

Baptcare Affordable Housing Policy

Document Information

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Overview

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Baptcare Affordable Housing's (BAH) properties meet the needs of renters wherever reasonably possible, and that all requests for alterations or modifications are assessed in line with legislative requirements.

Who Does It Apply To?

This policy applies to all rental properties owned and/or managed by BAH. This policy does not apply to any properties that may be managed through head leasing arrangements.

Definitions

- a) Alterations – Changes brought about intentionally, usually to make an improvement.
- b) Modifications – A change, usually to make something work better or to be more suited to the needs of users.

In a construction sense, alteration or modification means the establishment, erection, building, reconstruction, modernization, improvement, extension, discontinuation, or functional change to any aspect of a building. Alterations or modifications may refer to changes in structure, layout, building materials, plumbing, wiring, built-in equipment or facilities.

Policy

Overview

This policy defines the way in which alterations and modifications to BAH properties can be initiated and carried out.

Principles

All properties developed by BAH have been constructed to standards that conform to the Australian Standards Adaptable Housing Code and the gold level standard of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines.

This includes:

- Easy entry through ramps or slabs at ground level
- Accessibility including widening access through doors, hallways and within rooms
- Strengthening of walls to allow hand rails to be fitted
- Showers with no raised floor and sufficient space alongside toilets for wheelchairs
- Kitchens that can be modified.

These standards may not necessarily apply to properties purchased or leased by BAH.

General Alterations

Renters may request alterations to the property, fixtures and fittings by writing to the Tenancy Worker. If BAH provides consent, any such alterations will be at a cost to the renter. However, BAH may use its discretion to cover some of the costs.

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA) outlines certain modifications that may be undertaken by a renter without first obtaining BAH's consent, and further types of modifications where BAH may not unreasonably refuse to provide consent. A list of these modifications and further information can be found on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website:

www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/repairs-alterations-safety-and-pets/renters-making-changes-to-the-property

As a general principle, BAH will seek to accommodate reasonable requests to alter or modify a property where this will increase a renter's utility, unless the modifications:

- Cannot be reasonably or practically restored at the end of a tenancy (Note: where the alterations enhance utility of the property for renters with special needs - e.g. addition of ramps or improved access for wheelchair users – BAH may elect to retain the alterations)
- May result in increased costs to BAH, including maintenance costs
- May cause a risk to the health and safety of any person
- May negatively impact neighbours or common areas
- Would result in the property not complying with any legal requirements

If BAH declines consent to a request for alterations or modifications, the reasons for this will be provided to the renter. Where consent is provided, any works must be completed by a suitably qualified person.

Unless agreed otherwise in writing with BAH, renters are responsible for restoring the property to its original condition immediately prior to any alterations or modifications at the end of their rental agreement. Failure to

do so may result in BAH taking action to recover costs according to the provisions of the RTA and the BAH Charging Renters for Damages Policy.

Accessibility Alterations

When a renter requires modifications to enable them to continue to live in the property, they must first submit a request to the Tenancy Worker.

BAH will require supporting information from a qualified health professional, such as a General Practitioner or Occupational Therapist, as to the nature and urgency of the modifications requested.

The costs of such modifications will generally be borne by the renter or through access to government-funded programs such as the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program or the NDIS. BAH may use its discretion to cover some of the costs.

Where a property cannot be modified, the Tenancy Worker will work with the renter to find alternative appropriate housing that is owned and/or managed by BAH. Where appropriate housing cannot be found within BAH's housing stock, BAH will work with the renter to ensure they have access to the housing they need. This may include placing the renter on the Priority Transfer list of the Victorian Housing Register (VHR) – where eligible.

Rights and Responsibilities

Renters' rights and responsibilities are protected under the Residential Tenancies Act and other Acts of parliament.

It is important for renters to know and understand their rights and that along with rights come responsibilities. At the beginning of the rental renters are given a series of documents including a "Rights and Responsibilities" booklet. This booklet describes both the renter's and the rental provider's rights and responsibilities. If you have misplaced this then please ask a worker for a replacement copy.

Information and support can also be obtained through Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Tenants Union of Victoria.

Consumer Affairs Victoria

1300 55 81 81

www.consumer.vic.gov.au/

Tenants Union of Victoria

1800 068860

tenantsvic.org.au

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if the legal, regulatory and contractual environment requires.

Related Documents

- BAH Transfers and Succession Policy
- Victorian Housing Registrar Performance Standards
- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)
- Residential Tenancies Regulations 2021 (Vic)

Revisions and History

Next Review Date:	Month Year	
Revision History	Section	Commencing
Policy no. 9.8, v.1 v.2	Updates to Residential Tenancies Act	1/8/2019 (Approved by ELT Date)

This policy will be available on the BAH website: www.baptcare.org.au/services/housing/affordable-housing

Document Control

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