



Disability Modifications Policy (Version 1.0)

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1. Introduction

Community Housing Limited Group of Companies (CHL) houses many clients with a disability or mobility impairments and is committed to ensuring the accommodation in which they are housed is appropriate for their needs. CHL understands that a client's needs can change over time and seeks to support residents with a disability or mobility need affecting their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, to live independently in their home and enjoy a good quality of life.

2. Aim

The Disability Modifications Policy aims to ensure consistent property practices. It includes standards and principles for the management of non-standard fixtures and terminology, definitions and reporting to be applied across CHL nationally in the application of our integrated business systems and tools.

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

This policy will support CHL operations to;

- provide appropriate adaptations to allow for independent living
- ensure consistency through the development of a national approach
- improve internal communication between departments of CHL
- improve tools and training for all CHL staff working in operational environments
- enhance the ability of asset maintenance and housing teams to communicate effectively with tenants
- reduce maintenance costs
- ensure consistent use of terminology across jurisdictions

3. Principles

These principles guide the overall management of all disability modifications. This standardised approach ensures the organisation can apply a national standard within each jurisdiction, including compliance with National and State based regulations, industry standards, contractual obligations, legislation and organisation policies and procedures.

Principles for managing non-standard fixtures include, but are not limited to:

- Assessment and evidence of needs
- Determination of appropriate adaptations
- CHL Asset Standards Guidelines applied

The organisation uses this policy as a governing document to support the process of handling non-standard fixtures effectively and efficiently and with clear communication, ensuring the delivery of safe, clean and habitable properties to future tenants.

3.1. ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Term/ Abbrev.	Meaning
HO	Housing Officer
FSO	Field Services Officer.
SM	State Manager
SAM	State Asset Manager
OT	Occupational Therapist
GP	General Practitioner
AMD	Asset Maintenance Department

3.2. ASSESSMENT AND EVIDENCE OF NEED

Tenants (or a registered householder) can make requests for adaptations and modifications to better meet their needs and CHL will formally assess all requests for disability modifications. Requests should be lodged with the Client Service Centre or through their Housing Officer and/or using the aids & modifications request application form.

Housing Officers can assist tenants to make requests where appropriate. The tenant will need to demonstrate that the request is for mobility, health or safety reasons and obtain the relevant supporting material. CHL will support tenants and/or householders, where possible, to access funding for major works such as widening of doorways, air conditioning systems or accessible facilities.

Requests made on the standard form must be accompanied by an Occupational Therapist's (OT) report and/or a letter from the clients GP, specialist, or other healthcare professional. In some cases, minor requests such as grab rails may be considered without an OT's report or supporting documentation, at CHL's discretion.

Completed requests will be assessed by CHL Asset Maintenance Department. As part of the assessment, Field Services Officers (FSOs) may need to inspect the property to assess the building for the modifications requested.

Should a tenant or registered householder wish to install adaptations, either permanent or temporary in nature, for facilitating independent living in their home, CHL will not unreasonably deny such a request.

3.3. DETERMINATION OF APPROPRIATE ADAPTIONS

The FSO will make a recommendation for appropriate adaptations based on;

- the circumstances of and the evidence supplied by the tenant and/or householder
- a sound knowledge of building regulations and asset maintenance
- the total cost of the required upgrade
- whether CHL has authority to make modifications to the property, dependant on the program and/or contract under which the property is managed
- the cost-effectiveness of the upgrade in relation to the economic life of the dwelling
- consultation with the housing officer, tenant and/or health care professional
- alternative strategies, including re-housing the tenant in more appropriate housing
- the likelihood of further adaptations or modifications being needed by the client in the near future

A response will be provided to the client in writing, within 10 business days of receipt of the request.

4. Resolution of disputes

Tenants and/or householders have a right to appeal any decision made by CHL they believe is incorrect, unfair or unlawful. Clients who wish to appeal a decision made by CHL can do so using the CHL Appeals Process.

5. Related legislation, industry frameworks and standards, CHL policy and procedures

5.1. EXTERNAL LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORKS

Standards

Australian Standard AS 4299-1995, Adaptable housing https://www.saiglobal.com/PDFTemp/Previews/OSH/As/as4000/4200/4299.pdf
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Regulatory codes

Victoria https://www.vic.gov.au/property-planning/building-construction/building-regulations-codes.html
Queensland http://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/construction/BuildingPlumbing/Building/Pages/BuildingAccessPeopleDisability.aspx
Western Australia https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/corporate/disability-access-and-inclusion

Regulatory codes (cont.)

South Australia https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/planning-and-property/land-and-property-development/building-rules-regulations-and-information/the-building-code-of-australia
Tasmania https://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/technical-regulation/building-standards/building-practitioners/disability-access
New South Wales https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Housing/Housing-for-Seniors-or-People-with-a-Disability

Industry Framework

Scope https://www.scopeaust.org.au/quality-framework/
NDIS https://www.ndis.gov.au/specialist-disability-accommodation
Department of Social Services (Australian Government) https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/programs-services/for-people-with-disability/ndis-quality-and-safeguarding-framework

Legislation

Department of Community Services (ACT) https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/disability_act/national-standards-for-disability-services
NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/legislation-rules-policies
Disability Services Commissioner https://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/about-us/legislation/

Charters

DHHS (Vic) Client Services Charter https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/client-services-charter
Department of Social Services (Australian Government) https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/programmes-services/disability-employment-services

Regulations

DHHS (Vic) Better Regulatory Practice Framework https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/better-regulatory-practice-framework
Department of Social Services (Australian Government) https://www.dss.gov.au/housing-support
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute <i>Regulatory frameworks and their utility for the not-for-profit housing sector</i> https://www.ahuri.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/2824/AHURI_Positioning_Paper_No127_Regulatory-frameworks-and-their-utility-for-the-not-for-profit-housing-sector.pdf

6. Monitoring and review

This policy should be periodically reviewed and revised. Revisions should be made as and when required. The period between reviews must not exceed one year. The date for review of this policy is on or before December 2019. Training will be provided to each staff member and the board as a component of their induction.

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