisfaction of SAH before any alterations begin and on completion.

UNAUTHORISED ALTERATIONS

An alteration without written approval of SAH is a breach under each State Residential Tenancy Act.

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Scope

This policy applies to all tenants who live in SAH properties.

In leased properties, Transitional Housing Properties (THM), and properties managed on a fee for service arrangement, the approval of the property owner/manager will be required. In these instances SAH will approach the owner to seek permission for the alteration or modification to be approved.

Definitions

An “**alteration**” occurs where a tenant installs any fixtures or makes any alteration, renovation, addition or deletion to any part of the existing premises.

“**Existing premises**” means any buildings, and any fixtures and fittings within the rented premises boundaries up to, and including, fencing and gates. For example, installation of air conditioning or removal and upgrade to existing floor coverings, or installation of a new garden shed or disability modifications

Related legislation, policies and or procedures

- Residential Tenancies Act - Victoria 1997
- Residential Tenancies Act – South Australia 1995
- Residential Tenancies Act – Western Australia 1987
- Residential Tenancies Act – NSW 2010
- Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act - QLD 2008
- Residential Tenancies Act – A.C.T 1997
- Residential Tenancies Act – Tasmania 1997